

Statement by Ferrell Jenkins

As Chairman of Biblical Studies at Florida College and editor of the annual lecture book, *Jesus for a New Millennium*, it was my responsibility to edit and approve for publication the manuscript of brother Donnie Rader. We might express our views a little differently, but my teaching on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is substantially the same as that of brother Rader. My views may be seen in *Let Not Man Put Asunder* and in sermons I have preached on the subject. In my Epistles class on 1 Corinthians that I have taught every spring for the past 10 years, I devote between 5 and 7 class periods to the subject. Well over 1000 students have been in these classes.

When I saw that brother Rader had referred to Bob Owen, Earl Kimbrough, and Ed Harrell without careful documentation I wrote him about the matter. Below is part of my correspondence of October 25, 2000, to Donnie:

I had some concern about your use of unpublished materials. Specifically, I have reference to the citation of a taped sermon by Owen (in two places). All of the other sources you use are published. I would prefer in all of those that you cite the page(s). I have seen Harrell's material, but have not seen the material by Kimbrough.

I showed your manuscript to Colly [Caldwell, president of Florida College]. We both think that in a published source such as our lecture book, published by an academic institution, one should use only documented, published material. Apparently you have heard the sermons under consideration; I have not. According to the *MLA Handbook*, 4th ed. (4.10.12) you must cite the "sponsoring organization."

A brother may disagree with you, but we don't want one of them to say that his views were misrepresented and ask for equal time, etc.

Here is what I wish to do about this:

(1) Drop the reference to the unpublished tape by Owen, or...

(2) Make a reference to published material. Perhaps the manuscripts in "Toward a Better Understanding" may say the same thing (published by Preceptor and available on the web at <http://www.flash.net/~cofc/tabu/outline.htm>). I do note, after a cursory glance and use of the "search" feature in my word processor, that brother Owen mentions a sermon he preached in 1993 which he says has been incorrectly applied. Could it be the sermon you cite? Or...

(3) If you are not willing to make this type of documentation, then I will make an editorial note to that effect.

Brother Rader provided documentation for the Owen sermon from a web page in Texas. Even though I thought that this might be the sermon brother Owen was speaking about in *Toward a Better Understanding*, I went ahead with the publication of the manuscript without any statement. I consider it unethical, and likely illegal, for one to publish letters and materials of another person without their permission. For that reason I will not quote from brother Rader's correspondence. Brother Owen gave permission for me to publish his statement on this web page.

My correspondence with brother Rader was an effort to save him from what I considered unnecessary conflict over this matter. The unfounded statement of some that someone at Florida College “set up” brother Rader is a **reading of motives** and **untrue**.

I was not present for brother Rader’s lecture because I was teaching a class in McCarty auditorium at the time. The day before the lecture, president Caldwell showed me a letter from former president Bob F. Owen containing a request to respond by written statement to what brother Rader said about him. The statement below is the one read by brother Owen. I am including it on this web page because I was editor of the lecture book. The book, *Jesus for a New Millennium*, may be ordered from the Florida College bookstore. Call toll free (USA) 1 800 423-1648; (FL) 1 800 922-2390.

Brother Ed Harrell also distributed a statement stating that his views were “misrepresented.” I was informed that brother Earl Kimbrough distributed a few copies of his publication so those interested could see his understanding of the matter.

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Response of Bob Owen to Donnie Rader’s printed lecture In the Florida College Lectures February 8, 2001

My response today is to the manuscript of brother Rader’s lecture as it occurs in the Florida College series of 2001. Very possibly, I am making a mistake in responding. In the past I have ignored charges from pulpits and publications in order not to fuel the fires that stir ill will among brethren. Still having this feeling, I will not participate in an on-going fray over these matters. Please save your stamps and email time. I feel compelled, however, to respond to misrepresentations made here before people with whom I work and worship. They need to know these charges are false and misleading. Also, I wish to express my personal regrets that the college administration has allowed these charges to be published and distributed without my having equal opportunity to respond in the Florida College book.

On page 181 of the lecture book brother Rader attributes a view to me that I do not believe, have never believed, and certainly do not teach. He goes further and assigns a motive for my alleged teaching and it is false. I do not believe or teach that the message of Matthew 19 is unclear. I heard a lecture in 1996 in which it was said that the language of Matthew 19:9 might be ambiguous but rather than giving a more liberal interpretation of the passage as brother Rader has implied, the variant reading would actually prohibit divorce for any cause. I have never accepted that view. I believe and teach publicly what brother Rader preached today: the only basis for divorce and remarriage is fornication. Further, I believe God’s moral laws, including the divorce law, apply to all people.

On page 186 brother Rader says that I fellowship those who believe and teach error on divorce and remarriage and implies that I would do so under any and all circumstances. This is misleading. Like brother Rader, and I suspect like all in my hearing, I participate with brethren with whom I have some doctrinal disagreements. There are other brethren with whom I do not participate. Differing on the interpretation of a passage is not the only consideration. Does the association imply that I endorse a view I believe to be wrong? If so, I refuse the association. Does the association cause me to practice something I believe unlawful? If so, I refuse. Does the person who holds the differing view cause dissention and sow discord among brethren? If so, I refuse him.

Brethren, these matters call for more than a question of do we differ on an interpretation. I know for a fact that brother Rader associates closely and publicly with preaching brethren with whom he differs on some doctrinal matters – including some issues on divorce and remarriage. Labeling their difference as judgment does not keep it from being doctrinal. He has a perfect right to judge that the association does not compromise him and does not imply his endorsement of the other's view. A local church has the right to make similar judgments. One congregation might deem a man desirable to hold a gospel meeting while another might feel this person is unsuited for them. This judgment decision is commonly practiced.

If brother Rader feels a person is unworthy of association but knows I associate with him, brother Rader has a perfect right to observe privately or publicly that he thinks my judgment is bad. However, I believe he is wrong in charging me with sin or claiming my doctrine is false because I do not accept his judgment. He makes his judgment the law of God. This is Phariseism in full bloom.

Neither should the attack be based on someone's supposition that my views will lead to some gross error. That is a supposition, not fact. Look at reality: my lessons on fellowship deal with issues such as the covering and the war question—not to divorce and remarriage. I have taught my views on fellowship for almost forty years. I know of no person and certainly of no congregation that has been influenced to a loose view on divorce and remarriage because of my influence and teaching. Because I have not made the same judgments as some have regarding a particular high profile case, it has been charged that I hold my views on fellowship in order to accept people in adulterous marriages. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In closing, let me observe not what might occur but what has occurred among brethren. I'm not speaking about what I think might happen – this has happened. Through suspicion and misrepresentations, a division has been precipitated among honest, sincere brethren who believe the same things on divorce and remarriage, who preach the same thing on divorce and remarriage, and who practice the same thing on divorce and remarriage. I need not remind this audience of God's attitude toward division and toward those who cause division. The same God who hates divorce considers division and the sowing of discord an abomination. I pray that each of us will investigate his own heart as well as his own doctrine. I am thankful that the ultimate judgment is in the hands of a God who judges righteously.