I have read with more than passing interest and a wide variety of reactions an article in the Saturday Evening Post of June 3rd. In it Philip S. Rose draws a sensational picture of Dr. George S. Benson, president of Harding College, as the “Arkansas Crusader.” Now there are some things about both Dr. Benson and Harding College that I frankly do not like, but I do not believe that this dislike is violent enough to make me abnormally caustic in my personal appraisal of an unusual situation among us. Indeed, I would have to veer far to the left in the way of criticism to balance the Post’s excursion to the right in the way of praise. It is understood that there are some things involved in this situation that interest some of us immensely; things the Post knows nothing about, and cares nothing about, since “The Churches of Christ” are just a vague movement “more frequently called the Campbellites.” This is not a criticism of the Post on my part but an explanation that the Post is looking at Dr. Benson and Harding College from one angle and I am shooting at them from another. The Post bombards them with bouquets; I’ll probably hurl a brickbat or so before I finish. Really, the Post has done such a swell job of praising our “Arkansas Crusader” that I feel no impulse whatever to add anything to it, but on the other hand feel perfectly justified in damping the fire with a bit of cold water. I think it is burning too fiercely for either Dr. Benson’s good or that of the little college he is the big president of.

First, it may be well to take a look at the picture of Dr. Benson drawn by the enthusiastic Mr. Rose.

“George Stuart Benson came back from China to put a small country college on the map and found there was a bigger job that needed doing first.”

It was the “doing” of this “bigger job” that won the big president of “a small country college” his nation-wide notoriety. It was not the conversion of sinners or the extension of the borders of the kingdom of heaven; it was arousing America to the danger of paralysis that was threatening “democracy and human liberty.” The difficulties that beset the college were only “local.” He could not do much with them until he administered treatment to the whole nation first. “He vowed to himself that he would do what he could to help arouse America.” He did not keep his vows to himself for long. He first stunned the “House Ways and Means Committee” and all the reporters present with his wisdom. They were almost speechless, asking only a very few questions, but let loose a torrent of publicity for Dr. Benson and his suggestions as soon as they could contact their various papers. It “turned out to be something of a triumph” for Dr. Benson. This tidbit of publicity gave the doctor a voracious appetite, for more. It really tasted good.

“One success, no matter how spectacular, Dr. Benson well knew, did not constitute a campaign ....

Dr. Benson had demonstrated that he is no amateur in the highly competitive field of publicity.

But welcome as this first year of publicity had been, Benson realized that it was only the frosting on the cake. It was not sufficient to impress his ideas upon a nation of 130,000,000 people. To accomplish that result would require a well-organized, continuous campaign. And to be effective, the campaign he had in mind must include newspapers, radio and public addresses. . . .”

So the crusading wonder of the State of Arkansas took to the country newspapers and various radio stations and finally crashed the Saturday Evening Post. And there are new worlds looming in view to conquer in the crusade to save “democracy and human liberty.”

“Benson’s enormous popularity with people in many walks of life-farmers, business and professional men and factory workers—has not escaped the attention of the political slate makers in his state. He could probably be elected to any state office he might choose, a circumstance which the politicians recognized by offering him the best they had, the governorship. They suggested also that he might aspire to the high office of United States senator.”

We are told that this “tempting opportunity” was blushingly turned down by the modest president of the little college. He obviously prefers to be a big frog in a little pond, at least for the time being. Of course if the pressure is persistent, our Arkansas Caesar may finally succumb to having the crown placed on his able brow. Then what in the world will Harding College do? Possibly they can find a crumb of comfort in the thought that what Harding has lost, Arkansas and the nation have gained! However, Harding’s patriotism has a few yellow spots on it, as we shall note a little later on in this essay.

Let us see if we can find something in Dr. Benson’s background to account for his uncanny insight into the nation’s needs, socially, politically and economically. He left this country for China in the year of our Lord 1925, when we had a Republican president and the nation was “sound,” its people independent and employed and “democracy and human liberty” sitting high in the saddle and riding fast.
He was then twenty-seven years old, with a wisdom no doubt far beyond his years. He was not in this country when the great depression hit us. More’s the pity, for had he been here it likely wouldn’t have happened! But he got back about 1936 and got the shock of his life over the paralysis that hadsettled upon our nation after he left. So it was up to him to correct it. So he “vowed to himself that he would do what he could to help arouse America.” The upshot of it is that they are about to make an Arkansas governor or United States senator out of him and rob Harding College of its great president. And even then it is likely that he could not swing the nation entirely from the path of its peril. He might have to have just a wee bit of scotching from Senator O’Daniel of Texas. It looks as though Senator O’Daniel is also going to have some trouble keeping out of the draft for President or something bigger than he is. He also knows the value of publicity. I’m not much of a politician but from my seat in the bleachers, I’m not expecting either George Benson or W. Lee O’Daniel to knock a home run as a national saviour. As it looks from here Lee has a slight edge on George “in the highly competitive field of publicity.” He has him a hill-billy band and can write poetry. But give George a little more time. He hasn’t been out of China long, you know, and even in so short a time has “demonstrated that he is no amateur in the highly competitive field of publicity.” He is not apt to overlook any possibilities in the “field of publicity.”

In the midst of this dizzy publicity, we can be pardoned if we ask some questions and do a little speculating. This vast amount of publicity for the big president, with a modest amount thrown in for the little college, may be due to demonstrated genius on his part but if it is I have overlooked something. Some of us just can’t see it. I confess that I am a bit puzzled just here. I and some others are wondering. Can it be that the notorious promoter from New Jersey His urday Evening Post is not particularly interested in this remote past he was a pre-millennialist. Of course, the Saters. He has “changed” now but at one time in the not too construlity is rather well known. Some of us have not for- tion. He in publicity! Sure, he would scornfully deny such a sugges- ted the possibility that some interested in this dizzy publicity, we can be pardoned if we ask some questions and do a little speculating. This vast amount of publicity for the big president, with a modest amount thrown in for the little college, may be due to demonstrated genius on his part but if it is I have overlooked something. Some of us just can’t see it. I confess that I am a bit puzzled just here. I and some others are wondering. Can it be that the notorious promoter from New Jersey His urday Evening Post is not particularly interested in this remote past he was a pre-millennialist. Of course, the Saters. He has “changed” now but at one time in the not too construlity is rather well known. Some of us have not for- tion. He in publicity! Sure, he would scornfully deny such a sugges-

We have assurance that “Despite the long hours of sweaty work which have gone into his crusade for bed-rock Americanism, President Benson has not neglected Harding College. The school and what it stands for are close to his heart.”

As the great physician for a sick America, “No one was better qualified than Doctor Benson to evaluate and diagnose these symptoms.” It appears that he had two patients on his hands at the same time, both in a rather bad way. Harding College was sick nigh unto death when he got to it. It appears that the doctor got there just in time.

“Oh, obviously, there was enough work involved in the reorganization of the college and its financial affairs to tax the abilities of any executive.”

The ability of this “bed-rock” American was equal to the Herculean task of saving America and making a convalescent out of Harding College. What a man! But what was the matter with Harding College? Brother Armstrong had been its president for a great many years. What Dr. Benson saw “as his first discovery,” and it was “obvious,” is a serious reflection on the administration that preceded him. Nobody did anything much right until Dr. Benson got on the job! According to my limited information Dr. Armstrong had more confidence in Providence than he had in executive ability. He was somewhat inclined to let the Lord run it. Brother Benson “obviously” saw that whoever was running it, he needed a man of his calibre to help him, for it was a job “to tax the abilities of any executive.” Brother Armstrong was inclined to feel that if the Lord was with him, it was sufficient with “no endowment, no financial angel and no certain source of income.” It appears that Dr. Benson has more respect for endowments, financial angels and certain sources of income. At least he has gone in strong for reorganization and publicity. He has “demonstrated ability as a financial manager.” But with all this his salary is “only $1800 a year” and “Harding-faculty people with Ph.D. degrees are willing to spend their lives back there in the country teaching for thirty-five dollars a week.” It seems to me that with all his financial and executive ability he ought to manage somehow to pay his teachers better than that. We are not asking him to tell us who his “financial angel” is or who they are, but everybody knows that he is not carrying on this crusade to save America, with its expensive advertising, on a salary of “only $1800 a year.” Somebody is paying for it. Even if “Benson seems uninterested in money for its own sake,” pretense is not palatable unless it is very skillfully camouflaged.

Some years ago I heard a president of a school describe the sacrifices he and his teachers were making. He said that he had been president for lo, these many years, had received no salary at all and in addition had contributed some thousands of dollars of his own money to the work. In my simplicity I asked him how he managed to do it. His reply was that “The Lord has been good to me.” I explained it to a fellow-soldier in the army of the Lord and got a blunt rejoinder: “He is just a big liar.” Of course, I wouldn’t know. Maybe the Lord was good to him. But when men publish their ability and unselfishness, they should be careful not to leave the wrong impression on simple people like me and a lot of others.

We learn some interesting things from the Post article which brings up something else besides:
“Within three years, Benson had cleared the college of debt, reorganized the institution, paving the way for the far-flung crusade of Americanism in which he and the college are now involved.

We teach the sanctity of life, the dignity of labor, the importance of decency and good citizenship.”

The thought that Harding college is in a crusade for Americanism and good citizenship is intriguing to me. My impression is that it is a hothead of conscientious objector sentiment. Sure, Dr. Benson told the Ways and Means Committee that “This country must prepare to defend itself against any aggressor nation,” and some Harding college students turned down money from the government that “might better be used for military purposes.” Others invested some money they had made “in War Bonds and presented them to the college treasurer.” This looks good and no doubt is good! At least it makes good publicity! But if Harding college is not shot through and through with the sentiment that Christians should take no active part in government affairs, and cannot bear arms under any circumstances, then I am sadly misinformed. In a late issue of the Firm Foundation there is an advertisement of Harding College. It stresses endowment, new buildings and a “strengthening of faculty.” Two “outstanding men” are to be added to the faculty. Both are conscientious objectors, and I am wondering what they think of Dr. Benson’s publicity stunts in behalf of “bedrock Americanism.” And I wonder what he thinks of one of them.

“James D. Bales, who is now completing requirements for his Ph.D. in the University of California, is expected to join the faculty in December of this year.”

James D. Bales has recently published a book setting forth and endorsing the position of the conscientious objector. He insists that a Christian should not bear arms, or become part of the armed forces, even as a so-called “noncombatant,” that he must not put on a uniform or drill; that he must not contribute directly or indirectly to any war effort by anybody for any purpose. If necessary he should go to jail or die if that is the alternative. “Bed-rock Americanism,” indeed! The sources of the Post’s information about Dr. Benson and Harding College did not reveal this. Bales is, according to rumor, in line for the head of the Bible Department in Harding College. The Post and some others might be shocked to find out just how much of this sort of sentiment there is in Harding College. It just doesn’t jibe with crusading for “bed-rock Americanism,” and buying bonds and suggesting to the government to use its funds for “military purposes,” and exhorting the government to “prepare to defend itself against any aggressor.” Are Christian citizens? Can they evade some of the righteous demands of citizenship?

Finally, Dr. Benson

“wants America to rededicate itself to human freedom, to divest itself of all foreign ideologies and resume its march forward. This is his platform. Win, lose or draw, he is in the fight to the end.”

What some of us want to know is this: when the doctor gets America aroused, reeducated, divested and resumed, will it still be the devil’s government which Christians cannot afford to defend or promote? Dr. James D. Bales who is to “strengthen” the Harding faculty right away will doubtless teach Harding students the contents of his late book. If Dr. Benson starts a fight in the school, he stands a chance to “lose or draw” right in his own faculty. Some of his own faculty members could not vote for or against him should he run for governor or senator for they do not believe a Christian has a right to vote. I really do not think this is the Saturday Evening Post’s idea of good citizenship.

I really feel for the schools in the embarrassment some of their crackpots, mostly young preachers, are causing them in these critical times. Ones writes a book on “Can a Christian Kill For His Government?” Another sends out a tract ranting against aiding killers, meaning soldiers, our armed forces, by working in munitions factories, buying bonds or even giving them a cup of water. Here is a very Eair sample.

“And a third situation that may arise at the Judgment will be this. A Jap will be condemned to Hell. He will point his finger at some preacher and say, ‘I never heard the Gospel either. I was killed with the bomb that your War Bonds paid for. And it contained the iron sold from your backyard. And the powder was made from old grease which your wife saved in her kitchen and sold to the government to make a bomb with. And members of your congregation were working in the aircraft plant that made the plane that dropped the bomb which took me out of the world without one chance to hear the Gospel.”

Some brethren take the position that a Christian cannot kill but that he can help others do it, load their guns and carry them drinking water while they do it. Now is that in harmony with the scriptures?

The idea seems to be to let the Japs wreak their vengeance on this country and take all they want and it will increase their chances for heaven! This idiotic drivel and unpatriotic rot with a lot more like it may be ordered from the “A.C.C. Bookstore, Abilene, Texas.” The Abilene Christian College Press prints a lot of stuff like that, written by long-faced crackpots.

Of course, it is embarrassing to the school. The president, a swell fellow and personal friend of mine, does not believe what is dripping from the dwarfed minds of these youths of military age, who enjoy exemption as “ministers of the gospel,” and take advantage of it to attack the war effort. The Board of Trustees, I understand, are on record in full support of the government. It doesn’t do a school any good to be so compromised by the attitude of extremists and their unreasonable and unscriptural antics, that its patriotism becomes a question for debate or investigation by anybody. It is generally known that militant youngsters who carry on a war of words, both shrieked and written against buying war bonds and putting on a uniform are either in or came from “our” schools. One of them is to “strengthen” the faculty of Harding College next year. With the great President Benson crusading for “bed-rock Americanism” and Jim Bales coaching the students in “good citizenship,” Harding College ought to be a big college one of these days. Maybe they will make a big contribution toward ushering in the “millennium” which Brother Armstrong thinks may last two thousand years instead of just one.

Large numbers of American boys, Christians too, have gone directly from “our” schools into the armed forces of the country. They are neither hedging nor pussyfooting. They are not getting the “hand” they deserve from admin-
"This college is not a unit on the matter of objection. Like the church it is an individual affair and some of the faculty would no doubt be objectors, while others of us feel otherwise."

"This college" is not Abilene Christian College. "Others of us feel otherwise" includes the president himself. If our government, generals and soldiers were as timid and careful as some of our college administrations, the swastika would be waving over Washington and the Rising Sun over San Francisco. Then how would "others of us feel" and where would "our colleges" be? These silly boys who write that housewives should not sell grease to the government to make bombs with, nor give a drink of water to a soldier, must be coddled and handled very gingerly! They must be accorded the full monopoly among us on "agitating," except of course what "some of the faculty" feel inclined to do in the class room! Ugh!!

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The Janes Bequest

Dear Bro. Wallace:

In a recent issue of the Bible Banner you published a copy of the Janes Will. Since under the terms of that Will I am a beneficiary, that publicity has made it necessary that I publish a statement concerning my position on the premillennial question. I agree with you in that the brotherhood has the right to know what doctrine the preachers they support are teaching, whether it is of the Bible or not.

Inasmuch as my name appeared as a beneficiary under the Janes Will, I would like for all concerned to know that I do not intend to accept the bequest. And further that I do not believe nor understand the scriptures to teach the premillennial theory.

Sincerely in Christ,
Foy Short,
Box 243, Olla, La.

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The Norris-Wallace Debate

A full and complete account of hitherto unpublished facts concerning the great Fort Worth Debate of 1934.

Read the documentary evidence of Norris' duplicity and libelous perversions, together with the court orders restraining him from the fraudulent use of the manuscripts of the 1934 debate. Also up to the week developments resulting from his present challenges.

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THE NORRIS CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

For the past ten years J. Frank Norris, of Fort Worth, Texas, and Detroit, Michigan, has exhibited a bitterness unparalleled in the realm of religious polemics. His venom has exuded in both oral and written propaganda as he has relentlessly berated churches of Christ in general and Foy E. Wallace Jr., in particular. Had the victory in the Fort Worth debate a decade ago been his, why all of the raving and ranting in a manner little short of the maniacal all these ten years? Like Saul of Tarsus in one respect,smarting under the lash of defeat he is “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord.” Very definitely not like Saul in another respect, Norris has not “lived in all good conscience before God,” nor exercised himself “to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.” It is evident to all who are familiar with the course and conduct of J. Frank Norris in these things, and all matters to which they relate, that he has not acted in “good conscience,” nor could he conceivably convince himself that he could possibly conclude that he “verily thought” that he “ought to do” the things that he has been doing.

I. CHALLENGING THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Breaking out with a new fury a few weeks ago, Mr. Norris boasted that he had given the “Church Of Christ” such a “shellacking” in the Fort Worth debate that they did not want another. He averred that Wallace had been demoted, put on the shelf, and withal he could not even get the “Church Of Christ” to look like they expected. He had been led to believe that the churches of Christ in that age known to the whole world, both dictators such a “shellacking” in the Fort Worth debate that they did not want another. He averred that Wallace had been demoted, put on the shelf, and withal he could not even get the “Church Of Christ” to look like they expected. He had been led to believe that the churches of Christ in that age known to the whole world, both dictators and mighty, defying and demanding that he be met again in the polemic arena by a man of “national reputation” among the churches of Christ. Upon what meat has Caesar been feeding that he has grown so great! For ten years he has fed upon the meat of remorse and revenge and he seeks his satiation by maledictions.

When the churches of Christ in Oklahoma City, Dallas and Fort Worth, in a cool and even manner, accepted Mr. Norris’ latest challenges, it was the very thing that he least expected. He had been led to believe that the churches of Christ would not do it; he thought that they would not “agree on Wallace” and was foolish enough to believe that he could split the churches of Christ and drive a wedge in their ranks. He never had any idea of debating again; he has no idea of doing so now. Therefore, when his challenges were accepted in writing, with proper and manifold signatories, J. Frank Norris began to back-track, and is still crawfishing out of his own blatant boastings.

First, he declared that the “Church of Christ” did not want another debate — he could not dare them into one. Now, he turns it around, and with another tune he is saying that it seems that ‘The Church Of Christ’ wants to debate again — what a people, never satisfied, always wanting to debate, trying to force another debate on him, like they did the other time!

So, in order to escape the encirclement resulting from his own poor strategy, he now hides behind demands which he figured could not be met. First, he demanded that the “pastors” of the numerous churches of Christ must endorse the debate and the debater. When it began to appear to him that practically all of the preachers and churches would do that very thing, and with but little exception have already done so, this bold (?) challenger then changed his demand and said that a majority vote of all the churches of Christ in the city would be required! What a tactical strategist, the gentleman (?) is! He would have the churches of Christ to adopt “Baptist usage” of majority voting or he will not debate! That is not even good back-tracking, and is an insult to honorable crawfishing.

It would have been better for Mr. Norris to do as he did in reference to the Dallas debate ten years ago — just cancel it. We all know about that. Before the Fort, Worth debate was held, Mr. Norris wrote me and wired me that he wanted the second debate all arranged for and set, at Dallas, before the Fort Worth debate was held. We accepted his proposal. The Dallas churches agreed to it, endorsed me for his opponent and engaged the coliseum. But on the last day of the Fort Worth debate, after the Dallas debate had been publicly announced before that vast Fort Worth audience, Mr. Norris arose and cancelled the Dallas debate. When he was pressed to state his reason, his ridiculous excuse was that I had made some uncomplimentary remarks about his premillennial friends of the church of Christ!

But since Mr. Norris roars forth again with his challenges, it is altogether fair and reasonable that he should be reminded of his previous Dallas engagement and asked to make it good. And that is what the Dallas churches have done.

Furthermore, since the first debate was held in Fort Worth, Mr. Norris’ home city, it is also entirely reasonable and right that a second debate be held between us in Oklahoma City, my home city. That is what the churches in Oklahoma City think about it — and that is what they have asked.

The public no doubt would like to see these acceptances of Mr. Norris’ challenges. It is with pleasure that I submit them all, and with particular pride the endorsements from the churches where I live.

II. OKLAHOMA CITY SPEARS AS FOLLOWS

We submit first the letter from the Tenth & Francis church, where I have preached with considerable regularity for more than twenty years, and where I now, with my family, have membership. We offer next a letter from
the Capitol Hill church, established under my preaching twenty-one years ago, one of the best churches in Oklahoma City. This letter was voluntary and in addition to their signing of the statement in which the group of Oklahoma City churches joined.

** May 2, 1944

Dear Bro. Wallace:

Our attention has been called to the challenges of J. Frank Norris in his paper and over the radio for a debate with some man of “national reputation” among the churches of Christ. We observe that your name is being repeatedly mentioned in these challenges, and many references are being made to the debate which you had with Mr. Norris some years ago.

We hereby authorize you to accept Mr. Norris’ challenge for this debate. Inasmuch as the former debate was held in Ft. Worth, Mr. Norris’ home city, we propose that this debate be arranged for Oklahoma City, your home city, and that it be held in a public auditorium under terms and conditions to be agreed upon, and set forth in a legal contract to guarantee a correct report and publication of both sides of the debate.

We anticipate that it will probably be impossible for Mr. Norris to obtain the endorsement of a single Baptist Church in this city, but we are willing to waive that usual and proper procedure in order to enable you to meet his challenges in interest of the truth.

Faithfully and fraternally,

W. B. Barton; L. L. Estes; L. E. Diamond; A. W. Lee;
Elders, Tenth & Francis Church. Yater Tant, Minister,
Tenth & Francis Church.

** May 2, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

It is our understanding that Mr. J. Frank Norris of Ft. Worth, Texas, has been issuing challenges in his paper and over the radio for a debate with some well-known, representative man of the churches of Christ. It seems to us that the churches of Christ have been called upon in this challenge to defend the truth.

We are taking this means of letting you know that we are for you in accepting this challenge; and shall feel grateful to you for doing so.

It is generally known that the Capitol Hill Church of Christ sponsored the Wallace-Webber Debate in the Coliseum here in Oklahoma City, and we want the public to know that if proper arrangements can be made we stand ready to back you in the same way in a discussion with J. Frank Norris.

Fraternally Yours,

H. C. Harris; E. H. Messenger; A. D. Davis; Chas. N. Wilson; Elders, Capitol Hill Church. Hubert Roach, Minister, Capitol Hill Church.

May 8, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

We have seen the letter written to you by the Tenth and Francis congregation by which you are authorized to accept Mr. J. Frank Norris’ challenge for a debate with some representative man from the churches of Christ.

It is our feeling that Mr. Norris will withdraw his challenge and seek every way possible to avoid this debate, once he realizes that you are the man he will have to meet. But if there is any way at all by which you can get him to meet you either in Ft. Worth, Dallas, or Oklahoma City, we want you to know that you have the unqualified endorsement and support of the churches of Christ in Oklahoma City.

Faithfully yours,

Capitol Hill Church of Christ, By Hubert Roach.
Culbertson Heights Church of Christ, By Jno. H. Banner.
19th & Byers Church of Christ, By J. M. Gillpatrick.
31st & Blackwelder Church of Christ, By Glendon W. Walker.
Southwest Church of Christ, By T. J. Ruble.

III THE DALLAS CHURCHES ARE UNANIMOUS

There are twenty-one churches of Christ in Dallas, and I have twenty-one letters of personal endorsement and acceptance of the J. Frank Norris challenge. Space in this issue forbids the printing in full of all these letters. The letters are not identical, but similar in content. Submitted here is the letter from the Pearl & Bryan Streets church, followed by the list of twenty-churches with the names of the elders and the preachers signing them. It ought to satisfy J. Frank Norris, if endorsements are what he is waiting on.

** May 15, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

It is our understanding that J. Frank Norris has challenged the churches of Christ for a discussion. This challenge has been published in his paper and broadcast over the radio. He also demands an opponent of national reputation, one who is nationally known and whose position on the points of differences involved has been published in some of his publications.

Since the Cause of the Lord Jesus Christ is involved in this challenge, we join the other churches of the city of Dallas in inviting the discussion to Dallas. We, with the other churches of the city, whose endorsements are herewith made known, take pleasure in cooperating fully in this proposed discussion.

We believe the discussion should be held in a neutral auditorium, one that will accommodate the vast audiences that will be certain to attend all the sessions.

We are convinced too, you are more than able to meet all of Mr. Norris’s demands and under the present circumstances, you are the logical choice among the brethren to discuss the issues involved. We therefore take pleasure in commending you — without reservation, for the work in this discussion. We promise to lend every reasonable assistance in making the debate a happy realization.

Sincerely,

S. H. Crawford; W. G. McConnell; T. C. Walker; C. T. Ward; J. C. Jackson; Elders, Pearl & Bryan Streets Church. Coleman Overby, Minister, Pearl & Bryan Streets Church.

LIST OF DALLAS CHURCHES ENDORSING THE WALLACE-NORRIS DEBATE

PEARL AND BRYAN

OWENWOOD
Coleman T. Fikes, John A. White, James Taggart, Andrew Davis, and Cline B. Drake, Minister.
The Dallas churches are unanimous. What an outburst in the face of J. Frank Norris in answer to his challenge. They have not forgotten that he wanted a Dallas debate—that is, he did want one, before the Fort Worth debate. He arbitrarily, without cause or sensible excuse, cancelled it. Now the Dallas churches are very properly replying to his challenges by demanding that he come on over to Dallas and make good the debate he cancelled. We promise him a warm reception if and when he comes. He should either do it or blush and hush.

IV. FIFTEEN FORT WORTH CHURCHES GO ON RECORD

In 1934 the Fort Worth debate was endorsed by ten churches of Christ. That was acceptable to Mr. Norris then. Today, in the year 1944, fifteen churches of Christ have accepted his challenge. That ought to be acceptable to him now. Who is he to demand so much when he has presented no endorsements of himself—not even one Baptist church. Perhaps, his Fundamentalist Baptist Church would endorse the debate and endorse him to do the debating—but as yet we have no such endorsement. It is by no means certain that his own church wants the debate. Would they “vote” for it? Do they want it? Or, is Norris bluffing and brow-beating?

Be that as it may, the Fort Worth churches have called the bluffs of J. Frank Norris. We give below the joint letter of the Polytechnic and Castleberry Heights churches, signed by their elders and preachers. This letter is followed by the list of endorsements of the other churches and their preachers—fifteen in number. Has there ever been in all history of religious debates such an overwhelming acceptance of a man’s challenge for debate?

Dear Brother Wallace:

J. Frank Norris, of the Fundamentalist Baptist Church, has issued challenges to the churches of Christ, of this city, to meet him in debate. These challenges have gone to thousands by means of his radio preaching and his paper, “Fundamentalist.”

We believe it is our responsibility to God, to this generation and to the generations which are to follow, to do something about these challenges. Hence, the Polytechnic and Castleberry churches request you to meet Mr. Norris in debate, if fair and honest arrangements can be made.

Mr. Norris wants to meet a nationally known debater; you meet this demand. He has further requested that the debater for the churches of Christ be a man who has works in print on the subjects to be discussed. He says that fairness demands this because his speeches and writings on such subjects are in print. Thus, Mr. Norris should be glad to meet you again because he has the speeches you made in the debate ten years ago unless he has destroyed them; because no member of the church of Christ was ever allowed to see them. If that is not enough to satisfy that demand, Mr. Norris may get your many other works which are available to all. You are definitely the man to meet him.

It is gratifying to note Mr. Norris’ insistence for fairness relative to the published works of the debaters. Fairness also demands some other things; some of which are: First, it be held in a neutral place. Second, each debater is interested not in the people’s money but in their hearing the truth. Fourth, all speeches be taken by dictaphone, phonograph records, or by a staff of reputable court reporters. Fifth, the debate be published by a neutral publishing company. Sixth, the agreement for the debate be made a legal contract and notarized. If Mr. Norris is wanting a fair and honorable discussion, he will be happy to comply with the same. If Mr. Norris is not willing to comply with such just and impartial conditions, it will be evident to the whole world that he used the wrong word in demanding
fairness and that he is not interested in an honorable discussion. If he debates, truth will triumph just as it did in 1934; if he does not, it will be an admission on his part that he cannot in a fair and honest manner defend the doctrines he advocates and the church of which he is the founder.

Fraternally yours,

Elders, Polytechnic church of

Christ:

T. B. Echols

G. W. Mitchell

J. L. Stephenson

J. H. Richards

S. J. Lightfoot

J. A. Swaim

C. V. Hale

A. H. Norvelle

Minister:

Leroy Brownlow, Cleo E. Jones

LIST OF FORT WORTH CHURCHES ENDORSING THE WALLACE-NORRIS DEBATE

POLYTECHNIC


RIVERSIDE


CASTLEBERRY

H. Hooper, W. A. Gardner, A. W. Pringle, Elders and Cleo E. Jones, Minister.

CALMONT AVE.


NORTHSIDE


CENTRAL


ARLINGTON HEIGHTS


WHITE SETTLEMENT


SAMUELS AVENUE

Elders: F. E. Stowe, Jeff Hall, J. K. Bentley, Don C. Bentley, Minister.

HIGHLAND PARK


HANDLEY

Elders: Mead Reno, Earl Grady, Otis Thomas. John W. Pigg, Minister.

BIRDVILLE


WASHINGTON HEIGHTS


LAKE WORTH


ROSEN HEIGHTS


* * *

In usual procedure it is altogether sufficient for one recognized congregation to accept a challenge for debate, select the man they desire to represent them, and endorse him for the debate. Mr. Norris has no more right to demand that all the churches of Christ sign up endorsements for a debate than we would have to demand that all the Baptist churches sign up endorsements of him for the debate. How many Baptist churches in Fort Worth can J. Frank Norris get to endorse him for this debate?

It is obvious that Norris is seeking a way out to save his face. He sees a chance to do it by demanding that every church of Christ in Fort Worth must sign an endorsement of the debate. In his frantic search for a way out — are two or three churches of Christ in Fort Worth, and a few of the preachers, going to help him? It is not necessary for every church to sign the endorsement, but shame on those congregations who refuse to do so under such circumstances as these — and upon the preachers who have influenced them not to do so. Their action will go on record and will rise up to witness against them in the days to come.

V. CONCERNING CONDITIONS OF DEBATE

It has been the universal expression from all concerned that in the event this debate should materialize there must be a guarantee of orderly procedure. No one has forgotten the unfair advantages taken by Mr. Norris in his own auditorium, under his own dictatorship, in 1934. The public knows about the “doors” and the admission charges. The audiences witnessed Mr. Norris’ arbitrary rule of the sessions, accepting no rules and regarding none. Nor have any of us forgotten Mr. Norris’ threat, when in his outburst of anger and in white rage, he bellowed that he had one hundred armed men planted there ready for action at his call. He thought it would scare us — but it didn’t. Nor have we forgotten the scheming and trickery in reference to the stenographers, his public pledge to supply us with a full and complete copy of the transcript of the debate for corrections and approval, and his subsequent refusal absolutely to do so. It was Mr. Norris himself who prevented the publication of the debate, his libelous oral and printed falsehoods to the contrary notwithstanding. The evidence is abundant that J. Frank Norris never intended to permit the publication of the Fort Worth debate as it was delivered. We have in our possession the documents and letters showing that the very offers which he says in his book were declined were actually not declined at all. Those letters were all answered, his offers accepted, and he paid no attention to them. His offers were made to print in his book, not to be answered and accepted by us — and his disgraceful book was on the press being printed all the time that he pretended to be negotiating with us.

Therefore, everybody will be interested in the kind of a contract and agreement which should be entered into in the event of another debate. No one could expect us to trust J. Frank Norris. That he must be made a party to a legal contract, if and when he comes through on his challenges this time, goes without saying. I am willing for all the people, including the Baptists, to see the sort of a contract that I am willing to enter. In fact, the following contract already bears my signature, sealed by a notary, and is waiting for the notarized signature of J. Frank Norris. If he does not sign it, everybody will know why — including the Baptists.
THE CONTRACT
THE STATE OF TEXAS,
COUNTY OF DALLAS.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:
WHEREAS, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas, do not agree as to the teachings of the Holy Bible on the propositions hereinafter stated, and
WHEREAS, they have mutually agreed to meet for a discussion of said propositions: the said Foy E. Wallace, Jr., representing the Church of Christ and J. Frank Norris representing the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, and the Fundamentalist Baptist, and
WHEREAS, before said discussion is held, it is mutually desired, that the method of holding said discussion and the place of holding said discussion and the manner of publication and sale of said discussion be mutually agreed upon, prior to the time and place of said discussion; the time and place to be mutually agreed upon later.

NOW, THEREFORE, KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

1. Propositions
That the proposition for said discussion and debate shall be the same propositions debated by said Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and said J. Frank Norris in the Norris-Wallace Debate which was held in the auditorium of the First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, November 4, 5, 6, 1934; said propositions are as follows:

PROPOSITION NO. 1.
The Bible teaches that Baptism, to the penitent believer, is essential to his salvation from past or alien sins.
Wallace affirms; and Norris denies.

PROPOSITION NO. 2.
The Bible teaches that a Child of God, one who has been saved by the blood of Christ, can so sin as to be finally lost.
Wallace affirms; and Norris denies.

PROPOSITION NO. 3
The Bible teaches that Jews, as a nation, will return to Palestine when Christ returns to the earth and then will be converted to Christ.
~ Norris affirms; and Wallace denies.

PROPOSITION NO. 4.
The Bible teaches that Christ will establish a literal throne in Jerusalem, and will reign over the whole earth for a period of one thousand years.
Norris affirms; and Wallace denies.

2. Place Of Debate
It is mutually agreed that the place of said discussion shall be in a public auditorium which shall be neutral in said debate; control of said auditorium and the admission to said discussion to be open and free to the public, and the doors open for the public and the audience under the control of the moderators, as hereinafter stipulated.

3. Moderators
It is mutually agreed that the debate shall be presided over and conducted by three moderators; one moderator shall be chosen by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and one by J. Frank Norris, and the two moderators shall elect a third moderator, who shall preside at all meetings. The third moderator selected shall be neutral as to side, and shall be a man of, honorable, unquestioned fairness and integrity. This moderator shall have complete authority over the order and decorum throughout said discussions, both as to the speakers and to the audience. He shall have authority to suspend the debate or a participant if either participant shall conduct himself in a way or manner unbecoming or ungentlemanly. The moderators' decision shall be final in all questions of conduct of said debate, as herein provided.

4. Speeches
It is mutually agreed that there shall be two sessions on each proposition. At each session, each speaker shall be allowed two forty-five minute speeches alternately, and if he does not use the forty-five minutes in his opening discussion he shall nevertheless be allowed only forty-five minutes for his concluding speech of said session. In other words, each speech by each party shall be limited to forty-five minutes, which time must be used at the time designated or he forfeits the time not used.

5. Stenographic Report Of Debate
It is mutually agreed that this complete debate and the complete speeches of each debater shall be taken by dictaphone, if available, or by responsible firm of stenographic reporters, and if that is not available, then by three recognized court reporters; one to be selected by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., one by J. Frank Norris, and the two reporters shall select a third reporter, who together shall make all arrangements for a complete, accurate record of the debate, from beginning to end, and shall see to, supervise and actually take down and transcribe and type the complete discussions and proceedings of said debate from beginning to end.

6. Revision And Corrections
It is mutually agreed that after the debate and all discussions and procedure have been completely transcribed, and each party thereto, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and J. Frank Norris, shall be furnished the complete discussion of both sides fully transcribed, and each party shall be allowed a reasonable time, not exceeding sixty days, to make any corrections or changes of wording, citations, or authorities, and such other changes as to completely and accurately cover said discussions. It is further provided, that after each party has been furnished a complete transcription of said discussions, and after the speeches have been put in printer's type, each side shall be allowed to review the proofs in said form before the printing and publication of the debate. No new material shall be added to the transcribed discussions and no material changes made of original transcription, except as herein provided. It is further provided, that all references by the speakers to quotations, citations and authorities, shall be definite and specific, and only such definite, specific citations and quotations shall be incorporated into the transcription.

7. Publication Of Discussions
It is further provided that after each party has been furnished a complete transcription of the debate, if he fails or refuses, within sixty days to make his corrections, then and in that event, said transcription shall be taken as correct and shall be published in the form as transcribed by the reporters, and the reporters shall certify as to the correctness of said discussions as transcribed.

8. Publication Of Discussions
It is mutually agreed that the publication of this debate shall be placed in the hands of a neutral, responsible publisher, and the debate shall be published in accordance with the provisions of this contract. The moderators are hereby specially vested with the authority to make all necessary arrangements for the publication of the finished, transcribed debate with said publisher, and said debate shall be sold at publisher's cost, without profit to either Foy E. Wallace, Jr., or J. Frank Norris.
It is further especially agreed and understood that this discussion being solely for the purpose of obtaining a wide circulation of the complete arguments and speeches of each party hereto on the propositions herein stated, it is agreed that said debate shall be published at cost and sold at publisher's cost without profit to either party hereto, and the moderators are instructed to obtain as reasonable a price from the publisher of these discussions as possible, and said debate when published must be sold by said publisher to all persons, firms or corporations desiring to purchase same at the publisher's cost.

This contract is made in original and four copies and each is hereby declared to be an original for all legal purposes.

WITNESS the hand of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. at Temple, Texas, this 16th day of May, A. D., 1944.

FOY E. WALLACE, JR.

WITNESS the hand of J. Frank Norris at .................
Texas, this ............ day of ..................... A. D. 1944. (Unsigned)

THE STATE OF TEXAS,
COUNTY OF BELL.

BEFORE ME, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, on this day personally appeared Foy E. Wallace, Jr., known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration herein expressed.

‘GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE this the 16th day of May, A. D. 1944.

(SEAL)
Averlene Murphy,
Notary Public in and for Bell County, Texas.

THE STATE OF TEXAS,
COUNTY OF

BEFORE ME, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, on this day personally appeared J. Frank Norris, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

‘GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE this the .......... day of .........., A. D. 1944. (Unsigned)

Notary Public in and for ............ County, Texas.

Under the foregoing contract the moderators will have the power to specify the particular rules of order to govern the debate, whether Hedges Rules Of Logic or Roberts Rules Of Order, or other recognized rules of debate that any man who has any intention of conducting himself honorably and properly would be entirely willing to accept. I have signed the contract. Mr. Norris has not done so, though it has been presented to him. He prefers to talk around instead of writing his name down on the dotted lines.

VI. “WHY THERE WILL BE NO DEBATE”

The above heading is found in a recent issue of the Norris publication. Running true to form Norris is publishing letters addressed to “All The Pastors Of The Church Of Christ, Fort Worth, Texas” but does not publish the replies to his letters. He says in his paper: “The time has long passed for a reply and no answer has come.” But the facts are that his letter was answered. What happened to the answer? Believe it or not, the answer to his letter was refused by Mr. Norris. The answer was sent to him in registered mail with return receipt. It came back to the Fort Worth preachers marked “REFUSED.” Norris refused the answer to his letter and put in his paper: “The time has long passed for a reply and no answer has come.” Mr. Bogard says Norris exaggerates, but there is a word in our language with fewer syllables that spells what he does! The envelope bearing the mark “REFUSED” is being held for use at the proper time and in the proper way.

When Norris was writing those letters back in 1934-35 making what he called certain “offers” he did not make them to be accepted, and did not wait to see if they would be accepted. He simply printed his letters to us in his book, ignoring the answers, and put beneath the printed letter that they were “declined.” He wrote the letters for his book — not for acceptance, and knew all of the time that he would ignore any answer to them. Precisely the same thing is being done in this instance. He is writing his letters for publication purposes, prints them in his paper, refuses the answer, and lets the Baptists think that his “offers” are “declined.” The perfidy of such conduct on the part of a leader of a religious movement is unspeakable. It can be explained only on the ground that he believes the Baptist doctrine of hereditary total depravity and the impossibility of apostasy.

No one will deny the fact that there are circumstances under which a man may very properly “refuse” a letter or communication, and turn it back. But certainly not when he has sent a letter to the responding parties demanding an answer. Norris did that; and when the answer came to his own letter, he “refused” it, but said in his paper that “the time has long passed for a reply and no answer has come.” But the answer did come. A photograph of that letter, with the envelope marked “Refused,” will be interesting.

After publishing the above falsehood Norris then inserts a paragraph in his paper under the heading “Why There Will Be No Debate.” The reason is, he says, that certain “laymen” in the churches of Christ in Fort Worth have told him that they do not want a debate! It is expected that there would be a few such “laymen” in Fort Worth or any other city. But does that dispose of the challenges of J. Frank Norris? Not on his life! Fifteen churches of Christ in Fort Worth, in due order and proper process, have accepted his challenges over the signatures of the entire eldership of those churches, together with the signatures of their preachers. But what some “laymen” have said Norris
I propose now to bring out a Special Edition of the
failed. He will only lose more, if he has any left to lose.
His bold challenges have been exposed as bluff and bluster.

Part to stage a come-back in Fort Worth and regain a part
he backed out. This has been a desperate effort on his
own challenges. Something happened that he did not ex-
cepted by fifteen recognized churches of Christ in that city,
challenge in Fort Worth, a challenge that has been ac-
 chooses as he did the Dallas engagement.

But suppose none of the churches in Fort Worth should
accept the Norris challenges for debate — does that dispose
of his challenge? It does not. The Dallas churches have
accepted his challenge unanimously. Remember, he can-
celled the other one in Dallas. Then, there is Oklahoma
City. We are waiting for him there — and ready to give
him what he is asking for. If he insists that the debate
must be held in Fort Worth — why? Surely, not merely be-
cause that is where he lives — for Oklahoma City is where
I live, and I could as reasonably refuse to debate him any-
where else. It's a poor rule that would not work both ways.
The truth of the matter is that J. Frank Norris will not
debate anywhere with anyone unless and until he has all
the advantage, sole and complete control of the debate and
the premises where it is held, full control of the stenog-
raphers, exclusive possession of the manuscripts, and per-
sonal "charge" of everything else including the doors and
"admission fees." When he sees that he cannot do so; that
he must accept equal terms and conditions, and place him-
self under the binding rules of honorable debate and decent
decorum, he will not debate with anybody. **That is why there will be no debate**, if none is to be. J. Frank Norris
does not want an honorable debate. All he wants is an op-
portunity to bully the preachers, browbeat the churches,
and deceive the Baptist boys who are "sitting at his feet" in
his so-called seminary. Some seminary it is! The Nor-
ris theological cemetery would be a better name for it, for
the boys who go there.

We shall keep before the public one thing, namely, that
J. Frank Norris can have one, two or three debates, as he
chooses — in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Oklahoma City, either
or all, as he chooses. And if he will not debate on his own
challenge in Fort Worth, a challenge that has been ac-
cepted by fifteen recognized churches of Christ in that city,
then I hereby challenge J. Frank Norris to meet me in de-
bate in Oklahoma City under the terms and conditions of
the contract which has been submitted to him and which
is published herein. I am authorized to make this chal-
lenge, and I hereby do so, and shall henceforth keep him
and the public reminded of it.

The statements appearing in the Norris publication as
to "why there will be no debate" are sheer subterfuge.
They can only mean that J. Frank Norris backed out of his
own challenges. **Something happened that he did not ex-
pect. His bluffs have boomeranged. He will get out of
it the best way that he can — but the fact will remain that
he backed out. This has been a desperate effort on his
Part to stage a come-back in Fort Worth and regain a part
of the personal prestige he lost ten years ago. But he has
failed. He will only lose more, if he has any left to lose.
His bold challenges have been exposed as bluff and bluster.
His day has declined. His sun has set.**

**VII. THE FACTS ABOUT THE 1934 DEBATE**
There have been ten years of misrepresentation by Nor-
ris of the “Norris-Wallace Debate.” During the time the
efforts were being made to bring out a complete and cor-
rect publication of the debate, I was in the hospital with a
major operation — but all the time endeavoring to prevent
the travesty that appeared under the misnomer of “The
Norris-Wallace Debate.” At that time I had no paper, and
no personal medium. The facts concerning the matter
were sent to the other papers, The Gospel Advocate and
The Firm Foundation, but for reasons of their own they did
not see fit to let the brethren know those facts. I did not
think these papers owed anything to me personally, but
some mighty good brethren did think that they owed it to
the Cause that I had defended to let the facts be known.
Nevertheless it was not done.

The situation is different today. I do have a medium —
a very effective one. The Bible Banner has a large circula-
tion and covers the church throughout the nation and Can-
da. I propose now to bring out a Special Edition of the Bible
Banner, in which I shall publish photostatic copies of
documents relating to the 1934 debate; the facts concern-
ing the court action; the petition presented; the court's decision;
Norris' failure to comply—and the fraud that was perpe-
trated in the publication of the thing that bears the label of
“The Norris-Wallace Debate.” I propose to publish the
letters showing that the “offers” which Norris says were
“declined” were not declined, but answered. I propose to
show that his offer was accepted, and that I postponed a
meeting in a distant state in order to go to the appointed
place at the appointed time, to receive and review the
transcript of the debate according to Norris' “offer.” I
went. Neither Norris nor any of his men appeared. We
contacted them, and they would not come. I waited a
week and went home. Norris had his book on the press
all the time and said that we “declined” his offer. Bogard
says Norris exaggerates. I think it's something else.

I propose to show that the thing Norris did publish is
not even his own speeches as delivered, but matter written
up in manuscript before and after the debate. I propose to
point out that my speeches were never taken down in full,
as delivered, and that Norris never intended to publish any-
thing kin to the real Norris-Wallace Debate. I propose to
show that he left out of the thing he published some of the
most embarrassing things that happened to him, and that he
misrepresented the statements which he claims to be quo-
tations from my addresses.

In order to make this exposure effective, I ask that
brethren all over the nation order a supply of this Special
Number in advance, to distribute among the people in places
where the Norris propaganda is still being sown. I have had
requests from one side of the country to the other for the
facts in this matter, but cannot answer such requests by
correspondence. Brethren and churches in sections and
communities where harm has been done by the falsehoods
of Norris and his henchmen are asked to order by dozen,
fifty and hundred lots, this Special Issue of the Bible Ban-
er. There will not be any other matter in this number.

We are ready to engage J. Frank Norris in public de-
bate, in answer to his challenges, in Oklahoma City, in Dal-
las, and in Fort Worth. He can have one or all of them, as
he may choose, and I will not cancel a single one of them
as he did the Dallas engagement.

I now call on my brethren and my friends to help me
make these facts known to the wide world. I have every
confidence that you will respond.

Faithfully and fervently yours,
Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
SOME LATER DEVELOPMENTS ANENT THE NORRIS DEBATE

Since the lengthy article on the preceding pages was put in, type the following letters from the brethren at Fort Worth and Dallas, who have so faithfully labored to bring arrangements to a successful culmination, have been received. These letters speak for themselves.

From Brother Coleman Overby
Dallas 18, Texas
June 26, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

We now have the definite word from Norris—he will not under any circumstances meet you. This is settled. We met him for the last time Friday afternoon.

I pressed him to the breaking point on all these matters. All of this I shall labor to show when I write my article.

We had this embarrassing situation: Brother J. L. Hines has been carrying on correspondence with him all along-mostly a “War of Roses”—and they have agreed to have a “Radio Debate” this winter. Lately he went to Fort Worth, took his wife, and a stenographer to take down the conversation. When I called for the transcript to get the “low down,” it turned out to be plans for their debate. He labors to make this independent of the planned Wallace-Norris Debate, but it became an occasion for Norris to back out of the whole affair. Don’t think any of us spared Brother Hines—we told him plenty. With it, I told Norris he had completely gone back on his demand for a man of national reputation, and one whom the churches of Christ would endorse, and had taken on a man with only one church behind him. I presume the Sunset church will endorse him—maybe one more. This was all in the presence of Brother Hines. Norris wanted to know if Brother Hines was not nationally known and recognized—he pressed it and thought he had me on the spot, but I told him, no. You should have seen Brother Hines’ face. So much for this.

You will let me know when you plan to bring out the Special Edition of the Bible Banner, and what it will cost to bring out the number of copies you think wise. If you want Brother Hicks to use some of the matter before it appears in the Banner; and any other matter necessary to climax your plan. I want to get the churches here, Fort Worth, and Oklahoma City to finance the expense.

I am ready to go to work on my article so soon as you say the word. We did all we could in this matter. All of the brethren here cooperated well, excepting Brother Hines—he betrayed us. The boys in Fort Worth are to be commended heartedly.

Sincerely,
Coleman Overby.

From Brother Leroy Brownlow
Fort Worth, Texas
June 19, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

I suppose Brother Yater Tant who was in the city last week, told you that Mr. Norris refused the registered letter we sent him. You will find enclosed photostats of the envelope and letter.

Brother Cleo Jones sent you a clipping from Norris’ paper of last week, in which he had an article under the caption: “WHY THERE WILL BE NO DEBATE.” In our discussion with him, taken down by sound scriber, he said that he would not expect the churches to be unanimous in accepting his challenge; and that he would debate if fifteen churches out of twenty would endorse it. Now, he reverses himself by saying that there will be no debate because some of the laymen of the church of Christ have requested him not to debate and for him to pay no attention to the “young squirts.” Why listen to those laymen instead of fifteen churches? What an excuse! From the first day Norris issued his challenge, I have been of the opinion that he would not debate; but I had hoped that none of our brethren would play into his hands and give him such an excuse.

Cleo Jones called me last night and told me that Norris had announced over the air that he was going to have a radio debate with Brother J. L. Hines. That was news to us, for it is not our acceptance of his challenge. Since Brother Jones heard the announcement, perhaps he will write you more about it.

Brother Overby called Saturday night, and is planning to come over this week.

Brotherly yours,

Leroy Brownlow.

* * *

From Brother Cleo E. Jones
Fort Worth, Texas
June 26, 1944

Dear Brother Wallace:

I suppose that you already have a letter that Dr. Norris said over the radio last night that he had written you. I don’t know what kind of a proposition he made you, something though that I imagine would put him in the advantage. Whatever it is, weigh it from all angles and consult with Overby and the two congregations here that have indorsed Norris—We had announced over the air that he was going to have a radio debate with Brother J. L. Hines. That was news to us, for it is not our acceptance of his challenge. Since Brother Jones heard the announcement, perhaps he will write you more about it.

I am wondering what has changed his mind unless it be the fact that he is going to get some unfavorable reports concerning the challenge to the Fort Worth churches. Be sure of every step you take before you take it. He can be handled, but he must be watched. He is a schemer, and his schemes are always for him to be the bully and the other fellow without any sense. Let’s keep pressing him and the Truth will come out on top. The brethren here will help in whatever capacity is needed to get that fellow and his false doctrine on the run. I believe he is feeling the weight of it now and is trying to find a way out.

I suppose Bro. Overby has given you the details of that meeting last Friday. He (Norris) was very Uncomplimentary of you and not very much of a gentleman in talking to the rest of us fellows. He wilted when Bro. G. A. Dunn, Sr. asked him since he had refused to meet You again, would he meet any other man that these Congregations might select. He wants to select his own opponent and it looks like J. L. Hines has allowed him to have his way.

We are at your service in this matter. Let us know what he is trying to do, as he seems to Want to deal with You.
directly. We are for the right, God’s word above all else. With the help of our Master we will win a victory for our Saviour, and in His name. Put up a white flag? Never.

Fraternally,
Cleo E. Jones.

Norris Seeks To Save His Face
Fort Worth 2, Texas
June 24, 1944

In his flustered face-saving maneuvering to deliver himself from an unexpected predicament, Norris now attempts to shift the negotiations from the basis of his challenge to the churches of Christ in Fort Worth to a private arrangement with me. And what an arrangement! He wants me to play tail to a kite to be flown by him and Jake Hines! If you have a sense of humor the following letter, typical of Norris when he gets on a hot spot, will bring down the galleries.

Rev. Foy E. Wallace
Box 1804
Oklahoma City, Okla.

My dear Sir:

A group of ministers of your church, some dozen, called to see me yesterday with reference to having another debate with you.

Dr. J. L. Hines and I have arranged for a joint-discussion over the radio.

These brethren of yours asked if I were willing also for you to have a discussion over the radio.

I have secured time for Dr. Hines and myself and feel sure that I could secure time for you over the same radio, and without cost to you. I assume every responsibility of the radio, myself. This I am doing with Dr. Hines.

He and I will discuss the following subjects:

First, that Christ will return to the earth in Person, and establish His kingdom on the earth and reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

Second, that the scriptures teach that baptism of a penitent believer is one of the conditions of his salvation; and unless that penitent believer is immersed he cannot be saved.

Third, that the person born again receives eternal life and can never perish or fall away into perdition.

I have the time from 10:00 until midnight every Sunday night, to be exact 10:15. You could have a free additional use of the same time that Dr. Hines will use.

You can go on immediately after the introduction, or at 10:15. In as much as you have my published position on the above questions it will not be necessary for me to go first. I could take less, or an equal amount of time.

Because of requirements of the radio, it will be necessary to submit your manuscript at least a week in advance, to the radio.

This discussion with you will take place after the discussion with Dr. Hines.

Yours respectfully,
J. Frank Norris,
A BAPTIST PREACHER REBAPTIZED

W. CURTIS PORTER

Recent issues of the American Baptist, edited by D. N. Jackson, have carried reports of the rebaptizing of a Baptist preacher. The preacher concerned is Willie A. Thomas who is a student at the Jacksonville College of Jacksonville, Texas. The report of the baptizing was given by C. R. Meadows, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, and by Willie A. Thomas himself.

In preparing the way for the report Mr. Meadows said:

"In the first place, it is the age-long position of Missionary Baptists that only believer's baptism is valid, sound and scriptural. Those who have been immersed before they were saved are not scripturally baptized."

And since the Baptists claim that only the saved can be Scripturally baptized they had valid grounds upon which to rebaptize Willie Thomas, for Mr. Meadows reports the circumstances as follows:

"He explained his condition and his position to this writer, Brother D. N. Jackson, and others, stating that he united with the church and was baptized when he was twelve or twelve years old. He also stated that he had no real experience of salvation from sin until he was about twenty years old. After his conversion, he felt the call to preach, later answered that call and preached for several years. However, he was never satisfied with his baptism. We advised him correctly, we think, that the scriptural thing for him to do was to tell his experience to the church, be received as a candidate for baptism and follow his Lord in the scriptural way."

The suggestion of these preachers was followed by Willie A. Thomas and he was baptized again by Elder C. R. Meadows. But even that did not settle all difficulties, for, as Pastor Meadow reports:

"Then, the question of his ordination came up. He was ordained before he was baptized so it was our opinion that he should be ordained in the proper way in order to complete the job. This was done in the presence of the church and a number of ministers present were invited to sit in the council." But after making the report Pastor Meadows became afraid that there would be a little concern about the consequences of this action and said:

"Someone might raise the question - What about all these people baptized by Bro. Thomas before he was scripturally baptized? Our answer to that briefly is: The church does the baptizing and not the preacher. If we are to press that sort of question, no one of us could easily be sure that we are scripturally baptized. I do not know that the man that baptized me was a saved man. I believe he was, but I do not know. I do know that, according to our belief, that the church that authorized my baptism was, and is, an Orthodox, Scriptural, New Testament Church."

Well, we are going to press that sort of question. But before doing so, there are a number of interesting things in the report that I wish to call attention to. In the first place, "the age-long position of Missionary Baptists" (an age that could not be much more than 300 years long, for there were no Baptists of any kind prior to the seventeenth century) that "those who have been immersed before they were saved are not scripturally baptized." Consequently the rebaptizing of all who were baptized in the days of the apostles. Not one of them could qualify according to this "age-long position of Missionary Baptists." According to Acts 2:38-41 the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost were baptized "for the remission of sins." So they were baptized "before they were saved" and their baptism could not be acceptable to Baptists. Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul, was baptized that his sins might be washed away. (Acts 22: 16) His baptism would not be valid according to Baptist belief and practice. All the brethren at Rome were baptized prior to the walk "in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), which would be before they were saved, and they would have to do it all over again. Children of God throughout the regions of Galatia were such because they had been "baptized into Christ." (Gal. 3:27) This, of course, was before they were saved, unless they were saved out of Christ; and their baptism would be ruled out by the "age-long position of Baptists." As far as I am concerned, I would rather pay attention to the New Testament pattern than this "age-long position" Pastor Meadows talks about.

But Willie A. Thomas was baptized when he was about twelve years of age. However, his "real experience from sin" did not come till about eight years later. I suppose he had an "experience" of salvation from sin before his first baptism, but it wasn't real — the "real experience" came later. And after this real experience "he felt the call to preach." Notice that he did not hear the call — he felt it. And so he preached for several years but during this time "he was never satisfied with his baptism." I wonder why. If the Lord called him to preach, surely he was satisfied with it, and it ought to have satisfied Willie Thomas. The Lord was either satisfied with his baptism when he called him or he did not want him to preach Baptist doctrine. If the Lord wanted him to preach Baptist doctrine, he certainly would not have sent him out till he got his baptism straightened out. But since he did, according to the report, then the Lord did not seem to be much concerned about the "age-long position of Missionary Baptists."

And so that brings up the question that Pastor Meadows was afraid would arise — What about all those people that Willie A. Thomas baptized before he was scripturally baptized? What did their baptism do for them or make out for them anyway? People generally know that it is "the age-long position of Missionary Baptists" that a man cannot be a Baptist, or a member of the Missionary Baptist Church, unless he is baptized "by a regularly ordained Baptist preacher, who was baptized by a regularly ordained Baptist preacher, who was baptized by a regularly ordained Baptist preacher," with this method followed right back to the apostles themselves. So all those people Willie A. Thomas baptized during those several years he was preaching could not be Baptists, for Willie Thomas was not a Baptist himself. It takes what Baptists call "Scriptural baptism," which must be administered "after a man is saved," to make one a member of the Baptist Church. But Willie Thomas did not have that. So he was not a Baptist. And since he was not a Baptist, of course, he could not be a Baptist preacher. And those baptized by him were not even baptized by a Baptist preacher. After he was rebaptized it was decided that his former ordaining was no good and the thing for him to do was to "be ordained in the proper way in order to complete the job." So prior to his rebaptism and his being reordained he was not a "regularly ordained Baptist preacher" and could not baptize anybody according to the "age-long position of Missionary Baptists." Consequently "all those people" were not baptized by a
“regularly ordained Baptist preacher,” nor even by a Baptist preacher; no, not even by a Baptist, for Willie Thomas was not any of these things during that time. Not one of those people, therefore, could be a Baptist or a member of the Missionary Baptist Church. The baptism of every one of them was un-Baptistic, and the whole bunch should be rebaptized just like Willie Thomas was if they ever expect to have the glory of Baptists.

Pastor Meadows thinks their baptism might be valid, for if we were to “press that sort of question,” his own baptism might be invalidated, as well as the baptism of all the rest of his brethren. Since “the church does the baptizing and not the preacher” he hopes theirs will be all right. But I wonder if the church did not authorize the first baptism of Willie Thomas. If the mere fact that the church authorized it, makes it Scriptural, then his would have to be Scriptural, too. But Meadows might insist that his was invalidated because he had not had that “real experience of salvation.” Do you suppose for a moment that the Baptist Church that authorized his first baptism did so without hearing his “experience of grace”? They would certainly demand that he give such experience before they would vote upon him as a candidate for baptism. In view of “the age-long position of Missionary Baptists” we could not expect anything else. They would have refused baptism to him unless he told them he had had an experience of salvation. Well, if he told them he had such an experience, when he did not, as he now says, then he was baptized upon an empty profession — a statement that he knew was not true. And if he told that church he had been saved, when he knew he had not, how can the Jacksonville church now accept his testimony? Perhaps he has not been saved yet and this second baptism is of no more value than the first. If it be said that he did not wilfully misrepresent his experience in the first case but was only mistaken about it, then how can they tell that he is not mistaken again? If he was mistaken about it the first time, he may be the same this time, and the whole thing may have to be done over again.

The questioning that Pastor Meadows feared evidently started, for in a later issue of the American Baptist the “College Student” himself made a defense of his membership. A bunch of his preacher brethren began to write him about his action. And Willie Thomas got all “het up” about it and told them it was none of their business and to “knock the big mouths shut about it.” In his explanation of his action he says:

“I want you all to know that I was saved years ago, but I was not satisfied with my baptism as I wanted to be. The baptism that I had when I was a child might have been all right, but I was not as sure of it as I wanted to be is the only reason that I went under the water again. I am very much satisfied now, and happy on my way to heaven, and just can’t help what you think or say.

There you have the whole thing in a nutshell. The “only reason” that Willie Thomas “went under the water again” is given in his own words. He was “not as sure of his first baptism as he wanted to be.” Of course, he had no doubt about his salvation, for he wanted all of them to know that he was “saved years ago.” So that was not the disturbing element at all. He knew he was on his way to heaven, could not lose his way, nor even turn from it if he wanted to, according to “the age-long position of Missionary Baptists.” There were no misgivings about any of this that caused him to be rebaptized. Furthermore, he was preaching right along and baptizing others upon a profession of their salvation. Through his efforts many were thus being taken to heaven with him. He had no doubt about any of this and was not rebaptized to make his work in saving souls any more effective. The only reason he was baptized was that he was “not sure” about his first baptism. In other words, he was “not sure” whether he was a Baptist, a member of the Baptist Church, for the only thing his baptism would do for him would be to make a Baptist out of him. He was sure he was a Christian, a member of the family of God; he was sure he would go to heaven; he was sure that he was leading other souls to heaven: but he was not sure that he was a Baptist. He wanted to be sure about that. So he “went under the water again.” And after he did so he said: “I am very much satisfied now, and happy on my way to heaven.” Now, don’t misunderstand him. He was already on his way to heaven and had been for years, but he wasn’t happy about it. In order to be happy about it, he had to be sure that he was a Baptist. The thing that brought peace and joy to Willie Thomas was not the knowledge that he was saved from his sins and unalterably on his way to eternal bliss, but it was the knowledge that he was a Baptist. That would not increase his chances of eternal joy and glory, but it enabled him to be happy while he was on his way to eternal bliss. He couldn’t be happy without that. Of course, the Lord never even one time mentioned any such thing as the Baptist Church, nor did he ever invite or admonish any one to be a Baptist, but Willie Thomas just couldn’t be happy till he was sure he was a member of the Baptist Church. So I am glad to know that he found happiness at last. I would hate to know that he had made the long journey to heaven without ever being happy about it.

The Porter-Dugger Debate

The best discussion of Seventh Day Adventism that I have ever read is the Porter-Dugger Debate. It is a complete answer, put in the Curtis Porter way, to the best arguments that can be made in favor of Adventist doctrine. Mr. Dugger was as able a representative of the Adventist positions as can be found. Brother Porter’s answers to his arguments are direct and brief, but complete. It brings to the reader the ready material needed to meet the turns and twists made by Adventists in their efforts to bind Sabbath-keeping on Christians.

In addition to the Sabbath question, Brother Porter affirms what the New Testament teaches with reference to the first day of the week, and the Christian’s duty with reference to its observance. There is a wealth of information in Brother Porter’s treatment of this proposition, and his arguments were untouchable, and therefore, unanswered by his opponent.

There are two worthy things that can be accomplished by ordering this discussion. First: Every student of the Bible needs it for the information it contains. Second: Brother Porter’s work has been limited because of necessary caution with reference to his physical condition, hence, his income has been materially reduced. In ordering this debate you will be aiding him while obtaining far more in return for yourself. My suggestion is that you order not one, but a dozen of these books and hand them out to your Adventist neighbors. It is the answer to all the questions they can ask.

The price of the book is $1.00 and it is worth one hundred times that to anybody who has Adventism to meet. Order it from W. Curtis Porter, Monette, Arkansas.-F. E. W. Jr.
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