

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

“THE ENCAMPMENT PULPIT” OR PERHAPS “THE POLISHED FAMILY”: JANUS AT THE GATES...

Johnny Oxendine

In Roman mythology, Janus is the god of the gates, doors, beginnings and endings. The most familiar thing about this figure to most people would be the use of his name for the first month of the year. He was represented as having two faces or heads (looking in opposite directions) and symbolizing both future and past. I came to think of this figure after seeing promotions for two different lecture series that took place this summer.

There are ways in which these two programs were strikingly similar. Both groups were comprised of members of the church of Christ. Both groups brought speakers in from different parts of the country. Both provided classes for men and women. Both were in beautiful geographical settings. You could probably find a number of other similarities, but we will move on. There were also some distinct differences.

They were in two very different parts of the country (Tennessee & California). They were quite likely to have different weather (warmer in Tennessee than South Lake Tahoe). They were probably reaching somewhat different audiences. It is because of the last point that I was not entirely surprised, but again confused as to what message was conveyed when two different platforms could utilize the talents of the same speakers. (*Janus is looking/pointing in two*

different directions)

The Tahoe Family Encampment (going on now) has always been a host to very liberal elements in the brotherhood, especially men teaching at or associated with the Sunset International Bible Institute. Some of the speakers were from congregations that are partnered with Sunset in various missionary projects. Truitt Adair and Tex Williams are favorites, and they both have a relationship with Sunset that is well known.

Polishing The Pulpit had been known as a conservative program since 1995, quite different from the Tahoe extravaganza. It is overseen by the Jacksonville Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Alabama (the publishers of *House To House/Heart To Heart*), and is closely connected to brethren who are in fellowship with the Memphis School of Preaching, Apologetics Press, GBN, and so forth. They often feature Alan Highers, Tom Holland, B.J. Clarke, and other speakers who publish in the *Spiritual Sword*.

That these two programs would have the same speakers is quite honestly unimaginable. Tahoe clearly falls heavily to the left doctrinally, and to have brethren who are supposedly more “conservative” going to Tahoe to fellowship with little concern for that association, then turning around and heading off to Tennessee is what brought the image of Janus

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Guest Editorial...

What Is It To Be “Issue-Oriented?”

Occasionally, I will hear someone make the comment that those who are adamant regarding issues that face the Lord’s church are *issue-oriented*. Funk and Wagnalls defines *issue* as “a matter of importance to be resolved.” Webster says it is “the point or matter pending in a suit on which two parties join and put their cause to trial.” *Oriented* means “the determining of one’s position with reference to circumstances, ideals, etc.” (Funk and Wagnalls). Hence, to be “issue-oriented” is to “determine one’s position and put that cause to trial or to the test.” Christians are obligated to “**prove all things; hold fast that which is good**” (1Thess. 5:21). Hence, it stands to reason that *issues* will always be facing the Lord’s church. Since Christians have the obligation to “**sancify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you**” (1 Peter 3:15), we must be *oriented* to give a defense of “**the faith once for all delivered to the saints**” (Jude 3).

Although it is possible to become so imbalanced that we are cynical about the Lord’s church and its future, **we must face the fact that so long as the church exists we are going to have to face the issues that come our way. To do otherwise is to abdicate our responsibility** (Emphasis Mine, Ed.).

A negative connotation has been attached to the words *issue-oriented*. This *label* is used by critics to hush the mouths of those who still love the Truth while making the unsuspecting believe that there is something inherently evil in dealing with issues. None would be so bold as to suggest that all issues should be ignored, since even the most liberal *change agent* will take us to task on the issue of being issue-oriented.

The question arises, then, as to when our dealing with issues becomes imbalanced. *I suggest to you that any issue that comes down the pike is an issue that cannot be ignored and must be dealt with forthrightly. If the Truth is at stake we cannot and will not remain silent. The only alternative is to ignore the issues and allow the church to be swept into apostasy. It is my studied conviction that at least one reason why the Lord’s church is so troubled today is that too many brethren have simply grown weary of fighting the battle. Consequently false teachers have crossed the threshold, and are in the midst of the flock having a heyday* (Emphasis Mine, Ed.). Meanwhile, too many elderships and preachers sit back and do nothing for fear that they might be perceived as being *issue-oriented*. Yes, it is possible to become so consumed with the issues that face the Lord’s church that one can become cynical and never hold out any hope to God’s people. But the desire to provide hope and peace cannot drive us to ignore the issues that would in fact rob us of that hope and peace by leading us into error. —Tom Wacaster (CFTF, June, 1998, p. 9).

[*Re.: Dave Miller’s errors and those who fellowship him, bro. Tom no longer believes what he wrote in 1998. Is his silence indicative of “grow[ing] weary of fighting the battle” and why he ignores these issues. Why does he no longer believe “that any issue...cannot be ignored and must be dealt with forthrightly”?* Her is another physician who needs to repent and heal himself.—DPB]

(Continued From Page 1)

to mind.

You cannot say that Glenn Colley or Brad Harrub are hypocrites (Matthew 23), rather I believe they are a whole new order in the church—and it is amazing that “conservative” brethren do not view this as problematic. No doubt the brethren in Tahoe are glad to have another “bunch” of “conservatives” to legitimize their encampment. Colley and Harrub are multi-year attendees in Tahoe, and have been joined in recent years by Phil Sanders and Joe Wells.

Looking in the other direction (entirely) are the brethren in Tennessee, who apparently are not concerned with brethren speaking there (Tahoe) any more than the Memphis School of Preaching is concerned about speakers coming on to their program after having participated in the Sunset Workshops. *Janus? Disambiguation would be nice.*

—1724 Lake St.
San Mateo, CA
94403-1023



THE FOLLY OF THE FISH

Charles Pogue

William Jennings Bryan, known as the great commoner, once told the story of a man who believed a saltwater fish could be adapted to live in freshwater. He placed a herring in a jar of salt water, and day by day removed just a little of the water and replaced it with rainwater. At last, the herring was living in completely fresh water. But the man was not satisfied with that result, so every day he removed a little bit of the freshwater until he had the herring breathing air. At that point, he put the herring in a cage and kept it like a bird. But, alas, one day when his master was gone, the man’s servant placed a cup of water in the cage for the fish to use to moisten his food. When the man returned, he found the fish had inadvertently stuck his head into the water and drowned.

Once there was a lectureship held by a congregation that used only sound faithful preachers. But year by year and one by one, a brother who was willing to compromise on the

matter of fellowship replaced one of the sound men until the entire program was filled with men who would fellowship nearly anyone. Then, year by year, the speakers removed a point of Truth from their lectures and replaced it with error. Finally, the lectureship had completely abandoned the Truth, and only error was heard from speaker to speaker. One year by a still unexplained mistake and oversight, a sound Gospel preacher was invited to speak, and when he spoke, he rebuked the whole lot of them. Consequently, the brother was immediately labeled a troublemaker, called all sorts of uncomplimentary names, was withdrawn from and written up by Dick Sztanyo in the “Preacher’s Files” as a new anti! *The Moral Of This Story Is: Only a birdbrain would do a thing so fishy as to consort with “herring” brethren.*

—P.O. Box 592
Granby, MO 64844

CALL IT SOMETHING ELSE

Bob Howton

I was reading in the excellent Bellview Lectureship book *Leadership* the other day, and came across an article by bro. Dub McClish, in which he gave a comprehensive review of the highly controversial subject, titled, *Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders*. On page 89 of the cited volume, the following statement is made:

Both the Brown Trail Elders (Bedford, TX) and the committee of its preachers and instructors surely anticipated that their adoption of the “Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders” process would associate them with the generally recognized liberal congregations and bring criticism upon them because of such action.

The footnote on that paragraph dealt with the implications of that anticipated action, in the following words:

Dave Miller was defensive about this very charge in his

sermon of April 8, 1990.

But what about this idea of reevaluating current Elders, or reconfirming? There are some brethren that are really up in arms, it seems to me, and say, ‘That is what the liberals are doing’.... We may use the term “Evaluating” of Elders, we may use the term ‘Reconfirmation’. If these terms concern you, then call it something else.

I am aghast that *anyone* who claims to be a “Gospel” preacher would say such a thing! Using this misguided and erroneous standard would have us render *any* bedrock scriptural rule in such manner as to completely destroy the original intent of the idea. Look at the comparison of Colossians 1:18, as spoken by inspired men, and the diluted/abused idea imposed by mortal intermeddling and confusing. “**And He is the head of the Body, the Church....**” Now, call it something else! And He is the *supposed* head of *some*

body, which *could be* a church.... *Absolutely absurd!* And a dangerous *falsification* of God's Holy Word. 2 John 9 still says: **"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."** That, in my opinion, is exactly what transpires when anyone takes a Law from God and *calls it something else!* Using that kind of philosophy concerning the topic of "Reevaluating/Reconfirming Elders" and realizing that we can "call it something else," let's call it what it is! It is a deluded misapplication of Truth and as such, is a work of the devil! The Bible surely *proves* that *Truth*, but not the "Re-evaluating" misconception!

Calling truth "error" or equating "error" as Truth, carries eternal and severe consequences!

Heb. 10:25 warns Christians to not forsake the assembling together at the appointed times. *Let's call it something else, and meet whenever it does not interfere with other plans we might have.*

Acts 20:7 clearly requires partaking of the Lord's Supper every First Day of the week. *Let's call it something else,*

and partake of it whenever, or if, we choose to partake of it at all.

I Cor. 16:1, 2 gives orders for Christians to give cheerfully, and liberally each first day of the week. *Let's call it something else, and give only if we wish to, or not at all, as we use God's funds for us.*

2 Tim. 2:15 dictates that Christians must study God's Word, if they'd be approved of God. *Let's call it something else, and thumb through a few pages of the Bible every once in a while.*

Remember! You can call the cute black "kitty" with the white racing stripes, your "baby," but you'd better be careful to not rock on it's tail! Just so! Sin is sin, no matter what you wish to call it!

—*The Evangel*

**East Pointe Church of Christ
3935 Woodland Forrest Dr.
Tuscaloosa, AL 35405**

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Balanced Preaching

Dave Miller

When we abandon the numerous preaching manuals of men and return to THE one and only authority for understanding biblical homiletics, we are struck with awe that the contrast could be so blatant.

First, Some say the preacher should never offend or create division by his life or teaching. Granted, some preachers may inappropriately do so. On the other hand, the preacher who is patterning his life and teaching after Jesus will inevitably do so. In Jesus' case, **"there was much murmuring among the people concerning him"** (John 7:12). Time and time again, Jesus' doctrine and bold actions stirred up division: **"So there was a division among the people because of him"** (John 7:43; cf. John 10:19; 1 Cor. 11:19). The prevailing mood in the church of today is "peace at all costs," "smooth it over" and "whatever you do, don't create division." No one wants division for division's sake. But we've missed an extremely important element of biblical religion if we fail to hear the words of our Master when he declared: **"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division"** (Luke 12:51).

Second, among our more sophisticated brethren, a common sentiment suggests that it is inappropriate for the preacher to "call names" or speak too directly about a false doctrine, false teacher or false church. The "reasoning" behind this tenet suggests that such an approach only serves to alienate people. Granted, human discretion may need to be exercised to avoid unnecessary antagonism. But does this premise, in fact, have biblical support? If so, how do we account for the fact that both John the Immerser and Jesus labeled contemporaries with rather direct names (e.g., **"brood of vipers," "fools," "blind guides," "hypocrites," "child of hell," "serpents," "of your father the devil"**—Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:15-17, 33; John 8:44)? How do we account for the fact that Paul publicly called individuals down-by name—for their misdeeds (e.g., Demas, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Peter, Alexander the Coppersmith—Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18; 4:10,14)? Why did John call Diotrophes' name (3 John 9, 10)? Why did John come right out and call the name of a false religious group (Rev. 2:6,15)? One gets the idea that maybe publicly pinpointing

people, groups, and doctrines can be a wholesome activity!

Third, one hears a lot about the need to have “balanced preaching.” Presumably, what is meant by this admonition is that the preacher should refrain from being too “negative.” Granted, we should “**speak the truth in love**” (Eph. 4:15), but the Bible repeatedly intimates that the human mind is in more need of negative than positive. The inspired preacher Jeremiah was told that his task consisted of six activities: to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build, and plant (Jer. 1:10). Notice that four out of the six are negative behaviors. When queried by the rich young man concerning eternal life, Jesus delineated six commands, four of which were negative (Matt. 19:16-19). When Paul told Timothy

what the New Testament preacher’s task entailed, he summarized: “**reprove, rebuke, exhort**” (2 Tim. 4:2). Two of the three are negative.

The conclusion is hard for many to accept: biblical preaching—preaching that is balanced—is divisive, offensive, and often negative. God’s proclaimed truth is like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces (Jer. 23:29). To many, it is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). Their hard hearts are offended by it (Matt. 15:12-14). It’s divisive, negative qualities are accentuated only in the mind of the disobedient (Acts 7:51). But to those will receive it with humility, it will save their souls (Jas. 1:21)! (*The Restorer*, Editor: Gary Workman, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1988, February, p.3)



SOME THOUGHTS ON DAVE MILLER’S ARTICLE

David P. Brown

The previous article states the Truth about most of those brethren who call for balanced preaching. In it, Miller well describes their mind-set. And, we regret to say, their numbers have greatly multiplied over the past half century. Of course, such beguiled brethren have always been around, opposing faithful brethren who correctly hate and oppose every false way (Ps. 119:104).

Sadly, in his article, the 1988 Miller finds himself in the unenviable position of opposing one of the chief efforts employed by the supporters and defenders of the 2010 Miller. In their feeble attempts to justify extending fellowship to him, although he refuses to acknowledge his errors and repent of them, these brethren find themselves at odds with the 1988 Miller. These weak and insipid characters condemn those brethren who oppose Miller’s false teaching and fellowshiping him in his errors by labeling them spiritually unbalanced and the source of much, if not most, of the churches problems.

Miller’s closing remarks in his 1988 article “Balanced Preaching” need to be embedded deeply in our readers’ minds. One reason for such is that Miller’s article is not only the Truth regarding those who cry out for balanced preaching today, but it also applies to the 2010 Miller who turned from the sentiments he expressed in his 1988 article and now embraces what he condemned twenty two years ago. Thus, Miller’s 1988 article applies as much to him in 2010 as it does to those who call for balanced preaching in their efforts to support him and defend themselves and others in their unscriptural fellowship of him. *So it is that the 1988 Miller condemns the 2010 Miller along with all those who call for balanced preaching (as Miller defined and employed the term) in their weak efforts to support him and remain in fellowship with him as he continues in his errors today.*

In 2005, one of the first objections made to our Scriptural opposition to Miller’s errors was that we were unbalanced. Obviously, these ne’er-do-wells who continue to oppose us for opposing Miller consider their own opposition to us a component part of being Scripturally balanced. On the other hand, our opposition to Miller’s false teaching and continued unrepentant attitude is judged to be unbalanced. That crooked disposition of heart remains to this day among the defenders of the unrepentant Dave Miller.

The following quotations are indicative of the disposition of heart with which Miller dealt and refuted in his good 1988 article. In reading these quotations from Miller’s present-day defenders, please keep in mind that Miller refuted them in his 1988 article. But, with his change of heart, he has in his 1988 article also refuted and condemned himself. The reader is directed to Miller’s closing remarks in his article entitled “Balanced Preaching” where he wrote:

The conclusion is hard for many to accept: biblical preaching—preaching that is balanced—is divisive, offensive, and often negative. God’s proclaimed truth is like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces (Jer. 23:29). To many, it is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). Their hard hearts are offended by it (Matt. 15:12-14). It’s divisive, negative qualities are accentuated only in the mind of the disobedient (Acts 7:51). But to those will receive it with humility, it will save their souls (Jas. 1:21)!

The following quotations are from various articles in the September 2005 “new” Gospel Journal. This was the second issue that former co-editors Barry Grider and John Moore edited. According to the 1988 Dave Miller these brethren fail to understand that balanced preaching is “divisive, offensive, and often negative.” That “It’s divisive, negative qualities are accentuated only in the mind of the disobedient (Acts 7:51).”

Balance is a word abused by liberals and is anathema to

radicals.... Some spend their time constantly critiquing what others are doing and at times even refusing to endorse good and noble endeavors of sound brethren.... The church must maintain proper balance if it is to grow and if it is to have a positive influence in our world....

Both men [the men are named, Editor] are well grounded in the faith, are experienced in the Lord's work, are dedicated to truth, have good balance.... There will be unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace among brethren when we seek the very best for each other and get permanently away from a biting, devouring disposition to destroy.... Too many of us do not treat a brother as we would like to be treated were roles reversed. Caustic words have a sure way of returning to haunt us.... Is there any among us who cannot make improvement in the way we treat our brethren in Christ? Remember, He died for the very ones we may be seeking to crush....

Too many brothers wear Sound Doctrine as a badge of Christianity. In reality, the badge of Christ is Love.... A few years ago, I believed that as long as I taught the truth, then my love for others could not be questioned. I gleefully attacked liberals and change agents with sarcasm and satire. If they would have read my articles and heard my preaching they would have been stabbed by my rapier wit.... Many sound preachers and Christians have failed here. Love demands that we care for liberals, legalists, change agents, denominationalists, and...one another. Sitting behind a keyboard pecking out condemnations appears rude, arrogant, resentful, and unkind—all the qualities contrary to love—but it is easy.... We have all heard men defend truth who were more intent on making someone look stupid than inspiring conversion or repentance. Derision and ridicule express rudeness, not love.... We all face people, events and decisions in the church that are not matters of fellowship, but we do not like them. Some choose to "make an issue of them," but love chooses to let them go without a fight.... When change agents knock on the church's door its members must exhibit abiding love with meekness and instruction; this will thwart their will, not clever condensation [sic.] or gleeful humiliation (2 Tim. 2:24–26).

Christians are not to be arrogant or obnoxious in their conduct.... Brethren are not to be disagreeable so that their conduct in defense of the gospel becomes offensive....

We can be pigeonholed as that mean, exclusive bunch who think they are the only ones going to heaven while all else are going to hell.... There are instances where churches of Christ indeed have assumed an identity of belligerence....

REMEMBER WHAT MILLER WROTE ABOUT SUCH MIND-SETS.

Both of the following paragraphs are from Neal Pollard's "Devil Disease" article, written in August 2005. Grider published it in the Forest Hill News on 8/30/2005.

[After mentioning the dangers of liberalism, the article stated]: There are too many...who are equally damaging and vicious in their attack on the body of Christ. In one sense, they are more dangerous due to their contention that they are rooting out all false doctrine and exposing all error. When they are doing so with proper ethics, attitude and balance, they are to be applauded. Yet, there is a mentality that seems wholly obsessed with full time heretic detection, slandering brethren,

and scrupulously elevating minutia as on par with Christ's doctrine. They unnecessarily divide brethren.... They polarize and draw away disciples after themselves. They are fight-pickers, seemingly eager to engage in lengthy, unending diatribe and debate to the exclusion of other Christian obligations, of righteous, Christlike conduct, and of a charitable spirit that "is not rude...keeps no record of wrongs...does not delight in evil..." (1 Corinthians 13:5–6).

[Concerning these "fight-pickers," the same article then opined]: First, they are increasingly turning on one another. Further, they are succeeding in infecting themselves by their biting and devouring. Then, they are facilitating their own demise—that of influence, reputation, trustworthiness, and respectability. However, they have also viciously wounded good men and women...in the process.

Clearly the 1988 Miller did not see eye to eye with bro. Pollard. Remember Miller wrote:

In Jesus' case, "**there was much murmuring among the people concerning him**" (John 7:12). Time and time again, Jesus' doctrine and bold actions stirred up division: "**So there was a division among the people because of him**" (John 7:43; cf. John 10:19; 1 Cor. 11:19). The prevailing mood in the church of today is "peace at all costs," "smooth it over" and "whatever you do, don't create division." No one wants division for division's sake. But we've missed an extremely important element of biblical religion if we fail to hear the words of our Master when he declared: "**Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division**" (Luke 12:51).

Did Miller write the Truth on balanced preaching in 1988 or did Neal Pollard write it in his Devil Disease article in 2005? We certainly have seen nothing from Miller indicating that he has repented of what he wrote about balanced preaching back in 1988.

The following quotation came from the Forest Hill News, June 19, 2007, Volume 34, Number 25, published by Forest Hill Church of Christ, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd., Memphis, TN 38125, Home of the Memphis School of Preaching. Barry Grider wrote:

...In July [2007], I will begin a series of messages on Sunday evenings that will continue through the end of the summer entitled "The Beauty of Balance." Balance is the key to enjoying a healthy life both physically and spiritually. We will particularly notice how important it is for God's people to be balanced if we are to grow both spiritually and numerically.

Also, beginning Wednesday, the 4th of July, a special DVD series by Dave Miller entitled, "The Silencing of God," will be shown to the entire congregation, 7th grade and up. This also will continue through the end of the summer. **Brother Miller is a faithful and able gospel preacher who is doing a great work directing Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama.** These special DVD presentations, focusing on our great religious heritage in America, will help us see what is happening to unravel our society that once lived by the motto "In God We Trust." The information will be startling, but needs to be heard. Don't miss it! (Bold Mine.—Editor)

Does anyone think that Grider would print the 1988

Miller article on balanced preaching in Forest Hill's church bulletin today? Did bro. Miller evidence that he was "a faithful and able gospel preacher" in what he wrote in his article on balanced preaching in 1988?

Others in 2005, such as Alan Highers in *The Spiritual Sword*, made much ado about the importance of balanced preaching. Yes, this is the same Alan Highers who recently publicly announced that he had started a scholarship fund at Freed-Hardeman University, and not long ago, spoke on the sin of mechanical instruments of music during the 21st Century luncheon at that particular Lipscomb Lectureship. However, Highers said he was not on said lectureship, but he and the 21st Century luncheon were listed in the lectureship schedule brochure.

Since Miller is a regular speaker on the annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship, I wonder why bro. Highers did not run Miller's 1988 article on balanced preaching in that 2005 *Spiritual Sword* issue dealing with balanced preaching. Remember in 1988 Miller wrote:

...among our more sophisticated brethren, a common sentiment suggests that it is inappropriate for the preacher to "call names" or speak too directly about a false doctrine, false teacher or false church. The "reasoning" behind this tenet suggests that such an approach only serves to alienate people. Granted, human discretion may need to be exercised to avoid unnecessary antagonism. But does this premise, in fact, have biblical support? If so, how do we account for the fact that both John the Immerser and Jesus labeled contemporaries with rather direct names (e.g., "brood of vipers," "fools," "blind guides," "hypocrites," "child of hell," "serpents," "of your father the devil" — Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:15-17, 33; John 8:44)? How do we account for the fact that Paul publicly called individuals down—by name—for their misdeeds (e.g., Demas, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Peter, Alexander the Coppersmith—Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18; 4:10,14)? Why did John call Diotrephes' name (3 John 9, 10)? Why did John come right out and call the name of a false religious group (Rev. 2:6,15)? One gets the idea that maybe publicly pinpointing people, groups, and doctrines can be a wholesome activity!

Of course what Grider and friends wrote about balanced preaching was one thing, but they hastened to depart from their own prescription for balanced preaching and living when they referred to those who marked them for their errors. The ultimate in their hypocrisy was seen in the Forest Hill church's fallacious withdrawal of fellowship from Dub McClish and your editor in December of 2009.

Also, is it the practice of balanced Christianity to continue to leave brother Garland Elkins off of the Spiritual Sword Lectureship and fail to include Alan Highers on the MSOP lectureship? Surely, between Getwell, *The Spiritual Sword*, Forest Hill, and the MSOP, there are enough sophisticated

brethren to allow for about anything and, in the minds of many brethren, justify it too—all in the name of balanced preaching and fellowship.

Again in 1988, Dave Miller wrote the following about those who call for balanced preaching.

...the Bible repeatedly intimates that the human mind is in more need of negative than positive. The inspired preacher Jeremiah was told that his task consisted of six activities: to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build, and plant (Jer. 1:10). Notice that four out of the six are negative behaviors. When queried by the rich young man concerning eternal life, Jesus delineated six commands, four of which were negative (Matt. 19:16-19). When Paul told Timothy what the New Testament preacher's task entailed, he summarized: "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (2 Tim. 4:2). Two of the three are negative.

Does anyone think that Miller's 1988 article will be handed out to the MSOP students, or that Bobby Liddell, the MSOP director, will put it in their publication, *The Yoke-fellow*? MSOP faculty members have been known to have Miller's September 2005 article at the ready when they are asked about Miller's involvement in the R&R of elders. Then they (at least some of them) can also present it to the inquirer to show that Miller has repented of his sin in teaching and practicing the R&R of elders, etc., *about which in reality the article says nothing*.

One thing is for certain, Miller's 1988 article is exceedingly clear, frank, and candid on what the Bible teaches on balanced preaching and what some people who call for it actually mean by it. It is as succinct and pointed as his September 2005 article is nebulous and vague—but it certainly does not evidence Miller's repentance for having taught and practiced at the Brown Trail Church of Christ the R&R of elders, etc.—*for which to this day he has not repented*.

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Logic forces us to conclude that the *balanced preaching* called for by the brethren herein mentioned and others of like-mindedness will produce a *balanced fellowship*. But it will be a fellowship built on the same flimsy foundation that was advocated some forty or so years ago by the forerunners of those who dominate and control the universities operated by the brethren today—the balanced preaching best exemplified by Max Lucado and Rubel Shelly.

To a degree, the face of that balanced fellowship is revealed in the article by Johnny Oxendine appearing on the front page of this issue of *CFTF* entitled, “*THE ENCAMPMENT PULPIT*” OR PERHAPS “*THE POLISHED FAMILY*”: *JANUS AT THE GATES*... . Rather than allow the Word of God alone to determine what our obligations to Him are, these preachers are seeking a consensus of certain brethren of their own choosing, who to them seem to be somewhat in the church, in their efforts to decide what is and is not a mat-

ter of fellowship. And, then we wonder from where church councils, synods, and conferences came.

When will we ever learn that it is God’s Truth alone that unites us and not a consensus reached by a conclave of frail but polished preachers who have the unmitigated gall to determine by their own likes and dislikes what a fellowship matter is and what it is not. The respect of many for Bible authority is certainly at a very low ebb.

By the mercies of Christ, we exhort all to pattern their characters after the examples of Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, Elijah, all the prophets, John the Immerser, Christ’s apostles, the New Testament evangelists, and above all Jesus Christ, our Lord, rather than today’s so-called balanced brethren who, from polished and glittering pulpits, spew their honey flavored and hypocritical poison out to audiences that lap it up to the eternal destruction of all involved. ☞

THE UNVARNISHED PULPIT

"Don't be negative, said some to me;
 But they were as negative as could be.
 Don't be negative was their constant cry
 But from the cross I heard Jesus sigh:
 'Twas not sweet positive truth I taught
 That caused my painful death to be wrought.
 It was exposure of error, lust, and greed,
 That prompted my enemies to plot the deed.'
 So regardless of the cry of many
 I must be free from the blood of any.
 And when the Judgment opens wide,
 We can stand with the prophets side by side.
 Preach it, brother, preach, never compromise.
 God must be glorified; it cannot be otherwise."

—Author Unknown

ODE TO A HIRELING PREACHER

*Preach a sermon, preacher; but make it short and sweet;
 Our stomachs strike at 12 o'clock, a hungering to eat.
 Preach a sermon, preacher; we care not what you say;
 As long as you leave us alone, and fire the other way.
 Preach a sermon, preacher; make it good and plain;
 But don't you dare to get so close as to call sin by its name.
 Preach a sermon, preacher; but don't get too specific;
 As long as you will generalize, we think you are terrific.
 Preach a sermon, preacher; make it what we love to hear;
 We'll pat you on your spineless back, while you scratch
 our itching ear.*

—Author Unknown



THE MEN WHO WOULD BE KING

David B. Watson

In the book of First Kings, chapters eleven and twelve we read of two men, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, both of whom desired to be king over all Israel. The position of king was a position of prestige and a position of power and a position of preeminence, and both men desired such.

A Position of Prestige: Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, of the dynasty of David, and rightful heir to the throne when his father died. Thus when “**Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father... Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead**” (1 Kng.. 11:43). The Pulpit Commentary points out that:

“we see here a young prince, heir to one of the greatest empires of antiquity, the inheritor of an illustrious and unequalled name, with all the advantages which the glory and greatness of his father could give him reaping the benefits of a long peace, his coffers full of money, his cities filled with all manner of store, his fleets ploughing the sea, his army guarding his frontier.”

His position as king was indeed a position of prestige.

Jeroboam was “**the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon’s servant, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow woman**” and “**he lifted up his hand**

against the king. And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king” (1 Kng. 11:26-27).

And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: and Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: and he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee (1 Kng. 11:29-31).

God promised: “And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel” (1 Kng. 11:37). He was further told

And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee (1 Kng. 11:38).

Jeroboam wanted and was promised a position of prestige.

A Position of Power: The word “power” means “the ability to control others; authority; sway; influence” (Webster).

Rehoboam’s desire for power is seen in his answer to the complaint of the people of Israel. The people had complained to him saying: “Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us” (1 Kng. 12:10). Rehoboam answered “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (1 Kng. 12:10-11). Rehoboam saw his kingship as a position of power. “The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph” (1 Kng. 11:28). Jeroboam was a powerful man but wanted a greater position of power.

A Position of Preeminence: The word “preeminent” means “to project forward..... eminent above others, excelling others.....surpassing” (Webster).

And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only (1 Kng. 12:20).

Jeroboam received a position of preeminence.

And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon (1 Kng. 12:21).

Rehoboam would have forced his position of preeminence on the people with power except that God intervened

and stopped him saying “this thing is from me” (1 Kng. 12:24).

The Present Problems: The present distress among the congregations of God’s people concerns an impenitent false teacher, Dave Miller, who has been marked and avoided by faithful brethren for years. This false teacher currently has a position of prestige as executive director of Apologetics Press. This false teacher has a certain amount of power and ability and authority to control, sway and influence others. This false teacher has a degree of preeminence and is thus looked up to by some. Perhaps these are some of the reasons this false teacher refuses to repent.

There are others who fellowship and support him in spite of his error. Many of these supporters are men who would be king in that they also have or desire to have positions of prestige at or in schools or academies, colleges or universities, broadcasting networks, publishing corporations, etc. Many of these supporters and promoters have the power and ability and authority to control, sway and influence others in the church and/or organizations of which they are a part.

The Parallel: Many of the supporters of the false teacher, Dave Miller, are like “Diotrephes who loveth to have the preeminence” (3 John 9).

Diotrephes was said to be “prating against us (faithful brethren – DBW) with malicious words” (3 John 10). When Rehoboam answered the people who complained to him, the record says that he “answered the people roughly” (1 Kng. 12:13). Faithful brethren, who have called for Dave Miller to repent, have been called “toxic” and “vile” and “liars” (among other things) by supporters of the false teacher, Dave Miller.

Further, Diotrephes “receiveth us (faithful brethren – DBW) not” (3 John. 9). “Not content therewith” (with malicious words) “neither doth he himself receive the brethren” but “forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John. 10). Supporters of the false teacher, Dave Miller, have not been content with their malicious words against faithful brethren, but have gone so far as to mark and withdraw fellowship from those who rightly call for Dave Miller’s repentance.

Faithful brethren, however, will continue to “follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.” (3 John 11). Faithful brethren will continue to remember: “He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (3 John 11). Faithful brethren will continue to pray for and call upon Dave Miller and his supporters to repent of their evil. May God deliver His church from men who would be kings.

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AT THE RIVER'S EDGE: MEETING JESUS IN BAPTISM (A REVIEW, A RESPONSE, AND A REPLY)

Gary W. Summers

Some time ago many churches received a booklet and a letter from the College of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University. The letter is addressed, "Dear church leader," and is signed by Jack R. Reese, who is the dean of the aforementioned college. The opening words are: "Preaching baptism and practicing it faithfully are crucial for the church in these days." While we agree wholeheartedly with that statement, the irony is that men like distinguished Carmichael Professor, Carroll D. Osburn (from Abilene Christian University) are the ones who have undermined the Bible's teaching on this subject, insisting that whether we baptize for or because of the remission of sins should not be a barrier to fellowship.

Therefore, we seek pardon for being a tad skeptical of anything coming out of ACU regarding the role that baptism plays in salvation. The booklet is designed to give people insight into baptism (which it does, in part). ACU's goal is that it will be used as a basis for Bible study in adult classes and youth groups. Such a decision would not be wise because, in spite of a few excellent thoughts, the material is seriously flawed.

The authors are Jeff W. Childers and Frederick D. Aquino. The former of these co-authored *The Crux of the Matter* (along with Jack Reese). In this book, faithful members of the church and Gospel preachers are accused of being judgmental and legalistic. Brethren are told that the authors, in their "study of the Scriptures began to call into question some of the conclusions we had reached in earlier decades" (18). Really? Why? The Bible still teaches by direct statement, approved example, and implication. What has changed? If someone comes along and shows a better way of doing things, we would all profit. If someone demonstrates that we have been guilty of poor interpretation techniques, fine—show us the better principle. But we are not about to trade fundamentally sound principles just because certain "professors" are bored with them. They further write:

Third, as we began to move out of our isolation and have real dialogue and relationship with people from other religious groups, many of us were astonished to see demonstrations of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Some of them seemed to evidence more Christian virtues than many of us. How could this be, if they had not come to the right understanding of the truth as we saw it (18)?

Commenting on this paragraph in February of 2001, this reviewer wrote:

Read this paragraph again, for this is truly "the crux of the matter." The faulty assumption is that denominational people have the fruit of the spirit and thus must be saved; the truth is that they have the appearance of the fruit because they have followed the teachings of the Word of God with respect to

those things. The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, and when people follow them, they are better for it. Many denominational folk have given up being immoral because the Scriptures teach against it.... In fact, that many live a purer life does not prove they are Christians, either.

This is nothing more than the philosophy of Max Lucado, as espoused in an article he wrote eight years ago: "A Dream Worth Keeping Alive: Liking the Fruit But Not the Orchard." Lucado also saw people who possessed the characteristics of Galatians 5:22-23, and he too wrongly concluded, "Why, they must be Christians." Who knows what will happen if he meets a patient Buddhist? In keeping with the spirit of this age, the means of determining who is a Christian has passed from objective criteria to subjective—from "Has he obeyed the gospel" to "Does he seem nice?"

That review went on to emphasize the importance of approaching the Bible objectively—to use the Scriptures to determine who is a Christian, rather than feelings.

Strengths

The River's Edge does have a few strengths. It affirms that baptism is "a total immersion into him" (referring to Jesus, although the authors never capitalize the personal pronoun) (4). They state correctly: "Baptism is not just a command to be obeyed, an essential requirement to be checked off the list" (5). They periodically elaborate on that point:

We bring them to the riverbank, but we also wait for them on the other side, ready to walk along side them, telling them stories of the kingdom, challenging them to grow, and providing the resources they need to mature and to serve their Lord (14).

They emphasize the importance of commitment, even going so far as to warn that "following Jesus isn't for everyone" (18). They also urge that changed lives should be indicative of all Christians: "Transformation into the image of Christ is the chief aim of the Christian life..." (23). These are all points that the Scriptures teach, and they should be emphasized.

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The Importance of the Subject

Since baptism is something that has been emphasized by the churches of Christ, perhaps we ought to explain the reasons for the attention that we give to it. The reason is NOT that it is more important than faith or repentance. In responding to God's grace, we must first decide whether we believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and whether we believe in the God Who inspired that Word. Once the evidence leads us to the correct conclusion (John 20:30-31) and we are ready to trust God and His Son Jesus to save us from our sins, another major decision must be faced.

Are we willing to repent? Everything else hinges on this point. We may know and be convinced of the truthfulness of the Word and the Deity of Christ, but do we really want to give up the sinful things in life that we practice? Many people want to grasp tightly all their worldly lusts and still be a redeemed Christian, but it simply does not work that way. A change in our actions, attitudes, and even our thinking is absolutely essential. Do we trust in God enough to give up sinful things and be satisfied with the spiritual blessings that come in their stead? It is precisely at this point that the most difficult decision is made.

If we determine to belong to God, then confessing that Jesus is the Son of God and being baptized are really no problem at all. If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6), and we know that baptism is required, we will be like those on Pentecost: **"Then those that gladly received his word were baptized"** (Acts 2:41; cf. v. 38). If all this is so, then why do we emphasize baptism?

Primarily, the reason is that there has been a concerted denial of its involvement in salvation. Many are preaching the unbiblical doctrine of "faith only," which does not allow for repentance, confession, or baptism. Most "sinner's prayers" do not mention these, either. Thus, we have taken it upon ourselves to call attention to the role of baptism in salvation.

Weaknesses and Errors

Therefore, this booklet is greatly disappointing: while it discusses many worthwhile aspects of baptism, it does not take the opportunity to highlight its most crucial element—the forgiveness of sins. The word blood does not occur in this booklet, which is remarkable. In fact, stating the truth about the blood of Christ washing away our sins in baptism is not thought worthy of mention, and, to the contrary, the authors think it should be ignored. They write: "Discussing baptism's essentiality reveals little, but looking into its essence can open our eyes to see the power of Jesus to cleanse and renew broken lives..." (5).

Wait a minute! How can the authors divorce baptism's essentiality from its essence? Its essence is the very thing that makes it essential. If baptism is involved in man's obtaining forgiveness of sins (its essence), then how can its essentiality be minimized? Yet the authors of this booklet do minimize baptism. Consider the following two sentences.

Baptism is a marvelous point of entry for disciples and should not be commandeered by agendas that reduce it to a simple rule or that focus solely on debates about its essentiality. Such agendas distract us from the essence of baptism, weakening our understanding of the discipleship it pictures (10).

If the authors are trying to move ACU out from under the dark clouds of suspicion regarding what they teach concerning salvation, this booklet will not accomplish that goal. The above statement insults those who have prepared diligently and debated successfully over the years on this very topic. No one who has ever engaged in the arena of honorable public discussion (by the way, have these men ever presented their views publicly and had them challenged?) ever had any other "agenda" but to teach people the truth concerning what the Bible says. If anyone has an agenda, it would be the authors of this booklet, and their purpose is to direct people's attention away from what the Bible teaches about the essentiality of baptism!

They also affirm that "it's unlikely that total agreement on every baptismal issue can ever be achieved" (10). What kind of gobbledygook is this? Those who are willing to hear what God has revealed on the matter stand in agreement. A sincere student of the Word will want to know what the word transliterated baptism means; does the New Testament authorize sprinkling and pouring or only immersion? A true disciple is not going to say that Biblical information is not important.

A true disciple will not be satisfied to be baptized and not know the reasons behind it. Yet the authors scrupulously avoid the fact that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, Acts 2:38 is cited only one time in the entire booklet, and it is misapplied: "When a person is baptized 'in the name of Jesus' to receive 'the gift of the Spirit' (Acts 2:38), he or she is putting on Jesus, like putting on a different suit of clothes or a new skin (Galatians 3:27)" (8). First of all, the verse does not say that we are baptized to receive the gift of the Spirit. Peter spoke thus: **"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (Acts 2:38).

Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is the byproduct of being baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Never did Peter or any other New Testament preacher tell sinners to be baptized in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Second, why did the authors of this booklet omit the reason that Peter did give for baptism—for the remission of

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sins? This is no accident or oversight; what we find in their words is a deliberate attempt to remove the purpose the inspired Holy Spirit put into the text and replace it with an idea that (although in the text) is not the purpose for baptism.

The writers progress even further in their clumsy efforts to obscure Acts 2:38. They provide three reasons for baptism. The first one refers to John 3:5-8 and the new birth, which is certainly an important passage. But then they say, “Our baptism connects us to the birth of Jesus. It is as if the Spirit of God were hovering over the waters, ready to bring forth a new creation at God’s command (Genesis 1:2)” (9). What exactly is the connection between Jesus’ birth and our new birth, according to them? This text makes no sense.

“Second, in the water, we’re also joining Jesus in the Jordan river. His presence in the water purifies it, transforming it from a muddy stream into the cleansing waters that sanctify us to become his servants” (9). What? Cleansing has nothing to do with the physical quality of the waters (1 Peter 3:21). We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus WHEN we obey from the heart the command to be baptized (Rom. 6:17-18; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5).

The third point about joining Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection is Scriptural, and they cite Romans 6:3-4. But they cannot bring themselves to say that baptism is essential to salvation or that it is the means by which our sins are washed away. Although they argue that we must die to ourselves, there is no hint that we must die to SIN. Romans 6:6 (which they do not mention, although it is in the context) gives both of these: “**Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin, For he who has died has been freed from sin**” (Rom. 6:6-7).

That the authors harbor a low view of the true purpose of baptism is seen by their opening comments. They describe baptism as “a long-awaited event or the spontaneous response to an inspiring sermon” (3). In what church has baptism been a long-planned event? Someone might make the decision to be baptized and plan for the following day, but we never encourage any one to put off obedience—particularly for a long time. In the New Testament, all obedience was immediate. What the authors describe sounds more like a ritual than baptism the way it is taught in the New Testament.

This notion was not accidental; they later encourage planning “the structure of Sunday worship around baptismal events” (13). This sounds like what the denominations do when they plan for a baptismal service every six months or so. They do not keep their baptisteries clean and ready for use. They only fill them up once or twice a year for their special public services. If one is going to pick out special clothing for the occasion (13), he certainly does not regard baptism as essential—the way it is presented in the New Testament. The authors (apparently) do not view baptism as the passing from a lost state into a saved one. Why would someone who has been taught about salvation properly want to wait to have his

sins removed? Imagine Ananias saying to Paul, “**And now why are you waiting? Arise and go buy some special baptismal clothes and in two weeks we will have a ceremony**” (Acts 22:16)!!

In their haste to dispense with baptism for the remission of sins, the authors (in effect) challenge the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when we ask, “Is baptism the work of God or a human work?” we are forcing a false distinction that does not fit the full incarnational glory of God being unveiled in Christ (10).

Pardon the unsophisticated expression, O erudite and educated writers, but Hogwash! People need to know the answer to that question. If baptism is of men, then it is a work of human merit and cannot be considered part of salvation. If, on the other hand, it is the “**working of God**” (Col. 2:12, a Scripture not mentioned in this section), then it must be regarded as essential.

Furthermore, did it never occur to these “scholars” that this is the very question Jesus asked? “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” (Matt. 21:25). Would they deign to take the Lord to task for pitting humanity against God (11)?

More could be said by way of criticism—especially regarding the Holy Spirit (#5, 29), but these comments are sufficient to convey the point that these authors, with the endorsement of Jack Reese, dean of the graduate school of theology, have attempted to sanitize salvation by removing from it the concepts of sin and the blood of Christ shed on the cross. They have tried to remake baptism into a positive, personal, “extreme makeover” experience. We are much safer with the New Testament, which presents baptism as that which removes the sins of the penitent soul, without which he would remain lost.

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A Response—At Apostasy’s Edge

On May 16th, I published a review of *At The River’s Edge*, a booklet written by Jeff W. Childers and Frederick D. Aquino, published by ACU Press. One of the authors wrote and asked for a copy of my comments, which I emailed to him. A few days ago I received a 6-page response from him via e-mail. It was not exactly what I expected from the academic community (which would have been something like, “I’m afraid you missed the point of the book, old chap”). Instead, the reply was exceedingly defensive and quite accusatory.

My usual procedure in such matters is to quote directly from someone so that there is no possibility of misrepresentation, but the next to last paragraph reads:

I have sent you this letter because I believe that your review deserves a response. This is a personal letter and I trust that you will be ethical and not share, distribute or publish any portion of this letter without asking me first (6).

This request, then, is the only part I will quote—for obvious reasons. It is perplexing, however. First of all, since he was involved in the publishing of a book (for public distribution and consumption), and since my review was therefore also public, why would he want his response to be kept private? If he really thinks that I did his material an injustice, why not defend it at the same level it was criticized—publicly?

Furthermore, I did not solicit this letter, nor did he bestow conditions before sending it, such as, “I will reply to you—but only if you keep it confidential.” Therefore, in the absence of a prior arrangement, technically, I could quote every word, but out of consideration for the request, a paraphrase of the major points will be used instead—except for brief words or phrases in quotation marks. “Why even do that?” one might wonder. The explanation is that the e-mail is very instructive. If one of the authors reacted this way, others might, also.

Prior to the actual review, I noted that the booklet’s purpose was to emphasize that baptism is crucial for the church at this time and that such a claim was ironic in light of Professor Carroll D. Osburn’s de-emphasis of it. Author X (since even his name shall remain anonymous) accused me of “mudslinging” and said that what Osburn teaches has nothing to do with their booklet (1).

Really? In one sense, there is a point here, but it is nothing more than a quibble. While it is true that Osburn did not write this booklet, it is the case that all are professors at the same “Christian” university and that one of them denies the value of baptism while others allegedly uphold it (of course, they did not really uphold it, after all). This is precisely what was claimed—irony, which is not the same as “mud-slinging.” But here is the most important question: “Does Author X disagree with Carroll Osburn on this subject?”

Concerning the fact that people are skeptical about any-

thing coming out of ACU regarding the role that baptism plays in salvation, Author X claimed I was “biased,” “judgmental,” someone with an agenda, an ACU basher, on an “anti-ACU crusade,” and, furthermore that my heart was not right (1). [Is it because of paragraphs like this one that he did not want the letter shared?] No, actually, I was just being realistic. ACU, for years, has been at apostasy’s edge. Sound Gospel preachers take issue with professors who term Genesis 1-2 as Creation Hymn myths, copies of which material were provided by Dr. Bert Thompson, and several brethren have seen the evidence. We further take umbrage at Andre Resner’s blasphemous article, “Christmas at Matthew’s House,” in which it was irresistibly implied that Mary, the mother of our Lord, was an immoral woman, along with “dear, sweet Ruth.” ACU’s response to all of these irreverent professors has been to defend them. Paul taught that false teachers are to be noted (Rom. 16:17), not defended. It is true that many have no confidence in ACU—and rightly so.

If Paul could take issue with false teachers, why should we not do likewise? If ACU disagrees with Osburn’s teaching against baptism, why is he a distinguished professor? I have no loyalty to any man-made institution—but rather to God, His Word, and the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If ACU took a Biblical stand for Truth, faithful brethren would be ecstatic, but she repudiates no false doctrine—only those who point it out.

Next, I was accused of thinking that my readers are incompetent and trying to prevent them from reading the booklet for themselves (2). This charge is laughable. I assume that

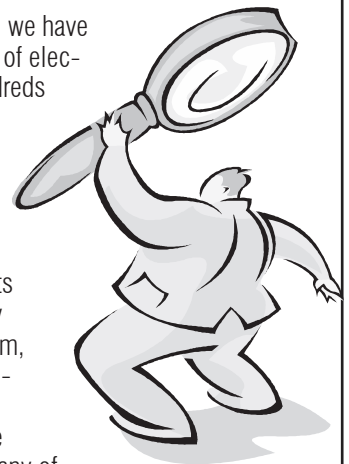
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—Dub and Lavonne McClish



all of those who read what I write are intelligent and competent. Every article I write is accessible to anyone and open for criticism. All of them are on the Internet (or soon will be), and occasionally people do take issue (although 90% of those who do are Max Lucado devotees). Author X's booklet is in my office and available for anyone to borrow. I asked the secretary here to read it and to specifically look for the word blood. She did not find it, either, and her overall impression was, "Are they supposed to be in favor of baptism?"

Also, I am accused of being dishonest because I mentioned a previous book by the same author and am therefore wrong for using the fallacy of "guilt by association." It would be wrong to conclude that two similar actions link people—without further evidence. For example, if a mobster likes Italian food and a Christian brother also enjoys it, it would not follow—if both were in the restaurant at the same time—that the brother is also a mobster. The connection must be greater than mere coincidence.

In this instance, however, when the author of two books is the same, such is scarcely coincidence or unrelated. Life is not a courtroom, in which evidence is suppressed and we are not allowed to know anything except what we are currently viewing. Most of the time, people select a great portion of their current reading based on what the author has previously written. A book jacket frequently mentions previous efforts by the same writer. In fact, *At the River's Edge*, on page 41, states: "Looking for more? Check out the other books in the *Heart of the Restoration* series, and this list features one of the co-author's previous works! This objection is fatuous!

Personal Pronouns

In my review I made a parenthetical remark about the authors not capitalizing personal pronouns relating to Deity. Author X (or should it be author x?) not only took offense but accused me of abiding by the 17th-century English literary ideology of human editors (2). This charge is just plain sloppy on his part. Although the King James translators chose to capitalize God, Father, and Holy Spirit (which are not capitalized in the Greek text), they did not capitalize personal pronouns relating to any of Them. It is the 20th-century New King James translators who did.

He said that the implication was that they did not reverence the Lord, which was "sheer rubbish," more "mud-slinging" (I'm beginning to wonder if I reviewed a religious publication or a political one), and "wrong" (2). The only thing he did not do is explain why they chose not to capitalize pronouns that refer to Deity. To be sure it is a preference, but most brethren think the upper case conveys an attitude of respect. It does not, however, involve a "thus saith the Lord."

Baptism

When I explained that we emphasize baptism because so many people deny its involvement in salvation, Author

X termed it a "bad move," arguing that I should not let denominations dictate how I present the truth (2). Did not Paul include the wonderful definitions of love in 1 Corinthians 13 because those brethren were deficient in it? Did Paul let the Judaizing teachers influence what he said and how he wrote to the Galatian brethren? The rationale that would ignore what others think makes no sense. Did Jesus not ask what men were saying about Him (Matt. 16:13)? If the Bible is to be relevant, we must take into account the current popular thinking—and deal with it in light of the Scriptures. To teach about baptism, for example—and not take into account that a large segment of society envisions (upon hearing that word) sprinkling or pouring—would constitute a high order of foolishness and naiveté. How can one also not assume that people have been erroneously taught that they are saved before and apart from baptism?

Previously, I asked: "If baptism is involved in man's obtaining forgiveness of sins (its essence), then how can its essentiality be minimized?" Author X exhorts me to be "more honest" and then poses a false dilemma about agreeing with him or admitting that baptism is just a rule (3). His comments here really make no sense. What more honesty can be required than to say baptism is not a ritual but rather a required, meaningful, essential act? He is the one who never mentioned the blood of Christ and barely noticed Acts 2:38, yet he accuses me of "spoon-feeding" people "baby food" (3).

Of my affirmation: "Those who are willing to hear what God has revealed on the matter stand in agreement," he replies: "Are you serious?" Yes; sometimes I attempt to use a little humor, but this was not one of those instances. He again offered me a false dilemma—which I decline to accept—and accused me of being "the slave of a very suspicious and crusading agenda" (3). Does he think I will believe his vain repetition just because he devotes himself to "much speaking"? To answer my point, he gives examples of using a baptistry versus a natural body of water and disagreements over whether someone is too young to be baptized. Therefore, conscientious brethren can be in disagreement. The illustrations would work better if they were the subject. The context of those "willing to hear" what God has revealed about baptism refers to its essentiality, which he should know. This is just an effort of distraction from the primary issue.

Absurdity

The main criticism I had of their booklet (and there were others that were not dealt with) was that they were writing, ostensibly, to elevate baptism to its rightful place; yet they did not discuss the key characteristic of its connection with the forgiveness of sins—although it is mentioned briefly on page 10. Author X castigated me for not mentioning Acts 2:39 and therefore, obviously believing that baptism was only for people in the first century (3)! He would be right in reaching such a decision if I had written a book with that very purpose

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in mind and then omitted it. Such was not my goal, however; this lame censure is mere flummery.

It is with great pleasure I report that Author X says he strongly believes in Acts 2:38 and that he baptizes for that reason (4). He offers an explanation for their rationale; they wanted to concentrate more on the “Gospels” (actually there is only one Gospel—just four accounts of it) (4). Okay, then, why did John baptize? He preached a baptism of repentance **“for the remission of sins”** (Mark 1:4). Jesus also said that His blood was **“shed for many for the remission of sins”** (Matt. 26: 28). What a great opportunity to show the connection of the blood of Christ to the remission of sins. Why did they not do so?

He wonders why I did not mention this sentence: “First, we’re reborn by water and the Spirit, experiencing a **“washing of rebirth and renewal,”** as a new creation cleansed of sin (John 3:5-8)” (9).

I highlighted the passage, and there is nothing wrong with it—except that it needs more explanation. Any denominational person could quote these verses and make the same point. We waited for further explication of the words but found none. Frankly, I could not comprehend the point made next, which was: “Our baptism connects us to the birth of Jesus” (9). Apparently, Mary conceiving Jesus by the Holy Spirit is supposed to have something to do with us becoming a new creation. But we are born again by the Spirit in the sense of being begotten by the Word (1 Peter 1:23). The two concepts are not similar.

“There’s Power in the....”

Author X agrees that we are saved by the power of Jesus’ blood, but then adds that to link baptism with the blood of Christ is “not a major New Testament theme.” He then accuses me of depending more on “preaching traditions” and spiritual songs, and “debating traditions” than the Word of God (4). First of all, why should “debating traditions” be dismissed with a wave of the hand, as though they were part of a pile of dirty laundry? In debates, our brethren have compiled some of the best and compelling material to make their points. They have frequently converted souls with their careful argumentation and reasoning from the Scriptures. Those brethren ought to be praised rather than dismissed as insignificant.

Second, blood and water came forth from the Lord’s body, according to John 19:34. The book of Hebrews mentions the blood of Christ several times in the context of forgiveness of sins (see chapters 9-10). Furthermore, why did the eunuch ask to be baptized, since Philip had preached to him Jesus (which would include the shedding of His blood for our sins)? The New Testament obviously connects the blood of Christ with baptism for the remission of sins. The diatribe against their mention of blood continues for another paragraph.

Planning

The next paragraph is just as shrill. In response to the criticism of baptism being a long-planned event, he accuses

me of not being sensitive to the training of children and advocating that every baptism be a “surprise.” Actually, there was nothing in the context about children being trained from birth or the parents looking forward to their baptism all their lives. The authors simply wrote: “Whether a long-planned event or the spontaneous response to an inspiring sermon, a public baptism was an event of great importance” (3). No one would imagine, from those words, the interpretation which Author X seeks to place upon these words. How many readers have ever witnessed a baptism that would qualify as a “long-planned event”? Some may have waited two or three days—perhaps, a week at most. Churches do not plan far in the future for baptisms. Even when young people are involved, it is not generally known very far in advance. In fact, parents have often admitted, “I had no idea he would obey today.” Author X did not satisfactorily explain the terminology used here, nor did he comment on the use of the word “ceremony” in connection with baptism.

Once again, I was tagged as one who has a “mud-slinging agenda” for being critical of baptisms as long-planned events (with respect to special clothing) (5), but there was no response to the observation that in the Scriptures baptisms were usually impromptu and immediate.

Did I misrepresent the authors in saying that they do not view baptism as the passing from a lost state into a saved one? Author X declares that the booklet portrays baptism as “a radical change from non-disciple to disciple” (5). These are not identical expressions in the minds of most people.

He chastises me for showing that baptism is a Divine work (“the working of God”), and I cited Colossians 2:12, which he ignored. He tries to make me say that “human response” is not a part of it. Of course, it is, but that fact does not negate that God is the one who washes away our sins WHEN we obey, which I had affirmed.

He closes by stating that we both believe in baptism (6). Nearly every religious person does. Many, however, fail to see the meaning of the word (its mode—immersion), and few understand that its purpose is for the forgiveness of sins. How about a booklet on that?

**—5410 Lake Howell Road
Winter Park, FL 32792**



An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile – hoping it will eat him last.

If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile-driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time – a tremendous whack!

The truth is incontrovertible, malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end; there it is.

— Winston Churchill

Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, 10221 Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 507-1776, (256) 507-1778.

-Colorado-

Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 535-5807.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Cambridgeshire—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk. Keith Sisman, Gospel Preacher. Contacts: Keith Sisman [From USA, Toll Free: (281) 475-8247]; By phone inside the U.K.: Cambridge (England): 01223-911243]; Alternative Cambridge contacts: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Matt. Shouey (Lakenheath) - 01638-531268. Postal/ mailing Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516,

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

Pensacola—Eastgate Church of Christ, 2809 E. Creighton Rd., {emsacp;a. F; 32504, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Tim Cozad, evangelist, (850) 477-4910

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803) 279-8663.

-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

- Tennessee-

Murfreesboro—Church of Christ, 1154 Park Avenue, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at www.murfreesboro-churchofchrist.org. evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.387.1429; tgjoriginal@verizon.net. www.northpointcoc.com

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Hubbard—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goins; DJGoins@gmail.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

New Braunfels—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.