

Church Financed Gymnasiums God-Serving or Self-Serving?

A Written Debate

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DEDICATION

This small volume is affectionately dedicated to **Lloyd** and **Marion Gale**, a great Christian couple, that I shall always associate with true loyalty to Christ, soundness in the faith, and immeasurable service to the kingdom to be appreciated only in eternity.

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Misspelled words have been corrected for a smoother, uninterrupted reading (content was not affected by this action).

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INTRODUCTION

This not a *formal* written debate. However, this is an *informal* written debate in the form of correspondence between two members of the Church of Christ which took place over a period of about eight months (from November 1993 to June 1994). Brother **Thomas C. Brite** is a lawyer by profession and a member of the Oak Hills Church of Christ of San Antonio, Texas (where well known **Max Lucado** is the preacher). **Gary L. Grizzell** presently preaches for the Alexandria Church of Christ of Alexandria, Tennessee. These Christian men have different perspectives toward the interpretation of the Bible. The two contrasting attitudes toward Bible authority seen in this exchange of words, ideas and Scriptures appear to represent an overall contrast in attitudes presently confronting the Lord's church. The practice of church elderships spending the Lord's money to build gymnasiums in order to *entertain* both members of the church and non-Christians is a growing trend. This book reveals the thinking typical of those who have led the church off into the entertainment business and thereby caused the blessed church of our Lord to be viewed as just another man-made religious denomination. It is hoped that after reading this small volume one can get a realistic, scriptural view of the issue of **Church Financed Gymnasiums**.

It is hoped that the reader will, by reading this exchange of letters, be made aware (or be reminded) of the present arguments on each side of this discussion and the utter bankruptcy of the pro-gymnasium position.

Due to the fact that this question of church support (out of the church treasury) of gymnasiums is equivalent to the question of shall the church provide entertainment *out of the Lord's treasury*, this issue really "boils down to" a discussion of the true, actual, scriptural, God-desired and God-ordained purpose of the Lord's church according to the New Testament (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20).

Since association with fellow Christians is one of the great joys

and blessings God has given to the Christian, it is imperative to understand what is being advocated by the author and what is not being advocated. Consider the following for clarification purposes.

WHAT I AM *NOT* ADVOCATING:

- ❶ I am **not** advocating that churches may not eat fellowship meals.
- ❷ I am **not** advocating that churches may not eat fellowship meals *in the church building* (See my book entitled, **UNSCRIPTURAL BINDING — A Current Discussion**, April 1996, Pillars Publications).
- ❸ I am **not** advocating that members of the church may not engage in recreational activities with one another, e.g. picnics, outings, retreats, camps, etc. It would be ludicrous to hold such a position.
- ❹ I am **not** advocating that a Christian is in error by seeking to build a friendship with a lost individual through appropriate means.
- ❺ I am **not** advocating that what we know as *anti-ism* is good. I am **not** *anti*, i.e. I am not seeking to bind where God has not bound. It will do no good to accuse the author of being *anti* after one reads the author's written debate mentioned above with an anti-orphan home, saints-only, and anti-fellowship meal preacher published prior to the publishing of this book, and when one sees that the author's argument is established from the New Testament. Also, **one must answer the argument** set forth in the following material rather than conveniently jump to the conclusion that the author is *anti* (cf. I Peter 3:15).
- ❻ I am **not** advocating that there may not be *secondary* uses of authorized expedients, provided the Lord's treasury doesn't pay the expense of secular pursuits and provided it does not violate any New Testament principle of truth, e.g. the command to "Abstain from all appearance of evil" — I Thess. 5:22.

WHAT I AM ADVOCATING:

- ❶ There is absolutely NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for the church (out of the church treasury) to build and maintain gymnasiums for the enjoyment of members of the church (in particular, the young people).
- ❷ When *any* congregation of the Lord's people misuses the Lord's treasury in that which is unscriptural, it serves as evidence of and a reflection of that leadership's misunderstanding of deity's purpose for the church in a lost and dying world. (cf. Mark 16:15-16; I Timothy 3:15; Eph. 5:17).
- ❸ When members of the church enjoy one another's company by engaging in recreational activities (such as camp, outings, retreats, etc.), **it is not to be financed by the Lord's treasury.**
- ❹ There is absolutely NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for the church (*out of the church treasury*) to build and maintain swimming pools and such like for the enjoyment of members of the church (in particular, the young people). Faithful brethren for years have understood this and have built camp swimming pools out of individual's pockets as opposed to doing it out of the church treasury, which treasury is designed for three divinely appointed purposes: 1) Edification - Ephesians 4:12; 2) Benevolence - Acts 6:3; and 3) Evangelism - Mark 16:15-16.
- ❺ It is not only unwise, but it is **unscriptural** to erect (out of the church treasury) a sports' complex. Some brethren have been heard to take the position that this is an *optional* matter but that *the best choice* for an eldership is to chose to spend the Lord's money on preaching the gospel (as though God gives them a choice, which He does not). Those who advocate such a position end up being against spending the Lord's money on constructing a gym based on subjectivism rather than: 1) A respect for the authority of God's Word (cf. Col. 3:17), and 2) Because they have rightly divided the Word of Truth, i.e. correctly determined authority (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

The Author, April 1997

Chapter

1

Article As Published In *Contending For The Faith*

The following article by the author was published in the October 1993 issue of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, Editor, brother **Ira Y. Rice, Jr.** It was this article that stirred up a response from the author's opponent, brother **Thomas C. Brite** of San Antonio, Texas, unknown either by face or reputation to the author. In fact, at this date of putting this material together for publication in this small book I have yet to hear my opponent's voice by phone nor would I know him if I passed him on the street. Therefore, this written exchange did not begin as a result of a personality conflict but simply a sincere desire to discuss the Scriptures on the part of both brother Brite and myself.

IS THERE BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH SUPPORT OF GYMNASIUMS?

Gary L. Grizzell

SECTION I: ESTABLISHING BIBLE AUTHORITY

In undertaking the subject at hand, which is to

determine if there is Bible authority for church support of gymnasiums, it is necessary to establish just how anything is authorized by the Bible. The New Testament of Christ is the testament that men now living are under, so it will be necessary to establish how a thing is authorized by the New Testament (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:8).

There can be no doubt that in matters regarding salvation, Christianity and religion, we must have Bible authority today. The apostle Paul in writing to the church at Colossae in the first century said, "**And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him**" (Colossians 3:17). **Sir Walter Scott** once stated that in the Bible there are facts, commands and promises. He said that the facts are to be believed, the commands are to be obeyed and the promises are to be enjoyed. The reader will note that Colossians 3:17 is a command. It is not a fact, nor is it a promise! The only way to the promises of God (and that is what we all should want for it includes eternal life) is to believe the facts and obey the commandments. If one is to have eternal life he must OBEY this command to produce New Testament authority for what he does in religious areas. Paul said to "**prove all things, hold fast that which is good**" (I Thessalonians 5:21).

But not only must there be a *respect* for Bible authority, there must also be a knowledge of *how to determine* Bible authority. There are three ways to determine Bible authority for a thing:

- 1) Command
- 2) Account of Action (Example)
- 3) Implication

An example of this matter of determining whether a thing is authorized or not may be thus illustrated:

**"Is there New Testament Authority for the church
to build a modern-day church building
and worship therein?"**

All one has to do to determine the answer is to find a command (which is binding on men living today), an account of action (example), or implication to prove his practice of worshipping in a building scriptural. The command to *assemble* is found in Hebrews 10:25. The Hebrews writer tells Christians to practice the assembling of the saints and not to cease this practice (it is commanded). In the verse itself it is not stated as to where the assembling is to take place (and in no other passage in the New Testament is a special place to assemble explicitly commanded, nor is there a binding account of action, example, of Christians building and meeting in church buildings given). But, it is IMPLIED (implication above) that Christians may meet to worship God (in fulfillment to this command to assemble) anywhere they desire, *i.e.*, provided it is done decently and in order (cf., I Corinthians 14:40). Christians may meet in homes, by a riverside, or in a church building. This also is called generic authority.

Bible Authority?

CHURCH FINANCED GYMNASIUMS — GOD-SERVING OR SELF-SERVING?

Having shown the need to have Bible authority, and having shown how to determine Bible authority, we now must point out that there is absolutely NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for the church to build and maintain gymnasiums for the enjoyment of members of the church (in particular, the young people).

The reason this is the case is because there is, first, no command (binding on men now living) to build a gymnasium. There was no command for any congregation of God's people to build a gymnasium in the first century. Second, there is no example (account of action binding on men today) of the early church, the example church, building gymnasiums.

Third and last, there is no implication in the New Testament giving the Lord's church today the authority to build and maintain gymnasiums.

In view of the above we must ask those in the Lord's church, and those in denominationalism who profess that they have built their gymnasiums to the glory of God--where is your book, chapter and verse for doing such? (*CF.*, Colossians 3:17; I Peter 4:11; II Timothy 3:16).

It must be remembered that only one of these three ways to prove Bible authority will do. However, those who practice the building of gymnasiums cannot find even one of the three to justify their actions.

SECTION II: IS BUILDING GYMNASIUMS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH?

Chapter ① Article As Published In *Contending For The Faith*

The work of the Lord's church is three-fold:

- 1) Edification
- 2) Benevolence
- 3) Evangelism

One of the three works of the church is that of edification. By edification reference is made to the building up of the body of Christ. This edification is a spiritual building up as opposed to a physical building up. The apostle Paul wrote:

**"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but
GODLINESS is PROFITABLE UNTO
ALL THINGS, having promise of the life
that now is, and of that which is to come."
(I Timothy 4:8).**

The teaching program of the church wherein the word of God is studied is designed to build up the church spiritually. Paul told the Ephesus elders that he commended them to God and to the word of his grace which was able to "build" them up (*cf.*, Acts 20:28).

Secondly, the work of the church is that of benevolence (*cf.*, Acts 4:32-34; Acts 6:1-6).

Thirdly, the work of the church is to preach the gospel to every creature (*cf.*, Mark 16:15-16).

In view of the above it must be asked, "Does the

building of gymnasiums by the church, *i.e.*, financed from the church treasuries, aid the fulfillment of any three of these divinely authorized works?" If not, then there is absolutely no Bible authority for the church to build a gymnasium.

SECTION III: RECREATION, ENTERTAINMENT, GADGETS AND GIMMICKS

The work that God has given the parents (the home) is that of the education and the entertainment of the children. The work that God has given the church is limited to that of evangelism, edification and benevolence.

Since it is the case that the basic problem involved is that of a blurring of the roles of the church and the home, it is of interest to observe some comments of other brethren in regard to this matter. The following excerpts are not quoted to constitute some kind of authority in religious matters, but simply to set forth the same truth which the author believes as it relates to the heart of this issue.

Dan Jenkins has commented:

"There are those who are determined for the church to build gymnasiums and pay for them out of the Lord's treasury . . . There are still members of the church who have a great devotion to truth, and for one to announce that a gymnasium is to be built would immediately cause alarm as they remember truths they have heard since their youth. A new label is

"Family Life Center." However, such does not change the truth about these projects, they are still gyms and there is no Biblical authority for them . . . our God has limited the area in which the church can work . . . It is time that we clearly focus on two divine institutions, the home and the church . . . There is nothing wrong with Christians being involved in youth camps, sports' activity, banquets, etc. There is nothing wrong with them using their money to accomplish anything that is not sinful. However, when money is given to the church it becomes special, for then its use is limited **TO THE AREAS IN WHICH THE CHURCH IS AUTHORIZED TO WORK!** Consider Acts 5 and the money of Ananias and Sapphira. Peter said to them, "*Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?*" The answer is obvious. Before it was given to the church it was under the power (authority) of those who had it. But after it was given it was under the authority of the church! There is individual activity, there is home activity and there is church activity.

The heart of the matter is this. If we truly are devoted to a 'Thus saith the Lord,' to speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent, to the principle of neither adding to nor taking from the Scriptures, to speaking only as the oracles of God, then **WE MUST HAVE BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR THE BUILDING OF GYMNASIUMS.** Where is it? How can we consistently call men back to Bible names, Bible worship, Bible baptism, Bible morality while at the same time advocating that it is right for the church to build gymnasiums? To call a gym a 'multi-purpose

building' or a 'Family Life Center' does not change its nature, nor its true function; and it certainly does not make it scriptural.

However, in recent years some have arisen who either have a false concept of the work of the church or little regard for Bible authority and now want to usher in a new age for the church, complete with gymnasiums."

Under an article entitled, "The Gospel or Mundane Methods?" **Leon Cole** stated:

"Young people today are not dumbbells. You cannot woo them into the church with a basketball and a coke machine, then subtly try to squeeze in unconsciously a little religion and expect it to captivate them. No, they are intelligent enough to participate in the good time and skip the religion. As the lamented John D. Cox declared, 'If you hamburger them to get them into the church you will have to hamburger them to keep them there.'"

Brother **Harold Bigham**, in his article entitled: CAPS, CLOWNS AND COMEDIANS, from *THE BIBLE WAY*, April 1987, page 4, spoke about the church's involvement in entertainment:

"Entertainment is not the drawing power of God (John 6:44-45).

So many in the brotherhood would rather 'play ball' with the denominations on the softball field than to take up the sword of the Spirit and wield it against their pernicious ways! What have we accomplished if we win the Church League trophy from the denominations? All we have proven is that we are better ball

Chapter ① Article As Published In *Contending For The Faith*

players than they are!

Did Peter, Paul, Luke and others ever put on their caps and gloves and play softball against the Pharisees, Sadducees and others? Where is the authority for the 'Church of Christ Angels?'

Brethren, when we erect our 'Family Life Centers' to draw sinners to Christ, we are erecting a sandy foundation that will prostitute the power of God (John 6:26). Let us ever remember that it is the home's duty to provide entertainment for the physical appetite and the church's duty to provide the spiritual for the soul. The Lord's church is not in the entertainment business but we are definitely in the soul-saving business of bringing sinners to Christ to meet their Maker at the Judgment (Matthew 28:18-20). Let us leave the caps, clowns and comedians at the house.

--2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501"

Note to reader: For the sake of accuracy, it was W. Scott, the pioneer restoration preacher, instead of "Sir" W. Scott (the novelist) who was the source of the quotation on p. 8 — the author.

Chapter

2

A Dissenting Voice From Thomas C. Brite, Attorney At Law — November 10, 1993

After the author's article entitled — *IS THERE BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH SUPPORT OF GYMNASIUMS?* — appeared in the October 1993 issue of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, the following response letter was unexpectedly received.

Thomas C. Brite
Attorney at Law
515 Busby
San Antonio, Texas 78209

November 10, 1993

Gary L. Grizzell
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear Brother Grizzell:

I have just read your article in the October 1993 issue of "Contending for the Faith" entitled "Is There Biblical Authority For Church Support of Gymnasiums".

Chapter 2 A Dissenting Voice

It seems to me that your argument went out with the wind with the Anti's when we were debating the issue of having kitchens, water fountains and bathrooms in the church building. What is your position on each of these and, if you find these to be acceptable, how would you biblically support them while at the same time eliminating multi-purpose facilities?

I am quite proud of the fact that at the congregation where my family attends we had the foresight to build an auditorium that is used not only on Sundays for worship assembly but also during the rest of the week for many other events for families including even basketball games. It is used when the weather is bad outside for the children in our Christian school to play and recreate. I believe that it is a much wiser investment of the Lord's money to build a facility that can be used not only on Sundays for worship, but also to strengthen and edify our families throughout the week than build a facility that is used only three times a week. What do you think?

Do you believe that I am bound for eternal perdition because of the type of building in which I worship? If not, then I would hope that you would spend more of your time concerned with those things that will lead the lost to Christ. If so, then my beliefs are confirmed that "Contending For the Faith" and its followers are continuing to drift further and further into the sea of legalism.

In Christ,

(signed)

CHURCH FINANCED GYMNASIUMS — GOD-SERVING OR SELF-SERVING?

Thomas C. Brite

TCB:rc

Chapter

3

**Grizzell's First Letter To Brother Brite
November 18, 1993**

Gary L. Grizzell
Holladay Trace Estates
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501

November 18, 1993

Thomas C. Brite
Attorney at Law
515 Busby
San Antonio, Texas 78209

Dear brother Brite,

I received your letter dated November 10, 1993. You mentioned that you read my article entitled **"Is There Biblical Authority For Church Support Of Gymnasiums?"** in the October 1993 issue of **"Contending For The**

Faith." I received my issue of the paper one day prior to receiving your letter in the mail.

You certainly seemed to be very critical of my article. The battle of the mission of soul winning *over against* the misguided emphasis of entertainment is upon us. Yet, you classified me with the anti water fountain, bathrooms, and kitchen brethren because of the argument I made against the Lord's church constructing gymnasiums. You then accused me of inconsistency *if* I am in disagreement with the same brethren on those issues.

You revealed that your present belief is that **Contending For The Faith** and its faithful readers have drifted from Biblical truth. This I gathered by your implication that if I believed your position false on a certain issue that it "confirmed" your "beliefs" that "Contending For The Faith and its followers are continuing to drift further and further into the sea of legalism." (From the tenor of your letter it appears that you are using "legalism" as equivalent to what we know as "antiism" though I'm sure that you agree that we should be *legal* not only with reference to the civil law but with God's spiritual law, the

Chapter ⑨ Grizzell's First Letter To Brother Brite

N.T., Gal. 6:2).

Brother Brite, you asked my position on certain issues. You wanted to know my position on the kitchens, water fountain and bathroom issue. You desired to get my view of places of worship which are also used for basketball. You asked if I believe you are "bound for eternal perdition because of the type of building" in which you worship.

The Facts:

I wrote an article which set forth the scriptural argument for the church being involved *only* in those things which are authorized by the New Testament. I gave book, chapter and verse for my position according to **I Peter 4:11** which says, **"If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God."** My article asked for just one book, chapter and verse for the Lord's church to take money from the church treasury in order to build a gymnasium to entertain the membership.

Though you seem quite stirred up you evidently feel no obligation to answer my request for a book, chapter and verse (**I Peter 3:15**). *You*

did not use one scripture in your letter to refute the argument that I used in C.F.T.F. So, as Jesus said to the chief priests and to the scribes in his day, **"I will also ask of you one question and answer me, and I will tell you . . . "** (Mk. 11:29). The burden of proof is upon you to **"prove all things"** (I Th. 5:21) and show me with the Word of God wherein I have erred. As an attorney I am sure that you know of the fallacy of *begging the question*, i.e. of only *assuming* one's major premise true and then drawing conclusions from it. Where's the Biblical *evidence* that my argument against the building of gyms by the church is unscriptural? I believe it is in order for you to answer my question first.

As for **"Contending For the Faith"** and its followers" drifting "further and further into the sea of legalism," that's a strong assertion. Again, proof from the New Testament will be needed to prove such, not an opinion based on pure subjectivism. If we love Jesus we will respect his authority (cf. Jn. 14:15; Mt. 28:18; Phil. 1:17; Jude 3; I Peter 3:15; Eph. 6:17).

Sincerely, your brother,
(signed)
Gary L. Grizzell

***Chapter ③* Grizzell's First Letter To Brother Brite**

Copy sent to: Ira. Y. Rice, Jr.

Chapter

4

**Brite's Second Letter Of Dissent
December 6, 1993**

THOMAS C. BRITE
515 Busby Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78209

December 6, 1993

Mr. Gary Grizzell
Holladay Trace Estates
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear Brother Grizzell:

I received your response letter just before the Thanksgiving holiday and am just now able to sit and respond. As I should have mentioned in my response, I am unaware of any congregation that has built solely a gymnasium which has no other use. I am familiar with many congregations that have built multi-purpose facilities or family life centers which have many uses.

I regret not being more clear in my original letter to

Chapter 4 Brite's Second Letter Of Dissent

you. The scriptures that I would use in defense of a multi-purpose facility being built by a congregation rather than a traditional "one use" facility would be the exact same scriptures which you used in your article. I believe that God does allow us to build a building for our corporate worship. I also believe that there are no examples in the bible* for what form or type of structure we are to build. It is my belief that the Lord's money should be used in a way that it is used for the most good that can be accomplished for the money. That is why the congregation where I attend built a multi-purpose building that has more than one use.

This past Thanksgiving holiday we held a dinner that has become a tradition for our congregation. We used our multi-purpose building to feed about 450 homeless/elderly/needy people. This could not have been done if we had built a building with fixed pews that sit in darkness for 95% of the time. As a direct result of our annual Thanksgiving dinners, and the many other dinners which are held periodically, there have been several souls brought to Christ and the Church, our congregation and the Church of Christ in general, has received much good community attention. "Pure religion is this . . ." (I believe you called this benevolence in your article).

Additionally, as I mentioned in my previous letter, the building is used throughout the week by many groups in our congregation for group activities that could not be held in a traditional auditorium. Many adult and children's

* (For clarification: "bible" here was not capitalized in the original; this is not a type-setting error, GLG)

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activities are held which could not be held in a traditional auditorium. (I believe you called this edification in your article.)

Finally, because of the many types of activities which take place in our building, we have been able to find many untraditional ways to reach the lost. I hate to mention this to you, but there are outstanding Christians I know whose first contact with the church have been when a friend invited them to play basketball at our building. Numerous others have been reached through activities such as the Thanksgiving dinner and the many other functions that take place in our multi-purpose building. (I believe that you called this evangelism in your article.)

I agree with you that the Church's mission is not entertainment. However, I believe that we in the Church should use every option available to win souls to the Lord. I believe that we should "become all things to all people so that some might be saved."

In addressing some of the areas raised in your letter, I would respond as follows:

1. I do not equate legalism with antiism. Antiism is a form of legalism. Legalism is an attempt to bind in an area where the Lord has not bound. Your attempt to bind a particular type of building where the Lord has not bound is a form of legalism.

2. More and more articles in Contending For The Faith attempt to bind Christians where the Lord has not bound. That prompted my statement regarding the

Chapter 4 Brite's Second Letter Of Dissent

magazine drifting further and further into the sea of legalism. Please do not misconstrue my argument to mean that I believe that there ever was a point when CFTF was not in the sea of legalism. I believe that it was constructed on the shore of the sea of legalism and has continued its wayward drift.

3. Yes, I find your position to be totally inconsistent and indefensible if you accept water fountains, bathrooms, and kitchens and yet do not approve of multi-purpose facilities.

4. I have now answered your questions to me, I would now appreciate an answer to my questions:

- A. How many hours per week is the auditorium in which you worship used?
- B. Which type structure represents a more prudent use of the Lord's money? One that is used 3 - 4 hours per week or one that is used continuously throughout the week?
(Especially if your congregation had to build a separate fellowship hall for large gatherings, assuming you believe it is scriptural to have meals.)
- C. Do you believe that I am bound for Hell because of the type building in which I worship?

I do appreciate the fact that you recognize me as your brother in Christ. Even though you and I may disagree on this point, I believe that on the judgment day you and I

CHURCH FINANCED GYMNASIUMS — GOD-SERVING OR SELF-SERVING?

will be there ready (to) enter into heaven together where
all will be made plain.

Your brother,
(signed)
Tom Brite

cc: Ira Rice
Bellview Church of Christ Elders

Chapter

5

**Grizzell's Second Letter To Brite
January 4, 1994**

***Gary Grizzell
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501***

(615) 432-6984

1/4/93

Thomas C. Brite
Attorney at Law
515 Busby
San Antonio, Texas 78209

Dear brother Brite,

I received your second letter dated December 6, 1993, concerning my article in the October, 1993 issue of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, entitled: "**Is There Bible Authority For Church Support Of Gymnasiums?**"

You stated, "*I agree with you that the Church's mission is not entertainment.*" I am truly glad to see that

you are in agreement with the sentiment of my article. You remember that in the last paragraph of my article I quoted the brother who wrote: "*The Lord's church is not in the entertainment business but we are definitely in the soul-saving business of bringing sinners to Christ to meet their Maker at the Judgment (Matthew 28:18-20).*" The entire point of my article was to demonstrate that the church is to stay focused on the New Testament authorized work of the church (evangelism, edification and benevolence). This excludes today's misplaced emphasis by some in seeking to provide recreation for the members of the church. That is why I also wrote, ". . . *there is absolutely NO BIBLE AUTHORITY for the church to build and maintain gymnasiums for the enjoyment of members of the church (in particular, the young people).*"

The issue I wrote about was concerning the church that takes money from the Lord's treasury and finances the construction of a gymnasium for the *purpose* of *recreation* for the members of that church. I pointed out that such a church is acting without the authority of the New Testament. You have written about the issue of which activities are allowed in the church building (where worship and classes take place) during nonworship hours.

You stated that you were "*unaware of any congregation that has built solely a gymnasium which has no other use.*" It appears you cannot imagine the gym separate and apart from the church building where worship, teaching, and other authorized things take place.

Chapter 6 Grizzell's Second Letter To Brite

Toward the end of your letter you accused me of trying to bind a certain type of building on the people of God when all I really did was scripturally demonstrate that there is no New Testament authority for the people of God to (with purpose and foresight) construct a gymnasium (through the church treasury) to entertain its membership (and I was thinking of gymnastics, basketball, weight lifting, women's slimnastics, and what have you). My article in **CFTF** *did* criticize anyone who would falsely portray gymnasiums with descriptions like "Family Life Center" and "Multi-purpose building" (as per Dan Jenkins' excellent statement which was cited). These names for the gymnasiums appear to minimize (*hide*, if you will) the existence of the gymnasium which was financed unscripturally by the Lord's treasury.

"There Came Out This Calf"

Brother **Lloyd Gale**, a faithful gospel preacher in Lebanon, TN, is credited for making the following excellent analogy. In **Exodus chapter 32** when Moses came down from the mount, having received the tablets of stone containing the 10 commandments, he found the people worshipping the golden calf. The people had become restless since Moses seemed to have been gone too long, so they had clamored for Aaron to "**make us gods**" (**vs. 1**). Aaron collected the people's golden earrings, cast them into the fire and made a golden calf. When Moses came down from the mount and saw what Aaron had done he called upon Aaron to give account for his actions. He first pointed out that "**they**" (**vs. 23**) wanted him to make the calf. Then he replied, "**And I**

said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (vs. 24). Did Aaron expect Moses to accept that excuse? More important, did Aaron expect God to accept that excuse? The article I wrote was critical of those modern day Aarons who expect faithful brethren (and more important, God) to believe that they built a church building for edification, benevolence and evangelism and lo and behold, *"there came out this gym."* Are we *really* expected to believe that the playing of basketball is not a primary purpose of these buildings and that it is at most an incidental use of these buildings built by the Lord's treasury? Aaron made his golden calf out of design and gyms do not just appear anymore than Aaron's calf just appeared. The gymnasium brethren people today are like the people in Moses' day, i.e. they have lost sight of their lawgiver and want change. And they want it now!

Brother Brite, *if* there is N.T. authority for *purposefully* constructing a gymnasium from the Lord's treasury for basketball games (recreation) in your "multipurpose building," then there is *also* N.T. authority to purposefully construct a gymnasium from the Lord's treasury for basketball games (recreation) separate and apart from your "multipurpose building." If not, why not? If you argue that the church can have its gym but only as long as it is *in* your "multipurpose building," then your analogy about gyms being parallel with bathrooms falls down. Would you have condemned brethren in earlier days who used an outside toilet? After all, it was separate and apart from the place of worship. After all, it was only for one

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purpose. Your argument for the Lord's money to pay for your gym is unscriptural whether you place it in or out of the worship place.

Are you not contradicting yourself? You stated you agreed with me that the business of the church is not to provide entertainment, yet you stated in your **Nov. 10** letter: *"I am quite proud of the fact that at the congregation where my family attends we had the foresight to build an auditorium that is used not only on Sundays for worship assembly but also during the rest of the week for many other events for families including even basketball games."* Did you not say that your building was built for *"basketball games"* by *"fore-sight?"* Does this not reveal the motive and intent to provide recreation? So the architect's church approved blueprint of the building serves as a testimony of your purpose and intent to provide recreation. I'm afraid you have revealed yourself here, brother Brite. And you admit that the church-financed gym is one of the *"untraditional ways to reach the lost."* (**Dec. 6** letter). You also stated, *"I hate to mention this to you, but there are outstanding Christians I know whose first contact with the church have been when a friend invited them to play basketball at our building."* Then you referred to this as *"evangelism."* May the church build an 18 hole golf course from the Lord's treasury as long as members of the church agree to stop and have prayer at each tee-off? Afterall, could not the church use this gimmick to invite sinners to play golf and perhaps then set up a Bible study? I'm sure there would be many takers for free golf. If the church rented the local High School gym for *worship* on Sundays

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for \$50 per Sunday, could the elders (with foresight out of the church treasury) pay the High School Superintendent an extra \$25 per Sunday so the kids of the church could enjoy an hour of *basketball* after worship?

Why is this issue important? Because whenever the wisdom of God in saving the lost is set aside to accommodate human wisdom, there are always sad and destructive consequences (**I Cor. 1:17-25**). How many preachers (and their families) are presently willing to preach in **Which of these two statements of yours am I to accept?**

“I am quite proud of the fact that at the congregation where my family attends we had the foresight to build an auditorium that is used not only on Sundays for worship assembly but also during the rest of the week for many other events for families including even basketball games.”

(Nov. 10, 1993 letter,
3rd paragraph)

“I agree with you that the Church’s mission is not entertainment.”

(Dec. 6, 1993 letter,
3rd paragraph)

Russia but cannot get the support to go while liberals and digressives among us continue to *selfishly* and *unscripturally* waste the Lord's money on their own desires? The *me-generation* is seen in the Lord's church in two extremes: **1)** Some leaderships who hoard the Lord's money and, **2)** Those who spend the Lord's money freely, but primarily upon themselves in inappropriate efforts. Either extreme misappropriates the Lord's money and therefore the Lord's divine purpose for the church in a lost and dying world (**Mk. 16:15**). The community looks to

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these churches for a light in a dark world of sin, but the candle of truth has been snuffed out and sacrificed upon the altar of Babel (cf. Gen. 11:4). The "**doctrine of Christ**" (II Jn. 9) has been traded for the sugar coated, nondemanding theories of Grace Only, Faith Only, Unity in Diversity and the "*Come and Be Entertained*" gospel. These "*Guaranteed Not To Prick Your Heart*" preachers are offended with the type of preaching Peter did on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:37). (All *faithful* brethren are full of Christian joy, but they understand it is the fruit of knowing one has first pleased God in obedience, cf. Acts 8:39; 16:34).

I was amazed when you stated that the scriptures which authorize your gymnasium are "*the exact same scriptures*" which I used in *my* article. In view of the fact that the scriptures I used proved just the *opposite* of your position you can see why I said I was amazed. The scriptural argument *against* a sinful practice is certainly not to be twisted into the scriptural argument *for* that practice. Peter warned about the unstable who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction (II Pe. 3:16). Yet, given your own circumstances you have revealed that it was by "*foresight*" a gym was provided for recreation for the families of the church (along with whatever use you wanted).

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The "*exact same scriptures*" I used were:

Section 1: Establishing Bible Authority

Col. 2:14
Heb. 8:8
Col. 3:17 (twice)
I Thess. 5:21
II Tim. 2:15
Heb. 10:25
I Cor. 14:40
I Peter 4:11
II Tim. 3:16

Section II: Is Building Gymnasiums the work of the church?

I Tim. 4:8
Acts 20:28
Acts 4:32-34
Acts 6:1-6
Mark 16:15-16

Section III: Recreation, Entertainment, Gadgets and Gimmicks

Acts 5
Jn. 6:44-45
Jn. 6:26
Mt. 28:18-20

One can see that none of the above verses authorize the Lord's church to finance (*out of the Lord's treasury*) the constructing of a gymnasium to provide recreation for members of the church. Brother Brite, which of these 18 verses above give you or any of your brethren the

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authority of God to exercise "*foresight*" to build your gym? Which of these 18 verses allow you to be "*quite proud*" that "*the congregation*" where your family attends "*had the foresight to build*" that which may include use for "*basketball games*?"

The scriptures I used (among others) authorized the constructing of a building in which to worship, *not* the constructing of a building in which to offer sports' activities to the membership. I argued from **Heb. 10:25** concerning "*assembling*" with the saints for worship as an example of showing how a thing is authorized. Is playing basketball "*assembling*" according to **Heb. 10:25**? The command to assemble implies authority to exercise *foresight* to construct a building in which to worship, *not* authority to exercise *foresight* to construct a building in which to provide recreation.

I *am* arguing the church should respect the wisdom of God to determine the drawing power of the gospel. God wishes to keep the drawing power of the gospel the cross of Christ (**II Cor. 11:1-3; I Cor. 1:17-18**). The appeal of the social gospel which **Max Lucado** and **Rubel Shelly** are advocating is entertainment under the guise of religion. What do you want to come to the mind of the community when they think of the church, the opportunity for sports' activities or an invitation to be forgiven of sins by the blood of Christ? Which will it be for the future church? The cross of Christ or recreation as the drawing power? As for me I'll take my stand with the apostle Paul who said, "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is*

crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

You argued that the church should use every option available to win souls to the Lord and that we should become all things to all men to win the lost. But where is the balance in your letter in this regard? The desire to win souls does not give God's authority to engage in *unscriptural means* to win souls. Surely you agree that there are practices which are not intrinsically evil in and of themselves, yet for which there is no authority in *certain contexts*. There was nothing intrinsically evil concerning moving an object across country in David's new cart, but when David decided to move the ark of God in that new cart he sinned (David really liked that new cart of his, you know. And those of the so-called new hermeneutic love their new carts too). God had specified *how* the ark was to be moved and David ignored God's instructions (cf. **II Sam. 6:3-10; I Chron. 13:7, 9, 11; Num. 4; I Sam. 6:7**). Today, there is nothing intrinsically evil concerning eating steak but it *becomes evil* when placed along side of the fruit of the vine on the Lord's Day (cf. **Mt. 26:26-29; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29**). There is nothing intrinsically evil with playing basketball but when brethren dip into the Lord's treasury to construct a gymnasium to entertain the members it *becomes sinful* (**Col. 3:17; I Pe. 4:11**). The Lord has specified the work of the church and providing entertainment is not included. Providing entertainment is the work of the home and of this I am totally in favor. The *gymnasium brethren* are blurring the roles God has given for the home and the church. *If* it is the church's business to provide sports' activities for the young people, *by the*

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same line of thought the elders should also *spank* them when they are disobedient to their parents. When the church starts assuming the role of the home where does it end?

Then for a second time in my opinion you falsely accused **CFTF** of false teaching. You have accused brother **Ira Y. Rice Jr.** 's paper of binding where the Bible does not bind in articles in addition to mine. I suggest you make a list of errors you *think* you have seen and send them to brother Rice. Knowing brother Rice's willingness to contend for the faith I'm sure he would be happy to respond.

After referring to me as one who binds on others that which God does not bind, I confess you really floored me when you wrote: "*. . . I believe that on the judgment day you and I will be there ready (to) enter into heaven together where all will be made plain.*" While I really do appreciate your good-will toward me, according to this statement I wondered why you even became so stirred up at my article in **CFTF** anyway?! After all, you think I can bind on others what the Lord doesn't bind (which I haven't done) and do so with the approval of God so as to one day enter into the gates of heaven. Of course if I was truly (as you earlier accused) binding where God had not bound then I would be under the curse of God (**cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4-5**). Your statement reveals to me that your belief is one of *unity in diversity*, which is of course condemned in **I Cor. 1:10** where Paul taught we are to be of the same mind and speak the same thing in essential matters.

Just because the truth is narrow and most will reject it is no excuse for brethren to devise unscriptural methods in the form of gadgets and gimmicks to attract the lost to Christ (**Mt. 7:13-14**). If the pure, unadulterated gospel preached in love is not attractive to the lost then nothing will save them. The preaching of the cross will continue to be foolishness to those who are determined to perish, but to those who choose to be saved it will be seen for what it is, "*the power of God*" (**I Cor. 1:18**). May we never be ashamed of the simple gospel of Christ (**Rom. 1:16-17**). May we hold to the simplicity that is in Christ so that when men come, they will be coming to Christ the Lord and Saviour and not to a false view of Christ. (cf. **II Cor. 11:3**). What view of Christ did those "*outstanding Christians*" you mentioned originally possess when the first contact they had was with your gym? *What* were they converted to? Were they converted to Christ and a correct view of Christ's church or were they converted to a denominational view of Christ and his church?

Questions from your first letter dated November 10, 1993:

1. I believe there is New Testament authority for water fountains in the church building (**Heb. 10:25**, generic authority).
2. I believe there is New Testament authority for bathrooms in the church building (**Heb. 10:25**, generic authority).
3. I believe there is New Testament authority for eating a fellowship meal in the church building (**Jude 12**, generic authority).

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4. Yes, I believe it is wise to utilize the church building during the week during nonworship hours, provided the activities are God authorized activities (**Col. 3:17**). Faithful brethren for many years have been using the church building for multi-*authorized*-purposes. With regard to the misguided attitude of digressives the expression, "multi-purpose building," appears to refer to multi-authorized *and* unauthorized-purposes.
5. I do not believe you are bound for eternal perdition because of the type of building in which you worship, *provided* you do not violate some principle of truth found in the New Testament. No one has a right to violate the principle of authority as found in **Col. 3:17**.

Questions from your second letter dated December 6, 1993:

- A. I am presently seeking relocation and therefore have been preaching at other churches. However, the building where I worshiped and preached for over the last five years utilized the building (generally speaking) primarily during the worship and class-room hours.
- B. Your question *presupposes* that a structure which is used only three or four hours per week cannot *also* be used continuously throughout the week. I believe it is wise to use the building continuously throughout the week (*provided* the "**activities**" throughout the week are God authorized). If you practiced Bingo for money or Dancing for the young people in that

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building I do not believe there is authority for such practices (whether in the church building or out of the church building).

- C. Same as answer to number 5 above (since you did ask the same question twice).

I have some questions for you: Do you believe that baptism is for the remission of sins? Do you believe that there are saved people in denominations? Do you believe men are saved by grace only? Do you believe men are saved by faith only? Do you believe that miracles are for today? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit operates separate and apart from the Bible today? Would it be a "sin" to bring a piano into the worship on Sundays or should this just be considered an optional matter? Do you consider *Thanksgiving*, *Christmas*, and *Easter* as special religious holy-days? Your answer to these questions could help me to better understand where you are coming from.

Sincerely and in Christ,

(signed)

Gary L. Grizzell

cc: Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

Elders, Bellview Church of Christ"

Chapter

⑥

**Brite's Third Letter of Dissent
February 23, 1994**

515 Busby Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78209

February 23, 1994

Mr. Gary Grizzell
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear brother Grizzell:

I apologize for the delay in responding to your letter of January 10, 1994.

In your article in the October 1993, issue of CFTF you listed three areas for which you felt the Lord had authorized the construction or use of a building: Benevolence, edification, and evangelism. My letter of December 6, 1993, clearly showed to you how the building my home congregation built was utilized in these three areas. It is evidently not possible for you to comprehend that the uses I described and examples which I gave fall into at least one of those three categories. You seem caught up in

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your position that a multi-purpose building can not be used for any other purpose than basketball or gymnastics and thus you equate a multi-purpose building with being nothing but a gym. For this I feel sorry for you because you are missing a tremendous resource for reaching the lost.

You asked if I would object to a congregation building solely a gymnasium. My answer to you is "Yes", but not because it would be sinful, but because it is not the wisest use of the Lord's money, just as I believe that the construction of a building that is used only 4 hours a week is not the wisest use of the Lord's money. I do not believe that you are sinning when you worship in a building that is used only 4 hours per week nor do I believe that I sinned when I worshipped in a building that was used only 4 hours a week when I was growing up. But I do believe that the congregation where you worshipped and worked over the last five years and the congregation where I grew up did not build a building that best utilizes the Lord's money.

Our congregation feels that it is very important that we reach not only the lost in other countries, but also right here in San Antonio. That is why we built a building that has not just one use, but many uses under one roof rather than have to build a traditional auditorium and a traditional fellowship hall. As I mentioned to you in my last letter, we are very active in reaching out to the community, and no, not for sports entertainment, but as a resource for helping the underprivileged, which is always followed up with Bible studies when requested. We also maintain

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an active missions ministry which provides sole support to missionaries in New Zealand, France, Mexico, Africa, Brazil and partial support in other countries.

There are two things that bother me most about your article and the two letters which I have received from you. And I find these two things very apparent not only in your article but also apparent in many articles in CFTF.

First, it is very easy to question the motivations of someone with whom you disagree. It was very easy for you to accuse me, my congregation and other congregations who agree with my position of having "lost sight of their lawgiver and want change." You do not know me or my brethren at my congregation. I can assure you that there is nothing that I love more in this world than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my personal desire to live my life in a way pleasing to Him and full of service to Him. How you can make such an assumption about my beliefs is incomprehensible!

You were very quick to dismiss Paul's words in I Cor. 9 regarding becoming all things to all men. If you have a problem with these words being in the Bible, then you need to take this up with the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to write these words. I agree with you that this would not allow us to partake in a sinful event to reach the lost, but an event does not become sinful solely because it takes place in a church building rather than on a street corner. This imparts some holiness to the building which I think we would both agree is not the case.

Second, you question the salvation of those that have been saved through contacts with my home congregation. Again, this is very easy to do when you have no contact with any of the people involved. Must we continue to hold to the view that the first contact a person can have with the gospel is by hearing a sermon from the pulpit or from having their door knocked on? I hope not because that mentality is what has led to declining numbers. Is there something other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified that we must teach for salvation? Would you have us add something other than making the sinner realize that without Christ in our lives we are condemned to eternal Hell, that salvation is only through our belief in Christ, with sins remitted in baptism, followed by a life of service being faithful to Him? If so, then I want no part of it! If that is "sugar coated" then I will proudly plead guilty to preaching a sugar coated gospel. If you teach something other than that, then you are not teaching the pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ. Is there some other process through which CFTF would require us to pass before salvation can be attained? It doesn't get much simpler than that.

Somehow CFTF has come to the conclusion that we must sit comfortably by in our buildings and wait for the lost to come in out of the lost world and ask us who is this person called Jesus Christ. Only then do we have any right to talk to them about their souls. If we do anything to develop a personal relationship with the lost to enhance their feelings to the Lord or the Church then we have "watered down" the gospel. Isn't that one of the advantages of doing good works for others is that they will be

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more open to the gospel?

I too will take my stand with Paul who said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is too easy for us to criticize that which we do not understand, or want to understand, and cloak ourselves in religious piety. You see, it would be very simple for me to take you to task for being part of a congregation that has built a separate facility for fellowship meals when the money could have been saved by building a multi-purpose auditorium and sent to those folks you mentioned in your letter who are wanting to go into Russia.

I honestly believe that if we are truly out among the lost doing the work of Christ that we will see the kind of growth in the Church today that was evident in the first century. I look around and I must ask myself which of the congregations which closely follow CFTF are showing the kind of growth that the first century church had? Quite honestly, I do not see it. At best, I see congregations which are standing still but mostly I see good intentioned congregations which are dwindling in numbers, not reaching the young people, and dying out.

You asked which of two statements I made in my two previous letters to you were to be taken as true. It was my intent that both be taken as true since both were meant in all honesty and sincerity.

I do not see a contradiction between the two, since I

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believe that the activities which take place in our building fall into at least one of the three categories of activities which you approved of and listed in your article.

By using your logic to it's conclusion, that is, that a particular event which takes place in the church building must have some type of direct special authorization, I must ask if you have ever had a wedding take place in the building in which you worshipped? If so, which category does a wedding fall into? Do your Elders ever allow the young people of your congregation, assuming there are some, to utilize the building for a young people's party? If so, do the Elders sin when paying the electricity bill out of the Lord's treasury since such was used for entertainment?

To answer the questions you posed to me in your letter, I would respond:

1. Is baptism for the remission of sins? Yes.
2. Are there saved in the denominations? If by this question you mean are there those saved outside of the Lord's church, then no there are not. If you mean are there those out there who do not worship in a building marked Church of Christ but have obeyed God's command to hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, and live a holy life, then yes.
3. Are men saved by grace only? We are saved by grace, but this does not relieve man of his responsibilities established in the gospel.

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4. Are men saved by faith only? If you mean is baptism and a faithful life necessary in addition to faith alone, then no we are not saved by faith only. These others are the necessary response to our faith in Christ.

5. Are miracles for today? I do believe that God will answer our prayers, even for the healing of someone who without our fervent prayers would have died. I call that a miracle. If you mean performance of miracles by those who claim that God works through them to heal the sick or speak in tongues, then No.

6. Is instrumental music sin? Yes, it would be a sin to bring the instrument into our services.

7. Are Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter special religious holy-days? To me, No.

In Christ,
(signed)
Thomas C. Brite

Chapter

7

Grizzell's Third Letter To Brite April 13, 1994

April 13, 1994

Mr. Thomas C. Brite
515 Busby Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78209

Dear brother Brite,

I received your letter of February 23, 1994. You finally admit that it is your position that it is not "*sinful*" for the church to build solely a gymnasium out of the church treasury. Placing this matter in the optional category you are against doing the latter only as a matter of judgment.

The 18 Passages

In your December 6, 1993 letter you gave as your authority for the constructing of a gymnasium in your building "*the exact same Scriptures*" which I used in my article as published in **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** (Oct. 1993 issue). In my letter of response dated 1/10/93 I listed the 18 passages I had used and asked you, "**Brother Brite, which of these 18 passages above give you or any of your brethren the authority of God to exercise 'foresight' to build your gym?**" You have now totally ignored this question and have not demonstrated from the Word of God how *any* of these passages authorize your position.

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Honesty Commended

While I certainly do not commend your doctrine, which doctrine I hate, I must sincerely commend you for your willingness to state what you believe *about the church constructing gymnasiums* (though as I later will point out, I discovered you are not as straightforward with reference to all questions put to you).

Implications Of False Doctrine

Any doctrine which *implies* a false doctrine is false itself. If it is the case that the elders of the church have New Testament authority to take funds from the church treasury and build *solely* a gymnasium, then the elders are justified to build any other type of sports' complex as well. This is the reason I asked you the question about the church constructing a golf course, with prayer at every tee-off. Brother Brite, you did *not* answer that question.

True Definition Of A "Multi-Purpose" Building

Of course, if you changed your judgment and built solely a gymnasium and then years later decided to add classrooms to it the result would simply be another "multi-purpose building." From what I can tell, liberal brethren's concept of a "multi-purpose building" is a church financed gymnasium with added classrooms.

Divine Math

You accused me of being "*caught up*" in my position and I must confess that *since* there is not *one shred* of New Testament evidence for authority for the building of gymnasiums to recreate the members of the church I *am* certainly "*caught up*" in my position. Though you may build a gymnasium for one purpose (recreation and entertainment of the members and guests) and then use it for three other purposes, the first aforementioned purpose is not somehow magically justified by the Scriptures, i.e. 1 wrong + 3 rights do not = a scriptural position. I guess this is where that *comprehension* ability is needed that you referred to. The inspired writer James stated that, "**For**

whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). So, in the context of James 2:10 the divine math teaches that $1 + 3 = 0$. All the good and wonderful works accomplished by those in error are worthless with regard to salvation from their own sins (Mt. 7:21-23).

Diverting The Issue

It is certainly a diverting of the issue to point out how the congregation where you attend does good works in the area of edification, benevolence and evangelism. My article in **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** dealt mainly with the problem of some brethren who think they have the Biblical right to construct gymnasiums out of the Lord's treasury. Surely you would agree that the end does not justify the means.

Is I Corinthians 9:22 Authority For Gymnasiums?

You implied that I had a problem with Paul's words in **I Cor. 9** regarding becoming all things to all men. Of course I have absolutely no problem with the **I Cor. 9** passage, nor with Paul, nor with the Holy Spirit. I *do* have a problem with brother **Thomas Brite's** faulty interpretation of the passage. Contrary to your position, neither **I Cor. 9**, nor any other passage in the New Testament allows you authority from God to build your sports' complex out of the Lord's treasury. You even said, *"I agree with you that this would not allow us to partake in a sinful event to reach the lost . . ."* (your letter of 2\23\94). I have already proven that the act of using the Lord's treasury to construct a sports' complex is without New Testament authority and therefore a sinful event.

I do not understand why you would say that I *"was very quick to dismiss Paul's words in I Cor. 9."* Go back and look at the detailed paragraph on pg. 5 of the 1\10\94 letter. I gave examples of the imbalanced applications of the **I Cor. 9** passage. I used the examples of David's new cart, constructing a gym from the Lord's treasury in order to play basketball and eating steak at the Lord's supper. I am *for* all scriptural means to lead a lost soul to Christ. I am *against* all

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unscriptural means (gimmicks) to lead a lost soul to Christ.

You only *alluded* to the **I Cor. 9** passage and were very quick to pass on by without *ever* demonstrating how the passage allows for *you* to build your gym *with the Lord's treasury*. The proof is upon your shoulders to prove your case and you have not done it.

I agree with the following comment concerning Paul's statement in **I Cor. 9:22**, "**I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.**"

"He accommodated himself to the prejudices and preferences of men so far as he could without sacrificing truth and righteousness, in order to win them to Christ. In other words, he sacrificed personal rights and personal liberty of action rather than to insist upon them when they stood in the way of winning any man, or set of men, to the Lord."

A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles by
David Lipscomb; Edited, with additional notes by J.W.
Shepherd, **Volume II, First Corinthians**, Gospel
Advocate, copyright 1935, pg. 136).

You stated that "*an event does not become sinful solely because it takes place in a church building rather than on a street corner.*" This is a straw man on your part. Here is what I *did* say,

"Surely you agree that there are practices which are not intrinsically evil in and of themselves, yet for which there is no authority in certain contexts."

Then I gave the examples like that of eating steak. I wrote,

"Today, there is nothing intrinsically evil concerning eating steak but it becomes evil when placed along side of the fruit of the vine on the Lord's Day . . . "

Did I say, "eating steak . . . becomes evil when placed in the church building" No, I did not! I said, "**it becomes evil when placed along side of the fruit of the vine on the Lord's Day.**" In other words,

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wherever the church worships God, whether in a building, in an open meadow, by a riverside, or in a cave, there is no authority to eat steak for the Lord's supper. I still contend that David's new cart and the ark of the covenant do not mix. I still contend that gymnasiums and the Lord's treasury do not mix. I noticed that you simply passed over answering the arguments about *eating steak at the Lord's supper* and *David's sin in how he moved the ark of God*.

Accusations Against Writers Of CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Beginning in paragraph 5 you accused me and other writers of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** of judging motives and of questioning the salvation of others. I simply reported and reflected to you that which *you* had stated. You wrote that your building was built (among other things) for "*basketball games*" by "*foresight*." I then commented, "**Does this not reveal the motive and intent to provide recreation?**"

As far as questioning the salvation of others I cannot speak for those good men who have written for **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** but all I did was ask you,

"What view of Christ did those 'outstanding Christians' you mentioned originally possess when the first contact they had was with your gym? What were they converted to? Were they converted to Christ and a correct view of Christ's church or were they converted to a denominational view of Christ and his church?"

I simply asked a question. I was sincere in asking this question and believed that I had good reason to ask the question (and still do). In **Acts 19** at Ephesus Paul found some who had a misconception which had prohibited them from obeying the true gospel. Paul questioned these 12 "converts" and then corrected their false view. I contend that Paul was right in what he did. He certainly was not judging motives or questioning the salvation of others in a sinful manner. I believe it is in order to judge "**fruit**" (**Mt. 7:15-20; Jn. 7:24**). If there is a reason to believe that a truth-seeker was *possibly* subjected to a

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denominational view of the church, to ask questions in such a case is the loving thing to do. Are *you* judging *my* motivations to be anything other than concern for that person's soul?

Methods Of Evangelism And Church Financed Gymnasiums

You discussed your evaluation of traditional methods of evangelism. Are you not applying a mentality of *some* people to faithful brethren? You described the mentality of allowing the lost only limited methods of hearing the gospel. Namely, **1)** hear a sermon from the pulpit, and **2)** as a result of door knocking. You said these two methods are the reason for the **"declining numbers"** among churches of Christ. I feel someone else may be better qualified than myself to evaluate the declining numbers among us. However, I will say that from my experience of having preached the gospel in TN, AL, MS and FL, very few who are able in the church are even *willing* to knock doors. Whenever I have knocked doors there have only been a few who have braved the sidewalks. Though I do *not* personally believe that door knocking is the *only* method of soul-winning in every area, I could not help but think how door knocking has not *truly* been tried nationwide, in which case how can you say it has failed? I am not personally responsible for the declining numbers among the churches of Christ (as long as I do my part) but I do know that even when the Lord's church has done all she can only **"few"** actually want the gospel. The **"many"** will **"perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved"** (Mt. 7:13-14; II Th. 2:10). If an abundant amount of preaching of the pure gospel will not change that fact, certainly no sports' complex (or any other gimmick) some brethren erect will ever change that fact. I do not believe in using gimmicks as a knee-jerk response because the denominations are growing in numbers while we are declining. I do not believe in numbers at the price of truth. I agree with the following statements:

"The three great Bible S's -- service, sacrifice, and suffering -- have been effectively deleted from the vocabulary of most Christians today . . . Churches with the most activities for the young people are attracting them like flies -- and usually away from smaller churches who emphasize service above fun. Have a

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party and huge numbers appear; have a spiritual work session and those numbers disappear."

(Mark K. Lewis, **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, "Interest Groups In The Church," May 1985).

"There are some brethren who are standing up and speaking out against . . . gymnasiums and such like. 'Where is the authority for such practices?' Instead of proving that their position is scriptural, they simply exclaim the scriptures do not condemn it! This is exactly the argument that the Christian Church has made for years in trying to defend the use of instrumental music in worship. Instead of *proving* their claims, there is simply an *assertion*.

Brethren who are trying to defend the positions that we stated above instead of proving their claims, simply charge, 'There is arising a new anti-ism among us.' Brethren, it is not a new anti-ism arising among us. It is still just the 'old liberalism' reaching its tentacles farther and farther out."

(John M. Grubb, **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, article: "New Anti-ism" and "Old Liberalism," May 1985).

You spoke of the growth of the church in the first century. How many sports' complexes did the first century church have in order to grow as they did? In fact, between the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's how many gyms as tools for evangelism did the Lord's church in America build in order to become the fastest growing religious group in America? I would suggest you read **THE SPIRITUAL SWORD**, Volume 10, July, 1979, Number 4, Editorial articles: "**Why the Church of the First Century Grew so Dramatically**" and "**Why the Church of the Mid-Twentieth Century Grew So Dramatically**" by **Thomas B. Warren**. And while you are in that issue you might want to read, "**GOSPEL OR GIMMICKS?**" by Paul Southern on pg. 3.

Knowing of the abundant foreign mission work of the editor of

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH I found it amazing that you accused **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** of reaching the conclusion that we are never to get out of our church buildings but instead only teach the lost if they come to our buildings. Also, if this is not *judging motives* (which you earlier accused writers of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**) with your sweeping generalization I do not know what is.

It appears that conservative (faithful) brethren cannot win in regard to methodology. On one hand you criticized conservatives for depending on door knocking to reach the lost with the gospel. Then on the other hand you accused conservatives of insisting on staying shut up in our meeting houses and refusing to go out and evangelize. In our desire to do good we must not become "*implacable*" (**Rom. 1:31**), i.e. one who cannot be pleased. And in our criticisms we must not be misguided, like the man who got on his horse and rode off in all directions.

Sugar-Coating The Gospel

You became offended because I sermonized about how liberal preachers in the Lord's church "*sugar-coat*" the gospel. In the specific issue at hand, i.e. the abuse of the Lord's treasury by turning aside to recreation, New Testament authority has been violated. The constructing of gyms from the Lord's treasury for recreation *is* loosing where God has not loosed. (*cf. Mt. 16:19*). There is not a man on earth who can prove there is Bible authority for the church constructing sports' complexes to minister to the physical side of man.

Another Accusation Against Writers Of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**

You accused certain who write for **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** of believing that trying to develop a personal relationship with a lost person was wrong in that this was somehow compromising the gospel. I cannot speak for others but I will say for myself that I certainly believe in trying to develop a personal relationship with the lost (through pure activities) in order to make friends with the hope of

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teaching him the gospel. However, the issue we are debating is concerning *the proper use of the Lord's treasury!* As I stated in my previous letter to you, *"There is nothing intrinsically evil with playing basketball, but when brethren dip into the Lord's treasury to construct a gymnasium to entertain the members it becomes sinful (Col. 3:17; I Pe. 4:11)."* (1\10\93, pg. 5, para. 2). The right and privilege of trying to develop a personal relationship with a lost person does not give New Testament authority for constructing *from the church treasury* a gym or any other sports' complex.

By the way, for a great article which shows how an authorized expediency may be abused read **Larry Fluitt's** article, **"We're Going To Build A Baptistry!"** in the January 1984 issue of **CFTE**. In his allegory some over-zealous, misguided brethren, having proven authority for the expediency of a baptistry, decide they can now do anything they want with it. So they make it 60 feet long, string off lanes and the young people can now enjoy swimming in it. Then these brethren complain because some other brethren criticize them for building a *swimming pool* with the Lord's money. But they insist that it is only a baptistry!

Yes, I agree that one of the advantages of doing good works is so that the lost will be more open to the gospel. However, this fact does not allow authority to fund a fourth work of the church, namely, recreation. I do not believe that when faithful brethren point this out we should be told that the sky is falling, we are guilty of judging motives, questioning the salvation of others, preoccupied with sitting in our church buildings, preoccupied with door knocking, etc. Is this fair?

Still Another Accusation Against Writers Of CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

You then accused me and **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** of criticizing what we do not understand, of not wanting to understand and of cloaking ourselves in religious piety. Again, I would suggest you write to the editor and let him give answer. I will answer for myself. It is not that I do not *"understand"* your position, I do

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understand. It is not that I do not **"want"** to understand your position. It is simply that I see that you have absolutely no New Testament authority for your position. **"Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"** (Gal. 4:16). If being set for the defense of the gospel is **"not wanting to understand"** then I am guilty (Phil. 1:17). If contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints places me in the class of those who **"cloak"** themselves **"in religious piety"** then I am pleased to be placed there (Jude 3). And *you* earlier accused conservatives of the sinful judging of motivations of their opponents! (Rom. 2:1). Have you not done so here? (Mt. 7:1).

Separate Facilities

You spoke of my **"being part of a congregation that has built a separate facility for fellowship meals."** Is this an inconsistency suggested? I do not know whereof you speak. Perhaps you are stating that my position *implies* that I would not be against such. If so, I have already affirmed I have no problem eating a fellowship meal in the building *scripturally built* by the Lord's money. I will give you the benefit of the doubt here as to the meaning. I cannot but help just here being reminded of a statement made by brother **Tom L. Bright** about the *nature* of your writing when he recently wrote,

"In all honesty, rather than explaining anything, he simply asserts something and then passes on. This results in confusion in the minds of some." (CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH, January 1994).

Speaking of inconsistency, it would be just as easy for me to point out that *you* are a member of **Max Lucado's** congregation. Just recently I read that, **"Max Lucado is scheduled to speak on April 14, 1994, at Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis, whom Maxie D. Dunnam, Methodist preacher, characterizes 'a colleague in ministry with you in the Church of Christ.'"** (YOKEFELLOW, March 15, 1994 edition, Curtis Cates). Lucado has already proven he will violate **II Jn. 9-11** with the Catholic Church. It is difficult to believe he will not also compromise with the above mentioned denomination. Of course for all I know you

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may believe that *faithful* Christians you described as **"out there who do not worship in a building marked Church of Christ"** are being addressed by apostate brother Lucado in the Methodist Church.

"Direct Special Authorization"

You stated that my *"logic"* says *"that a particular event which takes place in the church building must have some type of direct special authorization . . ."*

What I *did* say:

1. **"The issue I wrote about was concerning the church that takes money from the Lord's treasury and finances the construction of a gymnasium for the purpose of recreation for the members of that church."** (Letter of 1/10/94, pg. 1).
2. **"Toward the end of your letter you accused me of trying to bind a certain type of building on the people of God when all I really did was scripturally demonstrate that there is no New Testament authority for the people of God to (with purpose and foresight) construct a gymnasium (through the church treasury) to entertain its membership (and I was thinking of gymnastics, basketball, weight lifting, women's slimnastics, and what have you)."**
(Letter of 1\10\94, pgs. 1-2).
3. **"Your argument for the Lord's money to pay for your gym is unscriptural whether you place it in or out of the worship place."** (Letter of 1/10/94, pg. 2).
4. I stated, **"I agree with you that the Church's mission is not entertainment."** (Letter of 1\10\94).
5. **"Did Aaron expect Moses to accept that excuse? . . . the article I wrote was critical of those modern day Aarons who expect faithful brethren (and more important, God) to believe that they built a church building for edification, benevolence and evangelism and lo and behold, *"there came out this gym."* Are we really expected to believe that the playing of basketball is not a**

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primary purpose of these buildings and that it is at most an incidental use of these buildings built by the Lord's treasury? Aaron made his golden calf out of design and gyms do not just appear any more than Aaron's calf just appeared." (Letter of 1\10\94, pg. 2).

6. I asked, "If the church rented the local High School gym for worship on Sundays for \$50 per Sunday, could the elders (with foresight out of the church treasury) pay the High School Superintendent an extra \$25 per Sunday so the kids of the church could enjoy an hour of basketball after worship?" (Letter of 1\10\94, pg. 3). This question you did not directly answer. However, based on your position that it is allowable to build solely a gym your position *implies* the Elders not only could pay the superintendent an extra \$25 per Sunday, but they could *purchase* the High School gym (provided it was for sale).
7. "Today, there is nothing intrinsically evil concerning eating steak but it becomes evil when placed along side of the fruit of the vine on the Lord's Day."
(Letter of 1\10\94, pg. 5).
8. "There is nothing intrinsically evil with playing basketball but when brethren dip into the Lord's treasury to construct a gymnasium to entertain the members it becomes sinful." (Letter of 1\10\94).
9. From the article in **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, Oct. 1993, entitled "IS THERE BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR CHURCH SUPPORT OF GYMNASIUMS?":
 - 1) I advocated that men are now under the New Testament of Christ and responsible to it in religious matters (**Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:8**).
 - 2) I advocated that men are to "prove all things" (**I Th. 5:21**).
 - 3) I argued that men are to "rightly divide the word of of truth" (**II Tim. 2:15**).

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- 4) I stated that there are three ways to determine Bible authority for a thing:

Command
Account of Action (Example)
Implication

- 5) I stated that "**generic authority**" is involved in how things may be authorized.

Let me say kindly, it would have helped had you explained what you meant by "**direct special authorization.**" If by this you meant that I'm advocating men must have Bible authority in all things pertaining to salvation, Christianity and religion, then yes, I *do* believe we *must* have authority. If your statement is to be so interpreted you would be directly denying Paul's command, "**And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .**" (Col. 3:17). If this is the case I suggest you take the issue up with the Holy Spirit and the apostle Paul. However, if you are suggesting by the use of the word "**direct**" that I am anti-generic authority (or implication), then you have simply overlooked (or ignored) what I wrote in the article in **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, Oct. 1993.

Response To Grizzell's Questions

As already pointed out you did not answer my golf course question.

You did not answer my High School gym question.

At the end of my last letter to you I asked you 8 questions and you only answered 7. The question you did *not* answer (I assume by oversight) was:

"Do you believe that the Holy Spirit operates separate and apart from the Bible today?"

With regard to my question on pg. 3 of the 1/10/93 letter to you, "**Which of these two statements of yours am I to accept?**" You

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replied that both of your statements "**were to be taken as true.**" I did not question your truthfulness. Since the statements *do* contradict one another I had hoped by this question, as a tool of instruction, to bring to your attention your own contradictory position. Forgive me brother Brite, but I must say this, I have never met a liberal yet who did not cry that his "**intent,**" "**honesty,**" and "**sincerity**" were being called in question when his contradictory position was pointed out to him. Those who build a gymnasium (a sports' complex) by "foresight" out of the Lord's treasury *cannot* consistently at the same time claim to hold the position that "the Church's mission is not entertainment."

You stated that you did not see a contradiction between your two statements since you believed the activities which take place in your building fall into at least one of the three categories, i.e. edification, benevolence and evangelism. Your argument appears to be: Since it is scriptural for a Christian to play basketball to build a personal relationship with a lost person in hopes of later teaching and baptizing him, therefore, there is New Testament authority to construct a gymnasium from the Lord's treasury. By the same irrational reasoning since it is scriptural for a Christian to go to a movie theater to build a personal relationship with a lost person in hopes of later teaching and baptizing him, therefore there is New Testament authority to construct a movie theater from the Lord's treasury. Based on this a Christian who races hot rods could press the elders for a drag strip next to the church building as an extension of the parking lot. I guess then someone would advocate a "Hot Rod Minister" lest the hot rodders in the church feel neglected.

Your answer on number 2 was *questionable* to say the least. You advocated that there are faithful Christians "**out there who do not worship in a building marked Church of Christ.**" Again, brother Brite, you have simply asserted something and then passed on. This type of language will result in confusion in the minds of some. *Whatever* you are saying, I *know* this, a *faithful* Christian *cannot* worship with any religious group which worships in error and teaches a false plan of salvation and *remain* a faithful Christian (cf. **Mt. 15:8-9; 13-14; Eph. 5:11**). Check the preaching of the apostles and first century preachers, brother Brite, and you will not find them

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leaving any doubt about their position when they finished speaking as you have done in answering this question. Your statement would *make it difficult* for a knowledgeable Christian (who believes there are no *faithful* Christians in the denominations) to believe you are not in error on this point. *Please* do not consider me as just trying to *win the argument* in this response, it is *the truth of the gospel* which is my objective, as it is yours as well.

If you will allow me to make a suggestion, your answer on number 5 reveals that you need to understand the difference between *Providence* and *Miracles* according to the Bible. I would refer you for helpful reading to **THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION** by **R. Milligan** (pg. 263 for a good definition of a Bible miracle). Your view that miracles occur as a result of prayer today is fallacious (**cf. I Cor. 13:8-10**).

Your answer to number 7 appears to give the impression that you believe it is *optional* for one to believe that Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter are special *religious holy-days*. Again, this type of language results in confusion.

Response To Brite's Questions

1. With regard to your wedding question, as I stated in the 1\10\94 letter, pg. 5-6:

"Yes, I believe it is wise to utilize the church building during the week during nonworship hours, provided the activities are God authorized activities (Col. 3:17). Faithful brethren for many years have been using the church building for multi-*authorized*-purposes. With regard to the misguided attitude of digressives the expression, "multi-purpose building," appears to refer to multi-authorized *and* unauthorized-purposes."

"I believe it is wise to use the building continuously throughout the week (*provided* the 'activities' throughout the week are God authorized). If you

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practiced Bingo for money or Dancing for the young people in that building I do not believe there is authority for such practices (whether in the church building or out of the church building).

As you know, **marriage** is ordained of God (**Gen. 2:24**). We preach from the pulpit that "**marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge**" (**Heb. 13:4**). The use of a building to accomplish that which is appointed by God is certainly a *different* issue than the designing (with *foresight*, to use your own word) of a building for recreational purposes from the Lord's treasury. My position is that the employment of a building for the specific purpose of two scripturally eligible persons to enter into this God appointed institution is within the proper bounds.

The church building is an expedient whose existence is warranted because of an obligation. The use of a *true* expedient is a totally different issue than the discussion of the use of an *unscriptural* expedient. A gymnasium (financed from the Lord's treasury) is *not* a God approved expedient for there is no obligation (command, implication or approved account of action) behind such.

2. You asked what the Elders where I worship allow with reference to the young people of the congregation. As I explained in the 1\10\94 letter,

"I am presently seeking relocation and therefore have been preaching at other churches." (pg. 6).

Your question involves *timing* due to my present circumstances, i.e. I am presently between preaching positions. Since I am presently *seeking* an eldership under which to preach, therefore I cannot possibly know of *their* position on this issue. To know this I would need to know the future, which no man can know. (I *have* been visiting on occasion at a nearby congregation when not "trying out," but not having "placed membership" I do not know all their

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practices).

As I have stated previously,

"The Lord has specified the work of the church and providing entertainment is not included. Providing entertainment is the work of the home and of this I am totally in favor. The *gymnasium brethren* are blurring the roles God has given for the home and the church. *If it is the church's business to provide sports' activities for the young people, by the same line of thought* the elders should also *spank them when they are disobedient to their parents. When the church starts assuming the role of the home where does it end?*" (Letter of 1\10\94, pg. 5)

If the young people of the church gather at the building for a "social" situation *accompanied with* that which causes them to meditate and think on God, this would not be unscriptural (anymore than when the members of the church meet at the building to eat a meal together, cf. **Jude 12**). The additional use of a true (scriptural) expedient is left to the judgment of the elders as they are guided by divine principle. The additional use of a false (unscriptural) "expedient" is left to no man or group of men's judgment in that it is not an authorized "expedient." Arguing that a church financed gym is an expedient to evangelism is like arguing that the piano is an expedient to edification in congregational singing.

Concluding Thoughts

Brother Brite, I close with a plea. I wrote an article which was published in **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**. My article set forth the scriptural argument against the practice of some who have left the old paths by the building of gymnasiums. You have now written me three letters to date (Nov. 3, 1993, Dec. 6, 1993 & Feb. 23, 1994) and I have written you three. In *none* of these letters have you proven from **the Word of God** that there is New Testament authority for the Elders of the church to construct *from the church treasury* a gymnasium in any form. I assume you are sincere as I

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believe myself to be sincere. I will continue to pray that you would *direct* your desire to please God and win lost souls to Christ with respect for the authority of God's Word on these matters.

Respectfully in the Cause of Christ,
(signed)
Gary L. Grizzell

Copies sent to: Ira Y. Rice, Jr. & the Elders of the Bellview Church
of Christ

Chapter

8

**Request To Make Known
Correspondence**

Gary L. Grizzell
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, TN 38501

Thomas C. Brite
Attorney at Law
515 Busby Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78209

Brother Brite,

The reason I am writing is to ask if you would have any objection to me making our correspondence known to other interested students of the Bible (beyond those who already know of the correspondence). Since the issues we discussed are important matters (Bible authority, the mission of the church, priorities, etc.) I believe others may find our written discussion helpful. What do you think?

Sincerely,
(*signed*)
Gary L. Grizzell

Chapter
⑨
One Last Ditch Letter
From Brite— June 23, 1994

Thomas C. Brite
515 Busby Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78230

June 23, 1994

Mr. Gary Grizzell
2128 Crystal Court
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear brother Grizzell:

Thank you for your letter requesting permission to share our correspondence. You certainly have my permission to share my letters with whomever you wish to share them with.

Since your last letter made reference to my article which appeared in the February 1994 issue of CFTF, I am enclosing a copy of a letter which I wrote to Brother Tom Bright on February 26, 1994. I have not had a response from Brother Bright as of this date. I hope that this response might help you understand more clearly my

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position.

I have debated in my mind for quite some time the benefits of responding to your last letter. I am bothered that you would make an exception to your rule regarding use of a building when it comes to my question of a funeral and also the one I neglected to mention, weddings. I would assume that you would see nothing wrong with a wedding in the church building, although I fail to see how a wedding would fit into your limited interpretation of what can take place in a church building.

On the other hand, perhaps the way to remove your objections to the situation at Oak Hills would be to inform you that the funds for the construction of our multi-purpose building did not come out of the general fund of the congregation, but were given separate and apart from the regular contribution by the membership. In other words, the annual budget for the congregation contained nothing about building costs and was not affected by the separate donations for the construction of the building. I do not know if this would satisfy your concerns about taking money from the Lord's treasury.

I worshipped in a Church of Christ building in Dallas this past weekend that was very ornate and obviously very expensive. I personally found this building to be offensive because of the amount of money that went into it's construction. And yet, this building would pass your test because it had permanent pews and could only be used in the traditional sense. Where do we draw the line in the amount of money spent in traditional uses? The Second

Chapter 9 One Last Ditch Letter

Baptist Church in Houston completed a facility a few years ago which would pass your test of usage, but cost 38 million dollars. I would have a much harder time scripturally justifying the construction of a building of that nature than I would the one constructed at Oak Hills.

Certainly the Elders of any congregation are charged to be good stewards over the Lord's money. I believe that they are charged with the responsibility of using the Lord's money in the best possible way to teach the gospel and carry out the Great Commission. There can be abuses of the Lord's money in the construction of a traditional use building just as there can be in the construction of a multi-purpose building.

Finally, regarding two of the questions which you had posed to me in your previous letters, let me respond as follows. First, I neglected to answer the question you posed regarding direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the present age. No, I do not believe in the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the present age. Second, you asked me about special holy days. I answered you that Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc. do not have special significance to me. However, I believe that Romans 14 allows for observance of these days by those who believe that there is special religious significance in these days. I believe that the observance of special days is not relevant to the question of salvation, so long as the believer is fully convinced in his/her own mind of why they do or do not observe certain days. (Romans 14:5). I also believe that Romans 14:13 prevents me from judging and condemning those who hold to such beliefs.

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Thank you for your consideration of these thoughts.

In Christ
(signed)
Thomas C. Brite”

(Note to reader: I did not include (due to the fact that this was a separate controversy) in this publication the copy of the letter brother Brite referred to which he had written to the faithful gospel preacher, brother **Thomas L. Bright** of Houston, Texas. However, you, the reader, may read of Thomas L. Bright’s response to an article written by **Thomas C. Brite** in the January 1994 issue of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH, GLG**).

Chapter

10

Concluding Thoughts About Brite's Last Ditch Effort

Not knowing if brother Brite would agree to share our correspondence with others, I then received his letter dated June 23, 1994 (*see previous chapter*). I certainly did not expect further argumentation thinking about all had been said that could be said. However, after learning of my desire to share this exchange with others he appears to have had somewhat more to say (which is certainly his right). I did not respond to his letter at that time, but I will make a response to it now in this section.

In my view the letter of June 23 did not really add to the discussion in a favorable way for my worthy opponent. He stated he hoped his letter might help to make his position more clear. However, I thought he had made his position very clear in his previous three letters.

He finally mentioned the name of the church of which he is a member, i.e. “**Oak Hills.**” This is the congregation where “brother” **Max Lucado** preaches. At the moment this is being typeset for publication I have before me the 1995 June and August issues of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH** wherein Max

Lucado is exposed for the liberal he is. Faithful preacher, **Darrell Conley**, had written an article entitled, *Tragedy In San Antonio*, wherein he described his unpleasant experience of listening to the tape recording of Max Lucado's sermon which he delivered at **Trinity Baptist Church!** Conley stated, "It has been clear to us in San Antonio that Max Lucado and the Oak Hills Church of Christ (of which my uncle was a founding member) have abandoned the truth." Speaking of Lucado, Conley said, "He recently delivered a sermon at Oak Hills where he said that he had no problem with worshipping with musical instruments (see *Biblical Notes*, ed. **Roy Deaver**, Nov./Dec. 1994) . . . It comes as no surprise then that he and liberal Baptist preacher, Buckner Fanning, agreed to swap pulpits (at Lucado's suggestion). They christened April 2, 1995, 'Unity Sunday.' Max told the audience at Trinity Baptist that when the agreement to swap was announced at Oak Hills, they applauded. So once again the wolf was invited by the shepherds into the flock, and the sheep bleated their approval. His sermon at Trinity Baptist was filled with over-simplification or avoidance of the issues that divide us from the Baptists, with ridicule directed at those who might oppose such a 'unity' meeting, including a retread of the old joke about those who thought they were the only ones in heaven. The Baptists really got a kick out of that one. Over and over he stressed that the problem of disunity was not doctrinal, but resulted from arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom of God and stubborn, hardheaded Christians who refuse to get along. Since the Baptists have always been willing to recognize any who claimed faith in Christ as a Christian, who do you suppose he was talking about? . . . He told that audience of precious lost souls

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that they were all going to get to heaven. He told them that unity already existed, we just had to preserve it.” (June edition, 1995).

It is more than curious to me that Brite and others at Oak Hills Church of Christ evidently have **no problem** worshipping with Max and his false teaching of unity in diversity. It is amazing to read of the answer which brother Brite gave on the question about baptism which I had asked and yet see him embrace Lucado and the Oak Hills congregation (*The reader is referred to pages 48-49 where Brite answered certain questions put to him*). Brite stated that he believes that water baptism is for the remission of sins, yet his preacher insists on fellowshiping those who do not believe this (denominationalists). Will brother Brite seek to correct brother Lucado and then if repentance is not forthcoming, separate himself from such a foolish one? Afterall, did not Jesus teach that if the blind follow the blind they shall **both** fall into the ditch? Did not John teach the sinfulness of bidding Godspeed to false teachers? (cf. 2 Jn. 9-11). Did not the apostle Paul teach to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them (cf. Eph. 5:11)? Associate Editor of **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**, brother **David P. Brown**, had written the editorial of that June/1995 issue of *CFTF* which was entitled, “**Max Lucado, Prince of Apostates.**” In his excellent editorial Brown exposes Lucado with fact and yet in kindness, saying, “The abundance of evidence proving that Lucado has made shipwreck of the faith (I Timothy 1:19) has been available for several years . . . However, because people see what they want to see, adequate evidence and credible witnesses have little to do with conclusions and positions drawn

and held by them . . . In 1991 on pages 113-120 of his book, **Behold The Pattern, Goebel Music** well documented Lucado's chicanery as well as his vain attempts to defend his belief and conduct. The evidence contained therein dates back to early 1989." Brother Brown then proceeds to mention Lucado's reference to **Chuck Swindol** as "a Christian writer," Lucado's teaching that the New Testament is *not* a divine blueprint, that he fellowships Roman Catholics, and that he has co-authored a book entitled **Christ in Easter** with sectarians **Charles Colson, Billy Graham**, et al. It seems it is totally within the realm of this book to at least refer to such an obvious inconsistency when one will argue that he believes that water baptism is for the remission of sins, yet sit week after week at the feet of Max Lucado, the "Prince of the Apostates." I sincerely hope that brother Brite will see the error of his way and repent before it is everlasting too late. Brother Brite, if you have the health to read this, I plead with you, it is not too late!

Not Out Of The General Fund Brite Says

Brite states that "perhaps the way to remove your objections to the situation at Oak Hills would be to inform you that the funds for the construction of our multi-purpose building did not come out of the general fund of the congregation, but were given separate and apart from the regular contribution by the membership." My question to this revelation from brother Brite at this late date in the discussion is why did Oak Hills do that? Afterall, if Oak Hills believes as Brite has been arguing throughout his three previous letters **that a building may scripturally be built with the intention to play basketball to reach the spiritually lost out of the Lord's treasury**, why did

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he and the others agree to do it “separate and apart from the regular contribution”? Additionally, if *this* collection was ever placed into the church treasury at any time, then it became the Lord’s money and the issue remained the same. Is it not obvious that Brite (and those of his mentality) considers this but an optional matter? I have proven from the New Testament that it is **not** an optional matter.

I want to reiterate that the article in *CFTF* in the Oct. 1993 edition dealt with the single concept of the question of — May the church build a gym (for sports’ activities alone) out of the Lord’s treasury? Throughout this entire letter-writing-campaign (debate) brother Brite has desired to drag me into his discussion of the combination gym/church meeting house. I was unaware of the name of Oak Hills Church of Christ (and their building) when I wrote the article which so stirred brother Brite’s dander.

I also believe in good stewardship in building meeting houses. Brite’s charging me with agreeing with the poor stewardship of those connected with a building in Dallas (whatever building he is discussing) because it has “permanent pews” is a straw man argument. Trying to label faithful brethren as *anti-portable pews* simply because we are seeking to keep the priorities of the Lord’s church straight is untrue and unprofitable. This is but a diverting of the issue and certainly putting words in my mouth.

I agree that there can be abuses of the Lord’s money in the construction of a “traditional” use building.

TWO QUESTIONS BRITE DECIDED TO ANSWER

Brite sought to answer two questions that I had asked him which he failed to answer, but I wondered why he chose not to answer other crucial questions. *First*, he states that he does not believe in “the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the present age.” *Secondly*, Brite’s view of “special holy days” (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.) is characteristic of a liberal mind-set. He stated:

“I believe that the observance of special days is not relevant to the question of salvation, so long as the believer is fully convinced in his/her own mind of why they do or do not observe certain days. (Romans 14:5).”

So, based on Brite’s statement, if one believes that Christ was born on December 25 and wishes to observe it *as Christ’s birthday* (with a special *religious* significance) along with the rest of the world, then he may do it with God’s blessing.

Again, based on Brite’s statement, if one “is fully convinced in his/her own mind” that Easter dates the celebration of the day of the resurrection of Christ, then along with the rest of the world he may observe it with God’s blessing.

When subjectivism becomes the rule on matters, then *what the individual **thinks*** becomes the law! [Does the lesson of Naaman of 2 Kings 5:11 mean anything to these brethren? (“**Behold, I thought**” — & connect this with

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Rom. 15:4)]. However, the observance of special religious holy days established by men is unauthorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17; I Pe. 4:11).

The Christian may enjoy a national holiday, while rejecting the unscriptural *religious* significance the world places upon such a day (the author agrees with the excellent explanation and sentiment about such days found in **Questions And Answers**, Freed-Hardeman Lectures, Guy N. Woods. 1976. pgs. 203 & top of page 204).

Suppose one decides today that “so long as the believer is fully convinced in his/her own mind” that he may observe the Sabbath Day as did the Jews, would Romans 14:13 prevent brother Brite from “judging” those who hold to such? Paul taught that certain holy days are unauthorized, no matter what one is fully convinced of in his own mind! (cf. Colossians 2:16-17). The Romans chapter 14 passage refers to optional matters, not obligatory matters.

My prayer and plea is that men may abide in the doctrine of Christ, turning neither to the left (*liberalism - loosing where God has not loosed*), nor to the right (*anti-ism - binding where God has not bound*) — 2 John 9-11. Only then will the church stay on the course and mission God alone has designed. I conclude with the following excellent article written in 1981 by a brother and friend known for his commitment to world evangelism. Will elders of the church listen to his passionate plea made over 15 years ago? ■

Church Financed Gymnasiums — Is It Scriptural?

“Church Gymnasiums

Jim Waldron

According to the *World Book Encyclopedia* a gymnasium is a special room or building for instruction and practice in physical training. The word gymnasium comes to us from the Greek language. In ancient Greece the word was applied to public places set aside for athletic sports. The first gymnasium built in the United States was built at Amherst College in 1860. Gyms, as they are commonly called, are now found on the grounds of practically all schools and colleges in this country. Besides this, many organizations such as the Y.M.C.A.'s and certain churches have built gyms. It is to the question of the churches of Christ building gymnasiums that we now direct our attention.

The work of the church of Christ is to preach the gospel to the whole earth (Mt. 28:18-20, Mk. 16:15-16). That is the salvation of souls through evangelism. Saving the lost also involves the edifying or perfecting of those who are converted by means of evangelism, even as it is written: 'Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up even as also ye do' (1 Th. 5:11). This building up or edifying was and is to be done through exhortation just as Barnabas exhorted new saints in Antioch to 'cleave unto the Lord' (Acts 11:23). The third thing the church is authorized to do in its work of saving the lost is benevolence. For James says, 'Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world' (James 1:27).

A careful search of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament reveals that the church is to be totally absorbed in seeking and saving the lost and that evangelism, edification, and the work of ministry (benevolence) are the only authorized means of so doing (see Eph. 4:12). The church is no more authorized to make recreation and athletics a part of her work than she is to make instrumental music a part of her worship. Note what **B.C. Goodpasture** once wrote on this very point:

"For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do, and it should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly, as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah, will it want to turn from its proper course to relatively unimportant matters. Imagine Paul selecting and training a group of brethren to compete in the Isthmian games! Of his work at Corinth he said: 'I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and his crucified.'"

The World Information Bank maintained by the Webb Chapel church in Dallas reports that the churches of Christ have fewer than 500 missionaries serving on foreign fields, while the Mormons and 'Jehovah's Witnesses' number their foreign workers in the thousands. When we are doing so very little to reach . . . lost souls of this world, how can we turn the resources of the church to secularism of athletics and recreation? There needs to be a renewal of commitment to 'hold the pattern of sound words' (2 Tim. 1:13) in reference to the church of the Lord Jesus.

When Christian parents plan recreation or athletics in a Christ-like atmosphere for their children, it is a fine thing. Such secular responsibilities fall on the home and family. However, we are at present in the churches of Christ in danger of perverting the work and responsibility the Lord has given his people to do in advancing the kingdom. In many places, the situation with the church is very similar to the situation described by Ezekiel just prior to Jerusalem's fall to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The prophet said of Jerusalem's leaders: 'They have made no distinction between the holy and the common' (Ezek. 22:26).

The work of the church of our Lord Jesus is a holy thing, and it ought not to be perverted by getting the church into the business of providing and promoting athletics and recreation by building gymnasiums and such like. We ought to do as Ezekiel said would be done in the restoration, 'teach my (God's) people the difference between the holy and the common' (Ezek. 44:23), that is — teach them what God has authorized the church to do whether it is in the area of the worship or the work of the church."

— written from Hong Kong at the time, as published in **The Restorer**, Gary Workman, Editor. Vol. 1, February 1981, NO. 3. Adapted and Used by Permission.