



To the Citizens of  
Green Ridge and Vicinity.





To the Honorable Citizens of  
Green Ridge and Vicinity,  
Greeting:

---

On the 13th day of August, 1899, at Green Ridge school-house (after some sparring upon the part of Elder S. I. Gardner, of the regular Baptist church, and myself, on doctrinal differences of our respective churches) I challenged the Baptist church to meet me in a public discussion on the following propositions:

1. Is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in fact the church of God, harmonizing in faith, doctrine, organization and practice with the church of Christ set up by divine authority 1800 years ago?

J. D. STEAD affirms,

THE BAPTIST CHURCH denies.

2. Is the Baptist church (commonly called Hard Shells) in fact the church of God, harmonizing in faith, doctrine, organization and practice with the church of Christ set up by divine authority 1800 years ago?

THE BAPTIST CHURCH affirms,

J. D. STEAD denies.

Elder Gardner accepted this challenge and said he would meet me on the above propositions, but insisted we use the King James' translation of the Bible as the only authority to be used in the discussion. To this I objected, on the grounds that it would bar me from using any of their history in showing up their faith, doctrine, organization and practice, as we could only know what the Baptist church is by their history; "by their fruits ye shall know them." To this he replied he was a man who had to work for a living and had not had the time to read up on the history of their church, and he would furnish a representative man, endorsed by their church, to meet me on those propositions. I then copied the above propositions, after changing the words "Hard Shell" to "Primitive" at Elder G.'s request, and enclosed the following with the propositions and handed them to Elder G. which he sent to Elder H. A. Todd, as is stated in his

first letter to me, that he had received them:

(a) In the discussion of the questions the Bible is to be the standard of evidence. All other evidence to be received upon its merits, subject to the rules governing such testimony before our civil courts.

(b) It is further agreed that the disputants shall furnish each other with equivalent endorsement from their respective churches, at least ten days before the debate commences, in proof that they have been accepted representatives, in good standing and fellowship with the brotherhood of the members and eldership, and sound in the faith as preached and practiced by their respective churches; worthy and trusted to present the faith of their respective churches, and advocate and defend the same in private debate and public discussion. A failure on the part of either party to furnish such credentials as herein named, shall be a sufficient evidence to either party that his opponent is not worthy to affirm or defend the doctrine and belief of his respective church in an honorable and public discussion.

[Signed]

J. D. STEAD.

Elder H. A. Todd's first letter to me read as follows:

ELDER J. D. STEAD,  
Kinmundy, Illinois.

*Dear Sir and Brother:*—I am in receipt of a letter from Elder S. I. Gardner enclosing letter and propositions purposed by you for public discussion.

I write you this as an explanation for the writing of this letter.

I cannot accept your propositions. I submit two, which, with less words, embrace all the essentials of your propositions.

I purpose King James' Translation as the only authority in the discussion, and Hedges' Logic the governing rules.

If you cannot submit to the propositions and conditions herein given it will be useless for us to correspond.

I am yours, &c.

H. A. TODD.

GRAYVILLE, Ill., 9-11, '99, 7 p. m.

#### PROPOSITIONS.

1. *Resolved*, That the Scriptures teach that the regular Baptist church, of which I (H. A. Todd) am a member, is apostolic in doctrine and practice.

2. *Resolved*, That the Scriptures teach that the church of Latter Day Saints, of which I (J. D. Stead) am a member, is apostolic in doctrine and practice.

To this letter I replied in the following:

ALMA, Ill., Sept. 26, '99.

ELDER H. A. TODD,

Grayville, Illinois.

*Dear Sir and Brother:*—Your letter of the 11th, after some delay, has reached me; came to hand on the 25th,

hence the delay in answering you. After giving it, with propositions enclosed, a careful reading, I find you object to the propositions sent you, but do not so much as state what your objections are; but judging from the ones enclosed, you object to the words faith and organization, inasmuch as you leave them out of the ones you purpose. Now, I will agree to drop out those words from your proposition, if you will now acknowledge in writing that you do not believe the Baptist church (commonly called Regular Baptists) is the church of God, and not in harmony with the New Testament Scriptures in faith and organization. Otherwise that proposition stands just as it is. If you make the above acknowledgement in writing, then I will let you off from affirming that part of your proposition, and will negative the one you purpose, for I do not believe that but it does not cover the whole issue between us. And that is the reason I worded it as I did. On the other hand, if you are willing to acknowledge, in writing, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is, in fact, the church of God, and harmonizing with the New Testament Scriptures in faith and organization, I will agree to take that out of my proposition, and will affirm the church of which I am a member is

apostolic in doctrine and practice. And in this way you will not be under obligations to deny something you believe.

I believe the propositions as worded by me cover the whole issue between us, and are altogether fair, and unless you acknowledge what I ask of you in the above, I shall be compelled to believe you do, and dare not meet the issue; it will be an admission on your part that you do not believe what you preach and you dare not deny in public discussion what the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are preaching.

In conclusion I will say, my challenge was to the Baptist church and not to Elder H. A. Todd alone. If Elder Todd is the only man the Baptist church has that can defend their faith and doctrine, and he is willing their church shall suffer a backdown because he is afraid to meet the issue, after all the boasting and threatening of the Baptist church, Elder Stead will be satisfied with the results when the facts have been made known to the public.

Very respectfully,

J. D. STEAD.

KINMUNDY, Ill.

In answer to the above I received a second letter from Elder Todd which read as follows:



ELDER J. D. STEAD,  
Kinmundy, Illinois.

*Dear Sir and Brother:*—Your letter of 26th inst. received by this mail, and as I have opportunity I now reply.

While I do not like the tone of your letter, for it reflects upon my honesty regarding the principles I hold more sacred than earthly things, whether I'm honest God knows, and He only shall judge me.

I will not discuss your propositions because they do not express what is necessary, and that they do express is indefinite and vague.

Now, the best I can gather, you want to discuss the *principles* and faith of each respective denomination, so I have submitted two propositions covering all the dividing territory, and two on the identity of the church. If you do not accept these *I will not debate you*, because they are candid and honest for each disputant. You need not propose other things different from them for it would not be accepted.

You have challenged for discussion, I have accepted it. When you have proper endorsements and rules, and necessary rules, which I now submit you, let me hear from you, yea or nay.

I am yours, &c.

H. A. TODD.

P. S.—If you enter the discussion,

copy the rules, sign, and send them to me. The discussion can be fixed for a future date and place agreeable to each.

H. TODD.

#### RULES.

1. The propositions shall be discussed in the order given in the list of propositions.

2. One day and a half shall be given to each proposition, the affirmative leading in a sixty minute speech, followed by the negative in a sixty minute speech. Only the opening speeches shall be sixty minutes long; all others shall be thirty minute speeches alternately.

3. Two hours in the a. m., and two in the p. m. of each day shall be occupied, divided according to rule 2.

4. Each disputant shall choose a moderator, and they two shall choose a third as president, the principals concurring in the choice.

5. It shall be the duty of the president to keep time, state all questions, read rules and propositions, etc.

6. Each disputant shall treat his opponent with courtesy and respect, nor reflect on either congregation.

7. Each disputant shall answer all questions revelant to the proposition being discussed, provided the majority of moderators so decide.

8. The King James' translation of the New and Old Testaments shall be the only authority in the discussions of the several questions.

9. We further agree to be governed by the rules of Hedges' Logic relative to public discussions.

H. A. TODD.

To this I again replied in the following:

KINMUNDY, Ill., 10-3, '99.

ELDER H. A. TODD.

*Dear Sir and Brother:*—Your letter of recent date at hand and contents noted. In reply will say, I am somewhat amused with the reading of it, especially so when you say in your letter you are an honest man, and are an honest defender of the principle you hold to. You certainly are not ignorant of the fact that the propositions you refuse to discuss with me in public have already been accepted by the Baptist church, and the Baptist church has agreed with me that they would furnish a representative man endowed by their church to discuss those propositions with me. You now seem to want to enter into a written discussion with me as to whether you and I would debate them. Did you gather from the tone of my letter that I was a man that would enter into a discussion on something there was no disagreement; for me, now, to enter into a discussion with you as to what propositions I am going to discuss with the Baptist church, would be an admission on my part that there had never been any agreement between us as to the propositions we were to discuss, which would not be true. Now, sir I have

no quarrel to make with you; you and the Baptist church can settle among yourselves who you will have to do your debating for you, and if the Baptist church fail to furnish a man to debate those propositions it will be an admission on their part that they can't defend what they are preaching, and will not deny in public discussion what the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are preaching. Can you afford to do it?

Yours for truth,

J. D. STEAD.

KINMUNDY, Ill.

In answer to this Elder Todd writes his third letter which speaks for itself:

GRAYVILLE, Ill., 10-7, '99.

ELDER J. D. STEAD,

Kinmundy, Illinois.

*Dear Sir and Brother:*—Your letter of recent date came to hand. I was sorry to see such stubbornness and inconsistency develop in a man who claims to be a representative man of the Latter Day Saints(?). I have delayed writing you until now, so I could write Elder Gardner regarding the statements you made, "That the Baptist church had accepted your given propositions." Now, you knew when you made that statement that it was not the truth, or else you are ignorant of the facts in the case. Elder G. tells

me your challenge for a public discussion on church identity was accepted. He also told you he would forward your propositions to me for my consideration. But that he nor the *Baptist church* accepted your propositions. I also sent him a copy of my propositions to you and he says they cover the ground of the challenge, and are fair in all.

Now, I will cut this correspondence short by saying to you, if you are not a coward of the first water, and a wart on the nose of your respectable people, just trot out in the public rostrum and see if I do not defend all those proposition affirms, and disprove all they deny. Now, as you have brayed so much, even boasting publicly, if you do not come to proposition I will publish, and cause to be published, all over that county, your bigotry and cowardice. I do not wish to be rasping, but I do intend for you to understand that it's no small affair to go as far with such matters and then stoop to the treachery you have to evade the inevitable.

I am not, nor are you, ignorant of the fact that no debater ever stated propositions and then asked open combat. Always the subject is proposed, and then the principals agree on propositions fair to each, and I would submit my propositions to a jury of debaters, and risk the decision.

I write Elder G. by this mail and I purpose for him to publish the matter as it is. *Now, debate or quit.*

H. A. TODD.

To this I had the following to say:

WHITE OAK, Ill., 10-21, 1899.

ELDER H. A. TODD, Grayville, Ill.;

*Dear Sir and Bro.:*—Your letter of the 10th at hand and contents noted; you accuse me of being stubborn and inconsistent. Well, I must confess I am not as pliable as the Baptist would like to have me. But do you not think it possible for you to be mistaken in that which is stubborn? you accuse me of being stubborn and the truth is, it is facts that are stubborn and I can't change them to suit you without telling an untruth, and you seem to find fault with me because I am not a representative of that class. I profess to be a representative of the Church of Jesus Christ and He taught his disciples to tell the truth and not compromise it under no conditions, not even to suit the Baptists. You say I told an untruth and I knew it or I was ignorant of the facts in the case when I made the statement the Baptist Church had accepted my propositions; it could not be possible I am ignorant of the facts when we stop and think. I was the one who made the challenge and could not be

ignorant of the facts; this being true, you associate ignorance with falsehood in order to soften the expression. Now, sir, I am perfectly willing if I have told a falsehood for you to publish me all over that country; and reserve the same right to myself I give you, should I find the Baptists misrepresenting things. Judging from what you have written me, you have based your accusations against me on what Elder Gardner has written you, namely, "My challenge for a public discussion on church identity was accepted, but neither he nor the Baptist Church accepted my propositions." You have based all you have written in your last letter on the presumption that Elder G. has told the whole truth and nothing but the truth, not making any allowance for a possible mistake being made by the elder and have said some very harsh things as you admit yourself you was rasping, but seem to think the end you wish to reach justified the means you have used. The end you wished to reach evidently was the Baptists had not accepted my proposition and Elder Stead was a very bad fellow; how well you may have succeeded in reaching the end desired will be made more prominent later on when all of the facts are set forth, there is always two sides to everything. Be careful, brother, you

don't say something that will reflect on your honesty or the honesty of some other elder in the Baptist Church. You have not forgotten, I trust, what you said in your second letter to me, when you thought I was reflecting on your honesty; you seem to have forgotten what you seemed to know so well then that God would judge you. Do you think God will judge you for what you say to Elder Stead, or do you think you would be warranted in saying anything to him in order to gain your point?

In the very fact that Elder Gardner sent you the propositions I challenged the Baptist Church to debate, is strong presumptive evidence in favor of the truthfulness of the statement I made to you, namely, "The Baptist had accepted my propositions," instead of it being false, as you, Elder G. and the Baptist are now claiming. Why did they send them to you? It is very evident they started with good intentions to do what they said they would do—find their representative man and chose you to represent them, and you refuse to defend what Elder G. has been preaching or deny what Elder Stead has been preaching at Green Ridge school house.

The propositions I gave to the Baptist cover the whole issue between us; the ones you sent me, do not. The



Baptists preach there is one true church and it is an organization composed of baptized believers, and *they* are the faithful ones and preach the doctrine of that church and practice it. Now, sir, I repeat what I said in a former letter, if the Baptist does not believe they are the church of God, harmonizing in faith and organization, as well as doctrine and practice, and they will acknowledge in writing they do not, I will no longer insist on their affirming it. The Baptist should quit preaching it, however, if they don't believe it. This is the reason I say *you dare not defend in public debate what you preach. I repeat it, sir!*

I believe the church I represent is the Church of God in fact, harmonizing in faith, doctrine, organization and practice, with the church of Christ set up by divine authority 1800 years ago. And, sir, I will meet you on the public rostrum and affirm it. *Dare you do the same for your church?* Now, sir, in answer to that part of your letter where you have resorted to abuse instead of sound reasoning it is a strong presumptive evidence that which I am ready to deny on the public rostrum is true; *i. e.* that ministers of the Baptist church are not true representatives of the meek and lowly Nazarene; instead of meeting an opponent with logic and the Scriptures of divine truth resort to pelting

him with epithets too vile and low for a minister of Christ to use, and without any cause whatever. And confesses he knows it, says he is rasping. Now, sir, I have this to say after having said so much of you when I resort to anything of this kind you will have reasons for thinking I am not a representative of Jesus Christ, and further, when you can prove I have done a single thing you accuse me of, you will have reasons for believing I am trying to evade the issue you have accused me of. You have accused me of lying, treachery, ignorance, boasting, bragging and cowardice, all because I have insisted the propositions I challenged the Baptist Church to discuss, were fair for all, and cover the whole issue between us. But you insist your church has never accepted them, but you do say they accepted a challenge from me. In answering this, I will say the only challenge I ever made the Baptist church was made in the following manner. I challenge the Baptist Church to a public discussion on the following propositions and the propositions read were the ones Elder Gardner sent you with this exception, the word Primitive was inserted for the words Hard Shell in the propositions the Baptists were to affirm. Now, let me ask if the Baptist Church did not accept those propositions as read in public in their

hearing. Why did Elder G. say he would meet me on those propositions first himself, and afterward tells me he would get a representative man of the Baptist Church to meet me on those propositions, and while he did not give your name he said the man that would do the debating would be a younger man than himself; and later in the evening after conferring with his brethren he had me to change the words Hard Shell to Primitive, and it was rumored round by his brethren the man's name was Todd, they were thinking of getting to do the debating for them; another strong presumptive evidence in favor of their accepting the propositions. And when I received your letter stating you had received the propositions and coming from *the very man it was said would do the debating*, the evidence becomes so strong, all reasonable people when they have heard the facts in the case will be compelled by the evidence thus adduced to think as I do. The Baptist Church did accept the propositions and Elder Todd is the man they chose to represent them. Evidently Elder Todd sees he cannot defend what they preach and the Baptists have got their foot in it, and now they are twisting and turning trying to dodge the real issue and to get out of debate, and will only affirm just as little as they can get off with; and

will only do that when they are driven to it. We are willing to rest our claims with these two clear-cut issues. The Baptists can now bring on their man or go on record of being too cowardly to defend their claims in a public discussion. Now, in conclusion I will say, I have no objections to your publishing the truth about me, but let me warn you now be sure you publish the truth.

Yours for the Right,

J. D. STEAD.

Not having received an answer to the last letter to Elder Todd, I called on Elder Gardner, some four weeks later, to enquire the reasons why the Baptists had not come up with their man. To this he replied he had not heard from Elder Todd for three weeks, as much as to say they had turned the matter over to Elder Todd, and was expecting him and I to come together on propositions. To this I replied Elder Todd refused to discuss propositions given them, and asked if Elder Todd was the only man they had that could debate. He answered, No, but he was probably the best informed in histo-

ry of any man they had in southern Illinois, and they had chosen him to represent them; evidently because I had told them I wanted to examine their church by their history as well as the Scriptures. And they thought their man would necessarily have to understand their history. "Very wise conclusion," but I am inclined to think their man is what they claim for him in that respect (a historian), and has learned too much about their history to ever undertake to affirm a proposition he knows he cannot defend, *i. e.* "the Baptist Church is the church of God in fact, harmonizing in faith, doctrine, organization and practice." Elder Gardner, in this interview with me, confessed he believed all this proposition covered, and preached it. And everybody who has heard them preach knows they preach it. Why won't they affirm what they preach, in public discussion with Elder J. D. Stead? Who is the coward, Elder Todd, will we let

the people decide? You was going to have me published; why did you not do it? Elder Gardner no doubt could answer. He says he accepted a challenge and knows and confessed I never made but one challenge. How could he accept my challenge without accepting the propositions when I was challenging them to discuss those very propositions and read them in their hearing at the time. I presume Elder G. is like Brother Todd, he did not want any one to reflect on his honesty. On taking my leave from Elder G. he promised me they would do something and write me right away. I waited three weeks longer and wrote the following:

PARRISH, Ill., 12-7, 1899.

ELDER S. I. GARDNER, Alma, Ill.;

*Dear Sir and Bro.:*—According to an agreement with you the last time I talked with you, I should of had an answer as to whether the Baptist was going to furnish their man to meet me in debate on the propositions I challenged them to discuss. I have been waiting patiently for your an-

swer. Have you any just reasons for not doing as you agreed to? Let me here from you at once and a failure to hear from you (since you have admitted to me you both believe and preach all the proposition covers I have challenged the Baptists to affirm and all this time insisted on them affirming) the Baptist at Green Ridge will be confronted with something they may not be looking for. If the Baptist has supposed they are going to have everything their own way and I am not capable of taking care of my side of this matter, they may be disappointed and learn later I am here to take care of our side and them too if they don't get a different move on them to what they have had. You might do well to give this matter a careful consideration and make me an early reply. A letter addressed to me at Parrish, Franklin Co., Illinois, will reach me.

Very Respectfully,

J. D. STEAD.

To this I received the following letter from Elder Gardner, which he says is the ultimatum so far as they are concerned:

ALMA, Ill., Dec. 10, 1899.

J. D. STEAD, Parrish, Ill.;

*Friend and Bro.:*—Yours of the 7th inst. received today and contents carefully examined according to your request, and find nothing to excite or scare the Baptists. If you have some-

thing for the Baptists at Green Ridge that they are not looking for, will you please let it come. We are ready to hear what it is. I have your letters to Elder Todd in my possession; received them when he wrote me, when I wrote him as I promised you, but did not receive an answer until last week; but was not at home until today. Now, elder, I laid the matter before our church at our last meeting and they have endorsed certain propositions upon which they will meet the world. I know you claim they accepted yours or that I did, but you are mistaken. I told you if the church said so I would discuss them with you and use only the Bible. Here are the propositions my church have endorsed:

1. Do the Scriptures teach that the eternal salvation of the alien sinner is absolute (or unconditional). Baptists affirm.

2. Do the Scriptures teach that faith, repentance and water baptism are necessary conditions to be performed by the alien sinner in order to his eternal salvation. Baptists deny.

3. *Resolved*, That the Scriptures teach that the regular (or Primitive) Baptist Church of which I, — —, am a member, is apostolic in origin, organization and practice. Baptists affirm.

4. *Resolved*, That the Scriptures teach that the Reorganized Church of L. D. S. of which I, — —, am a member, is apostolic in origin, organization and practice. Baptists deny.

This is all and it is final so far as our move is concerned. We will move when the time comes and take care of ourselves. We are not hunting fame, neither are we hunting a crowd. You



wrote to Elder Todd the Baptists had threatened and blowed. We have never done anything of the kind and are ready to let the people decide that for themselves.

Respectfully Yours,  
S. I. GARDNER.

ALMA, Ill.

From this I gather Elder Todd has Elder G. converted; they had better not try to defend what they preach in a public discussion; and he gets his congregation together and they take a vote. Vote on what? you ask. The very propositions Elder Todd had sent over to Elder G., which, if they have to debate, they had better discuss. What do they mean by all this twisting and turning, if Mr. Gardner told the truth when he said they believed and preached what I asked them to affirm? If you are anxious to debate the world, why not defend what you believe and preach, thinking people may doubt your honesty in those things you hold more sacred than earthly things. I was afraid when I read Elder Todd's second letter his honesty would

be tested before we were through with him.

Since the Baptists cannot, or dare not, furnish a man to meet me in public debate on the above propositions, after agreeing to, and boasting so much of what they *can* do, I have put this correspondence in circular form, and circulate them in the interest of a truth-loving people, that they may know why Elder J. D. Stead and the Baptists are not going to have the much talked of debate at Green Ridge school-house, and that the people may know the facts as they are and by this means be able to discern who it is that is a coward and afraid to defend his church on the public rostrum.

In conclusion let me say, when the Baptist Church can find a man who thinks he can defend what they preach and disprove what the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is preaching, on the public rostrum, I stand ready to meet such a man and will stay with him to his heart's content.

J. D. STEAD.



