

Contending FOR THE Faith™

WHO WAS BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Gary W. Summers

When a person jumps on a false doctrine hobby horse for a ride, his destination becomes uncertain, but it may be safely predicted that he will arrive somewhere he did not intend to go—and from which he will not be able to return. When Mac Deaver, a brother in Christ and capable debater, began to travel on his direct influence pony, no one could have imagined he would be writing and advocating the positions as set forth in his 2007 book and now the “Special Issue” of *Biblical Notes Quarterly*, Spring, 2011. Not only are the details of certain occurrences full of half-truths and deceit, his teaching has entered the realm of the bizarre.

Among things that he now advocates are:

- 1) 120 were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (4).
- 2) The Samaritans were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins; however, “to become a Christian one had to be baptized not only into the name of the Lord but into the name of the Father and into the name of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19, 20)” (6).
- 3) Today “the baptism in Spirit takes place at approximately the same time as water baptism does” (6).

Those who are scratching their heads and saying, “What?” should not feel alone. Those who have been agreeing with Mac up to this point should be getting a bit nervous. No matter where Mac’s horse stops along the way, there can be no question but that it is headed for the Lake of Fire!

This article will deal only with the baptism that occurred on Pentecost. Faithful brethren have taught for years that only the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, but Mac has now concluded and declared that 120 disciples received it. And what proof does he offer? He writes:

(Dear reader, there is no way to exclude the rest of the one hundred and twenty from the “they” of Acts 2:1. We have often tried to make such an exclusion by connecting the pronoun “they” in 2:1 to its alleged antecedent, “apostles,” in 1:26. However, this is simply not conclusive. (See Acts 13:52 and 14:1, 3 for a similar case). Furthermore, if one contends that the rest of the one hundred and twenty did not receive the Holy Spirit when the apostles did, he is claiming that there was then a part of the church that was not spiritually animated by the Spirit. In other words, he is claiming that there was a part of the church that was spiritually dead!) (4).

The above quotation is an explication of a true or false question that Mac had given regarding church membership; we will limit ourselves to the errors within the parentheses. Mac minimizes the arguments in support of only the twelve receiving the Holy Spirit baptism; he certainly knows of the other factors involved but just ignores them, a custom he has of treating truth when it is not favorable to him.

Andrew Connally

In his book of 2007, Mac quoted from Andrew Connally as agreeing with him on receiving wisdom directly from God (49). Whether or not he agreed with Mac’s position on that subject could be argued both ways, but it is clear that Connally would have had no agreement with Mac on this aspect of his Holy Spirit theology. The following quote is from Connally’s *Great Lessons from Acts*, published by him in Seagoville, Texas (no publishing date):

While we may not be able to know from John’s statement in Matthew 3:11 who would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Jesus in repeating and explaining the baptismal promise of the Holy Spirit, clearly shows that it was for the Apostles only (29).

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

TO REJOICE OR NOT TO REJOICE OVER THE DEATH OF THE WICKED

Recently, following the death of Osama bin Laden, certain members of the Lord's church strongly advocated that it was wrong (sinful) for Christians to rejoice over the death of such a wicked person. These brethren's protest raised the following question: *Should Christians rejoice over the death of the wicked?*

Let us begin our answer by noticing Ezekiel 33:11—

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Prior to this verse God twice declared the same in Ezekiel 18:22, 32. As to why God does not take pleasure in the death of wicked people is clear—*He knows when the wicked die they are going into torment from which there is no hope of escape.* If anyone knows how terrible Hell's torment is, it is God—for He prepared Hell for all those who refuse to take advantage of His grace and mercy that is freely offered to mankind through their obedience to the Gospel of Christ (Eph. 2:8, 9, Rom. 6:17, 18, Heb. 5:9).

Paul stated to Titus: **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Titus 2:11, 12). The grace of God is available, but most people will not take advantage of it. 2 Peter 3: 9 echoes God's sentiments found in the previously noted passages from Ezekiel. Peter wrote: **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”** Truly, God is not willing for anyone to go to hell. However, few will truly believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and obey the Gospel by being baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (John 8:24, Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 17:30). Only then is one a Christian, a member of the Lord's church and, therefore, in the position to live faithfully in Christ as long as one lives so that heaven can be one's eternal home (Acts. 2:47; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). Christians are not to rejoice because evil people go to hell when they die.

But, the preceding information is not all the Bible has to say on this subject. As we continue our study we notice Proverbs 11:10: **“When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.”** When we examine the kind of shouting done by the people noted in the previous verse, we realize that they are shouting for joy because the wicked have perished. These people are simply rejoicing because the wicked have been justly punished and can no longer cause trouble in this world. Who

would seriously argue with the fact that the fewer wicked people in this world, the better place the world is?

Following the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Israelites rejoiced over their ruin. Of that event Moses wrote:

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought

again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Ex. 15:19-22).
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THE KIND OF PREACHING NEEDED TODAY

Andrew M. Connally

In his book, *The Heart Of The New Testament* (Vol. II) I. Hester depicts the preaching of John the Baptist by saying:

What must have been the reactions of the multitudes as they heard this fiery prophet cry out to the scribes and priests of Jerusalem, “You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” It was plain to see that a man as well as a prophet had appeared in Israel, one who stood unabashed before those in high stations, who understood the weaknesses of the men of his day, and who had the courage to lay them bare. A new era had dawned, a time of pulsing reality instead of dry rabbinism or vague apocalypticism. John struck the moral nerve and it twitched.

Yes, John was God’s kind of preacher! Like the prophets of old, his message was pointed and powerful. He preached on sin and righteousness, judgment and repentance, forgiveness and conviction. He plucked the strings of the human heart and it twitched!

Men today need boldly to oppose the hedonistic philosophy of our times. We need to challenge the axioms and lives of our brethren and the world. We need to use the Word of God to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable!

So much of the claptrap coming from pulpits is nothing more than warmed over pablum and it is nauseating to adults! We need **“strong meat”** to be men.

Like John, our preaching needs to arouse the people. **“Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”** (Mat. 3:7—*ASV*). We need to get a response from our audiences. They may react in anger or with tears—so be it! Either way, the job is getting done. Good hearts will repent, evil ones will harden and the line is drawn. Men will search their consciences and obey or disobey, but they will have confronted God in their lives and that is what preaching is all about.

We need to expose error. If truth is not polemic, then half its power is gone. A lot of men say, “That’s just not my way”; well, it was the way of John, the Prophets and the Lord! What greater preaching has ever been done than this?

A lot of preachers are afraid of their elders, members, wives, and children, and, therefore, they refuse to fight the error they know exists in their own congregations, deceiving themselves and thereby deceiving others and all go tripping into hell together. Shake ‘em up, wake ‘em up, move ‘em out, so God’s will and way can be clear in an age of foggy, dim, and unclear thoughts, doctrines and ideals. Christianity is not myopic, mysterious mysticism. It is plain, clear, bold, aggressive, daring, and logical. And may the Devil take those who teach otherwise, for they misrepresent the truth. No one denies or would overlook the “truth spoken in love,” but this demands we speak the truth, all the truth, and only the truth, so help us God! It emphatically does not teach the pseudo-unity in diversity claptrap of our day or the insipid indefiniteness so often heard.

Time-servers, crowd-pleasers, actors, P.R. men, and pep-rally enthusiasts are not Prophets or Preachers. They are what their names imply—and they are hirelings! But God’s men touch the heart, prick the conscience, step on toes, “root up and destroy” every evil, error, and untruth they confront. They are true to the book and in a hurry! Their time is limited and they have a job to do that they can never get done and they know it. They must strengthen and build as strongly and as fast as humanly possible, for their part in the great drama of life will soon be over. Like John, and so many before them, their time may be shortened and they must fulfill their ministry, accomplish their work, and finish their course.

Jesus’ evaluation of John was: “Of men born of women, none was greater” than John! What a glorious tribute to a great preacher. We can ask for nothing more than to be found numbered among such great men.

May God help us to be His preachers of the hour.

—Deceased

Goebel Music

Goebel Music has been Mac's close friend for many years. In fact, when he wrote his gargantuan (1,414 pages) work, *A Resource and Reference Volume on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, he praised Mac highly. He also included Mac's flawed syllogism that he used in his debate with Bill Lockwood (710-11). Will brother Music now stand with Mac and repudiate his own teachings which were set forth in the Fourth Annual Denton Lectures, edited by Dub McClish in 1985? On that occasion brother Music wrote:

Even though we have mentioned this outpouring of the Spirit of God as a promise and as a baptism, and on whom it came, let us just as quickly point out that it fell not upon the 120 but upon the apostles! It was a promise to the apostles (Cf. Acts 1:4-5, 8; John 16:7, 13) and no one else (61).

J. W. McGarvey

Brethren Music and Connally were correct in what they wrote; they were also in agreement with the vast majority of other brethren, not the least of whom is J. W. McGarvey, who commented extensively on the pronoun argument which Mac pooh-poohs in a parenthetical comment. McGarvey, a world-renowned, 19th-century scholar, observed the following in his *Original Commentary on Acts*:

It is important to determine who are the parties declared by Luke to be "all with one accord in one place," for upon this depends the question whether the whole of hundred and twenty disciples, or only the twelve apostles, were filled with the Holy Spirit.... Those who suppose that the whole hundred and twenty are referred to, have to go back to the fifteenth verse of the preceding chapter to find the antecedent (24).

The truth that McGarvey states can be verified by any student of the Word. In Acts 1, Jesus had final words with His apostles and then ascended into heaven (1:9-11). One will look in vain to find anyone else mentioned in those verses but the apostles, who are first introduced in verse 2, where we read that He gave commandments to His apostles. He also presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many infallible proofs. He was seen by them 40 days as he spoke to them about things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Then He met together with them (no change in antecedent) and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which they had heard of from Him. That promise concerned them (the apostles) being baptized by the Holy Spirit shortly (1:5). After Jesus told them (the apostles) that they would "**receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them,**" He ascended to heaven.

They (the apostles) then returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room where they were staying; in fact they are all named in 1:13. Now, for the first time, others are mentioned. These (the apostles) continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers (v. 14). At this point a man was selected to take the place of Judas (1:15-26). It is mentioned that the number of disciples at this time was 120.

After the replacement was chosen, the text simply concludes by saying that Matthias "**was numbered with the eleven apostles**" (v. 26). As we head into chapter two, then, the last noun is apostles—not the 120.

The Quibble

Mac supplies Acts 13:52, 14:1, and 3 as a similar case. It is not similar. Although there is an interruption, it is clear to whom "**they**" refers in 14:1. Notice that Paul and Barnabas are the focus of attention in Acts 13-14. The missionary journey is one that they have taken together. The Jews fought against Paul and Barnabas in 13:50; the pair shook the dust off their feet and traveled to Iconium (v. 51). Verse 52 is a brief comment about the disciples they left behind being filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (v. 52). Then the narrative picks up again with Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (14:1). Would anyone get confused over the pronoun, they, in this case? They would not because the reader knows that the historical account is following the missionaries—not the disciples in one city. Also, since Iconium is mentioned the verse before and the one after 13:52, there is no doubt to whom "they" refers.

Likewise, in Acts 1 it is obvious that Luke has as his subject the apostles. Yes, they meet with other brethren, and they select one of them to replace Judas, but then the narrative returns to what happens to them—not the 120. McGarvey is right to point out that, if the 120 is the antecedent, one would have to go clear back to verse 15, whereas the apostles are mentioned in the verse prior to Acts 2:1.

More than an Antecedent

But there is much more proof to demonstrate that only the apostles are meant in Acts 2:1. *First*, the promise of baptism in the Holy Spirit was only made to the apostles in 1:8. *Second*, all of the indications are that they were the only ones who received it. What is the verification? Others have already presented compelling evidence.

Goebel Music wrote:

Then, too, it was the 12 that Peter defended in Acts 2:14, and it was to the 12 that the people directed their question and not to the 120 (Cf. 2:37). All of the ones doing the speaking were said to be "Galileans" (Acts 2:7). And it surely cannot be proved that the 120 were all Galileans (67).

Yes, nothing in the text indicates that any brethren but the apostles were speaking in tongues that day. If the women among the 120 were doing so, then they were speaking "**the wonderful works of God**" in public (Acts 2:11). Does Mac wish to affirm that notion? Is he so desperate to affirm his doctrine that he will have women preaching in public contrary to what the Spirit later inspired Paul to write (1 Tim. 2:11-14)?

Andrew Connally adds this observation:

Only the Apostles worked miracles until "they laid hands" on others. The miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit belonged to the Apostles only, until they "laid their hands" on someone else (Acts 2:43; 3:3; 3:6; 4:33; 5:12; 5:15-16; 6:6, 8) (29).

These comments are sufficient to prove the argument, but there is more to consider. Peter did not stand up with the 120; he stood up with the eleven (2:14). Near the close of the recorded sermon on Pentecost, Peter affirmed: **“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses”** (2:32). Who is **“we”**—the 12 or the 120? Remember that in Acts 1:2-3 it was said that Jesus presented Himself alive to the apostles. They are the witnesses. Can it be shown that all of the 120 saw Him during that 40-day period? It cannot.

Those who were baptized that day continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine—not the doctrine of the 120 (Acts 2:42). **“Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles”** (v. 43). The text never indicates the 120’s involvement in any of the things on Pentecost. Only the apostles are specifically mentioned. Thus, before Acts 2:1 and after Acts 2:1, the narrative is concerned with the apostles. The 120 are only briefly mentioned in the entire inspired account.

Thus, Mac’s effort to claim that the 120 were baptized in the Holy Spirit falls woefully and embarrassingly short. It is obvious that he did not study the matter thoroughly, as did J. W. McGarvey, Andrew Connally, Goebel Music, and hundreds of others who could be cited, or he may have studied the matter thoroughly and arrived at an erroneous conclusion. Whatever the case, he has joined the denominationalists and the Pentecostals in his insistence that all 120 were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They have advocated this error for decades. Do faithful brethren really want to join Mac in this departure from the Truth?

Disagreeing With Mac

Of course, there is always a severe consequence for disagreeing with Mac. In this case he charges that those who do not believe all 120 were baptized in the Holy Spirit (contrary to the evidence of the text) must claim **“there was then a part of the church that was not spiritually animated by the Spirit. In other words there was part of the church that was spiritually dead!”** (4).

Well, that certainly sounds bad. But where is the proof for such a reckless assertion? No one has argued that a part of the church was not **“spiritually animated”**; but, regardless, where is the verse that promises spiritual animation, whatever that is? Is Mac implying that everyone must be baptized in the Holy Spirit as the apostles were, or they are spiritually dead? Would that be true for today, also? If this is his assertion, then he is guilty of circular reasoning. He would be guilty of using his doctrine to try to prove his doctrine.

In other words, one of Mac’s teachings is that all who become Christians today are baptized in the Spirit. While we are arguing the veracity of that claim, he cannot then assume that his overall thesis is true in trying to establish a view that leads to his conclusion. Thus, this is a smaller tenet of the larger doctrine, which means that each point must be established along the way. One cannot jump ahead to the

conclusion and attempt to use it as proof of this part of his case. This tactic involves the use of circular reasoning.

Most brethren would also note that Mac’s definition of spiritual deadness is false. If those after Pentecost, apart from being baptized in the Holy Spirit, were spiritually dead, then what about those who lived before Pentecost? Was Enoch spiritually dead when God translated him? Was Abraham spiritually dead when God made the three great promises to him? Was Moses spiritually dead when he chose to suffer with the children of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Was David, a man after God’s own heart, spiritually dead? When salvation came to the household of Zaccheus, was he spiritually dead? Was the centurion that Jesus praised for his great faith spiritually dead? Was the thief on the cross spiritually dead when Jesus promised him Paradise? If it will help Mac out, these can be put in the form of true or false questions (and without parentheses).

One does not determine the meaning of a text by imposing his theory upon it; one studies a text for what it says. If ambiguity exists, then one may rightly apply other texts to it to provide the meaning, but no confusion exists in Acts 2 concerning who received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Jesus specified reasons for their receiving what they did. The purposes were to:

1. Remind them of everything that Jesus had taught (John 14:26).
2. Guide them into all truth (teach them all things) (John 14:26; John 16:13); and
3. Show them things to come (John 16:13).

Will Mac argue that these are all available to the Christian today? If the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available today, why are not all these promises? As Goebel Music taught more than 25 years ago:

Indeed, Holy Spirit baptism was a baptism that was both temporary and limited. However, if it did occur today then we would not have to spend so much time in our studies (Cf. John 14:26; 16:13) because we would have such things brought to our remembrance (69).

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“Democracy does not guarantee equality of conditions – it only guarantees equality of opportunity.”

— Irving Kristol

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PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELLING

Franklin Camp

Those who insist that the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit operating apart from the Word of God are essential to God's hearing and answering prayers, have a problem that they have not considered. Those who take this position say that the Holy Spirit sustains a relationship to the Christian that He did not have prior to the Christian age. Their position is that the Christian age and the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit go together.

If the personal indwelling and the operation of the Spirit apart from the Word are necessary for God to answer prayers, then the following difficulty needs to be explained. Did God hear and answer prayer before the Christian age? If yes, then the personal indwelling and operation of the Spirit apart from the Word are not essential to God's hearing and answering prayers.

In Genesis 18, Abraham prayed and God heard his prayer. God was willing to answer his prayer as long as the conditions could be met. Did Abraham have the personal indwelling as brethren claim that Christians have today? If God could hear the prayer of Abraham without the Spirit operating apart from the word, or his having the personal indwelling, why can God not do the same today? The personal indwelling of the Spirit is not essential to God's hearing and answering prayer.

—Deceased



FORGIVENESS WITHOUT REPENTANCE?

Guy N. Woods

Children of God should love all men, even their enemies, and when they repent, forgive them. Occasionally, I am asked if it is our duty to forgive those who sin against us when they neither ask for nor desire forgiveness. It is not only not our duty to do so, were we so disposed, but it is an utter impossibility.

The question recurs because many people persist in disregarding what the Scriptures teach is involved in genuine repentance and by substituting their concept of what they feel forgiveness should include. Those who do this imply, whether they intend to or not, that forgiveness is simply the cancellation of all bitter, revengeful, and uncharitable feelings toward those who sin against us, and the substitution of a disposition of kindness, love, and warm regard for the offending one or ones—a disposition, they urge, which should always be characteristic of faithful Christians.

But many devoted and dedicated disciples of the Lord never experience bitter, revengeful, and uncharitable feelings toward those who sin against them, however cruel and heartless such actions may have been. This attitude of a kind disposition is not forgiveness, anyway. God never entertains “bitter, revengeful, and uncharitable” feelings toward even the most vile of sinners, but He forgives only those who repent.

Our Lord, in the shadows of Gethsemane, prayed for those who hated him so much they sought and obtained His

execution, but He did not forgive them until they repented. Amid the agonies of the cross, He said to His Father. **“Forgive them; for they know not what they do”** (Lk. 23:34) a petition not unconditional in nature, since by His own words first uttered in the Great Commission (Mk. 16:15-16) and later applied by Peter, it was intent that pardon be bestowed only on the basis of repentance and obedience to the commandments He gave (Acts 2:36-38).

The words “remission” and “forgiveness” often translate the same Greek word *aphesis*, the meaning of which is “release,” the “sending of sins away” and the consequent restoration of the peaceful, cordial, and friendly relationship formerly existing. Unless the offender wants this “peaceful, cordial, friendly” relationship, it is impossible for the offended to affect it, however much he may desire and seek it.

It is at this point people often say, “Yes, but we must be ready to forgive always,” as indeed we ought, but it should be recognized that such readiness is not forgiveness. Our Lord made crystal clear our obligation in all such cases when He said, **“Take heed to yourselves; If thy brother trespass, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times...turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him”** (Lk. 17:3,4). *Thus, the divine edict is, if one sins against us, we are to rebuke him; and when he repents, we are to forgive him.*

It is the duty of all children of God to love all men,

even their enemies, actively to seek their good, and pray for their well-being; and, when they repent, to forgive them. It should ever be borne in mind that reconciliation is an integral and essential element of the relationship resulting from penitence on the part of the offender and forgiveness on the offended, and that is occasioned by an adjustment and settle-

ment of all differences that led to the alienation. We must be sure that no action or attitude of ours deters the proper response of others to us because our fellowship here on Earth and our salvation in Heaven hereafter are matters intimately involved.

—Deceased



THE RE-EVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS

Dub Mowery

Even while the apostles were still living, there were warnings given concerning those who would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:17). Mankind has the tendency to pursue whatever each individual deems to be right in one's own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Because this is true, numerous innovations have not only been introduced by denominations, but also by some within the church of our Lord. In fact, this is exactly how digression came about in the past.

In recent years, innovations such as baby dedications and the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders have been introduced into the church of Christ. It is the unauthorized use of the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders that will now be addressed. Just what is meant by that terminology? It is a process of determining whether or not a congregation's elders will continue to serve as its overseers. Someone might be inclined to say, "Well, what is wrong with that?" The answer: there is not any scriptural authority for the re-evaluation/reaffirmation process of determining whether or not men will continue to serve in the eldership.

The qualifications essential for a person to be selected as an elder (also referred to as bishops and shepherds) are found at First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Only men who meet the specific qualifications stated in those two passages may scripturally serve as elders. Who are the ones to appoint men to serve in the eldership of a local congregation? There is certainly no higher office here on earth in the church of our Lord than those men who serve as elders. The inspired Word provides the stipulations necessary to be qualified. Therefore, when men are selected as the bishops of a local congregation who meet the qualifications, then those brethren are Holy Spirit ordained (appointed) elders. In Acts 6:1-6 the inspired Luke records a need that developed in the church at Jerusalem for men to oversee the daily distribution of the essentials of life to the Grecian widows. The apostles instructed the entire congregation to look out among themselves men who met the qualifications given by them. When a congregation goes through the process of selecting from

among themselves men to serve as elders or deacons, then the entire congregation should be involved in the process.

Some hold the erroneous concept that once a man is appointed as an elder he is always an elder. However, the New Testament does not uphold that concept. There are several possible reasons why one could not continue to serve as an elder of a local church of Christ. These include: *First*, if a man who is serving as an elder for one congregation moves away to a different locality, then he can no longer oversee the congregation that appointed him. Also, he is not an elder over the local church in the new locality when he places membership with it. That brother may later be appointed by the latter congregation after he has proved himself to be qualified to serve as an elder among those brethren. *Secondly*, it would be unscriptural for only one man to serve as the bishop of a congregation. The scriptures only authorize a plurality of qualified men to serve as its elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Phil. 1:1; Acts 15:4-6). Therefore, when a congregation has only two men serving as elders and one of

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the men ceases to serve in the eldership, regardless of the reason, then the other brother is no longer an elder. He may be re-appointed by that congregation later when he along with at least one other brother has proven themselves qualified to serve in the eldership. *Thirdly*, a man who is serving as an elder may have personal reasons (such as failing health) that would disqualify him from continuing to serve as an overseer. Usually, a brother who realizes that he can no longer serve effectively as an elder will graciously resign as an overseer. *Fourthly*, a man may cease to meet the qualifications for an elder and should therefore resign. However, many in that situation refuse to resign! *What is a congregation to do under such circumstances?* The Apostle Paul gave instructions as to how a congregation is to handle a situation when an elder ceases to be qualified and/or has some accusations against him. He states, **“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear”** (1 Tim. 5:19-20). Also, the Son of God provides instructions that would be applicable to any brother in error, including elders of a congregation. Our Lord and Savior declared:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matt. 18:15-17).

A congregation in the process of appointing a man to be one of its overseers has not only the right, but the scriptural obligation to reject him as such when he is found to be unqualified or ceases to be qualified to serve in that capacity. However, the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders is an unscriptural and unwarranted process of determining whether or not men serving as elders will continue to do so. That process is little more than a popularity contest. In the first place, men are scripturally selected to serve as elders according to the qualifications given by the Apostle Paul. Often men are selected as elders who are no more qualified than a recent convert. If a congregation will carefully follow the inspired Word given by the Holy Spirit concerning this matter, then unqualified men will not be selected. The same qualifications essential to a man becoming an elder must continue to be true of him. If he ceases to possess any one of those qualifications, he cannot scripturally serve as an elder. Thus, the congregation is obligated to reject him as one of their elders. Passages of scripture such as First Timothy 5:19-20 and Matthew 18:15-17 should be adhered to in determining whether or not an elder remains qualified.

The re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders is a method deemed by uninspired men in deciding whether or not a congregation wants those serving in the eldership to continue

as their elders. As previously stated, it becomes little more than a popularity contest. Such an unauthorized procedure has many potential dangers in its use. Even if the eldership obtains a 100% approval, it is still flawed. The criteria of determining whether or not men serving as elders or to continue to do so, under the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders, may be based on the personal likes and dislikes of the individual members of the congregation. If for example, those influenced by change agents might “vote out” faithful qualified elders. The words of the prophet Jeremiah comes to my mind, he said, **“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”** (Jer. 10:23). The re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders has a predetermined but arbitrary percentage of approval for men to continue to serve as elders. *Question:* Who has the authority to set a certain percentage of the congregation for approval? *Answer:* Since it is an unscriptural procedure, no one has the authority to do so. Within one congregation that used this unscriptural method, each elder had to have a 75% approval not of the whole congregation, but of those voting in order to remain as an elder. In other words, a minority of only 26% of those voting (This could be contentious, disgruntled members or false teachers, etc.) could oust a faithful elder or the whole eldership. Such a man-made method could only be the devil’s means of unscripturally splitting a congregation.

Faithful brethren will continue to speak out against such innovations as the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders. We are to **“...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 3). The Apostle Paul exhorted,

Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [innocent] (Rom. 16:17-18).

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HOW LOW WILL THEY GO AND HOW ABSURD CAN THEY GET IN THEIR LUDICROUS EFFORTS TO DEFEND DAVE MILLER'S ERRORS?

John West

On April 23, 2011 a discussion began on the Facebook chat group "SEEKERS OF THE OLD PATHS!!!!!!". A question was posed by one of the members, Chuck Davis. He asked, "Where does it state in the scriptures that a man, put up for elder in a congregation, must receive a certain numbers (sic) of "votes" before he is considered?" There were several comments about this question and, in time, someone commented about "voting" men in or out of the eldership. At that point, the Brown Trail Church of Christ fiasco concerning their having practiced the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders was mentioned, along with Dave Miller's connection to and involvement in it. Immediately, some commented that the discussion should not turn negative. Others on the list came to Miller's defense. Michael Hatcher, Ken Chumbley, Doug Post and I held their feet to the fire about Miller and Brown Trail. Some admitted that this was the first they had heard about what Miller did regarding the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders at the Brown Trail congregation. A few wanted to study further, while others only wanted to defend Miller. During the discussion, Dave Miller was added to the group to defend himself; however, he never made a comment in this thread of the discussion.

On April 25, it ended when the administrators of the list deleted the entire discussion. That afternoon, Ken Chumbley started another thread by asking this question: "Are some members of the group only "seekers of the old paths" when it is convenient and when the truth does not interfere with what they are doing or desire to do?" There were a total of 15 comments in this thread; among them was the cry about being negative on a public list. Again, Dave Miller had a chance to respond, but remained silent. The next morning, April 26, I awoke to find that I had been "booted" and "banned" from the list. I was among several members who were booted, some of which never entered the discussion. They were booted because of "guilt by association" with those of us who stood against Miller. It is interesting that after we were all booted, Miller made a short statement to the list, then apparently left the group (his name no longer appeared in the membership by the end of the day).

The administrators of the "SEEKERS OF THE OLD PATHS!!!!!!" group are Jimmy Pitchford, Thomas Meade and Jimmy Wren, Sr. Jimmy Pitchford (the one who started the group) "friend requested" me on facebook one month or more before said discussion under consideration. After I was booted from the list, I noticed that Pitchford also removed me from his friends list. I immediately wrote Pitchford and Meade and asked if this is how they dealt with error. Then I rebuked them for their lack of backbone to fairly deal with this matter. I have yet to receive a reply from either of them. They showed their true colors by being cowards in this whole ordeal. During the

initial discussion, Jimmy Wren, Sr. (another administrator) became involved and began defending Miller. It was with him, that I had the majority of my part in the discussion. The rest of this article will be a summation of the exchange with Jimmy Wren, Sr. There is not enough space to print each individual email, but everything can be verified.

During the discussion about Miller and Brown Trail, Jimmy Wren took some of Dub McClish's points against Miller and accused Dub of using "unscriptural" arguments. He wrote,

Dave did recommend reaffirming elders. The point that I am making is the objections by Dub McClish are no more Scriptural then the idea of reaffirming elders by brother Miller (April 24, 10:53 pm.)

(I am giving these quotations exactly as they appeared on the list, including typos.) It is interesting to note that Wren only pointed out four of Dub's objections (numbers 4, 5, 6, 7). Why did he not object to the rest? He then posted the following:

If we should mark and withdraw fellowship from Dave Miller because he put forth an unscriptural program we would also mark and withdraw fellowship from Dub McClish and company for putting forth unScriptural objections and sending them all over the internet and brotherhood (April 24, 11:04 pm).

It was at this point that I became involved in the discussion with Wren. I wrote:

Jimmy, your whole line of reasoning is ridiculous. You must first prove that what Dub suggested is unscriptural. Next, you admit that Dave Miller taught false doctrine ("he put forth an unscriptural program"). So why are you trying to defend Dave Miller, who you admit taught false doctrine. You are the one who needs to repent!!! (April 24, 11:23 pm).

Wren then accused me of not being able to read. Every time I would press him about Miller or ask him a question, he would respond by accusing me of "changing the subject," "not reading," having "a bad reading problem", etc. etc. I challenged him to debate this subject and his response was, "I would be glad to but you can't even stay on the subject here and your reading problem is very serious!" (April 25, 1:49 am). No matter his ludicrous dodges, I continued to press him about his efforts to defend Dave Miller.

During the discussion, Wren denied charging Miller or McClish with teaching false doctrine. Thus, I reminded him that he had written,

If we should mark and withdraw fellowship from Dave Miller because he put forth an unscriptural program we would also mark and withdraw fellowship from Dub McClish and company for putting forth unScriptural objections and send-

ing them all over the internet and brotherhood (April 24, 11:04 pm).

His accusations that my reading skills and understanding left much to be desired continued. And, Wren continued to deny that anyone had taught false doctrine. If what he wrote was true, why then would he write that “we should also mark and withdraw fellowship from Dub McClish and company for putting forth unScriptural objections and sending them all over the internet and brotherhood?” He argued that it was “unScriptural,” but that it was not error. This kind of hypocrisy and dishonesty was typical of him throughout this discussion and a subsequent one. Wren finally decided to define his terms about his idea of “unscriptural.” He wrote the following:

UnScriptural and false doctrine are not the something. UnScriptural just means that this is not found in the Scriptures. Examples would be a church building, a sound system, the rest rooms, song books and etc. False doctrine is any teachings that opposes that which is taught in the Scriptures (April 25, 2:10 am).

Notice he said “UnScriptural and false doctrine are not the something.” Really Wren? He sounds like a denominational preacher who puts whatever definition he wants on a word. He tries to equate *unscriptural* with an expedient (an option that discharges an obligation in the quickest and best way available), which he cannot do because they are not the same at all. He correctly defines false doctrine as “any teachings that opposes (sic) that which is taught in the Scriptures.” His problem, however, is that his definition also defines *unscriptural*. Notice a few definitions of this word. NSN Encarta online dictionary defines unscriptural as: “not in the Bible: not recorded in, in accordance with, or sanctioned by biblical texts.” Wren does not understand the difference in an expedient and that which is not authorized (unscriptural). The definition itself explains the word very well. Also, notice a definition from the Oxford online dictionary: “not in accordance with the Bible.” Wren’s own definition of “unscriptural” is far from how the word is defined in the dictionary, and also what has been generally understood by *unscriptural* for many years. Unfortunately, he ignored a simple definition of a word and defined it to suit himself and for his own purpose. Hence, he was caught in a web of deceit of his own making, but he would not admit it.

When I was booted and banned from the facebook group, I thought I had heard the last of Jimmy Wren Sr. But, sadly I was mistaken. A few days later he began a writing campaign against me to the Bellview Church of Christ elders in Pensacola, Florida. He wrote the following:

John West, in the sermon preached on the 2010 lectureship, claims that “(somewhere) young ladies set in the pews with their dresses up to their panties. The men who waited on the Lord’s table complained about this encouraging the preacher to bring a lesson on modesty. The preacher complied. As a

result of preaching on modesty the elders fired the preacher. Those ladies showing their panties were daughters and granddaughters of the elders.

Can this story be substantiated by the elders at Bellview? Would both John West and the Bellview elders substantiate this story. Jimmy Wren.

I sent a reply to Wren and Cc Michael Hatcher the email. I wrote:

Jimmy, I just received this email from Michael Hatcher about your inquiry of my 2010 lecture at Bellview on modesty. I have cc’ed him in on this email since you chose to write to the Bellview church. I am not going to get into a writing exchange with you because you are a liar and a dishonest, untrustworthy person. But I will ask you a few questions about this inquiry.

1. Are you questioning the illustration that I used?
2. Are you calling me a liar about the illustration that I used?
3. What business is it of yours anyway for any illustration that I used in any sermon that I have preached?
4. Why are you so concerned about illustrations that I have used in sermons?
5. Why do you think the Bellview elders have to “substantiate” my illustration?
6. Have you ever used an illustration in a sermon before?
7. Do you believe that you have to substantiate every illustration you used to everyone in the brotherhood?
8. Are you simply being a trouble-maker by asking this of the Bellview elders?
9. Why did you not contact me in the first place about the illustration, instead of going behind my back to someone else?
10. Why are you such a coward in dealing with me personally?
11. Since you are Dave Miller supporter and refuse to hear the facts about his error, why should I trust or listen to anything you have to say?

Now to the answer. The illustration I gave was from a church near where I lived and preached. The said preacher in question was a preacher that I knew very well. And, yes it did happen. That is all you are going to get from me because I don’t answer to the high and mighty Jimmy Wren, Sr. By the way, who made you the keeper of illustrations in the brotherhood? I don’t answer to you, but God. Why are you being a “**busybody in other men’s matters**” (1 Pet. 4:15)?

My advice to you is first, repent of your attitude; second, mind your own business and do your own work.

As I stated in the beginning, I am not going to get into another exchange with you since you have proven yourself dishonest. Good Day, Mr. Wren. Sincerely, John West (April 29, 10:01

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am).

As I stated earlier, there is not enough room to include all of the emails in this exchange, but these can be verified and made available. This exchange was a “back and forth” on whether or not my illustration was “true.” Jimmy’s tail feathers were still ruffled from our exchange on the facebook group. Why would he choose my sermon out of all of those who were on the Bellview lectures? Why would he choose to single out me since there were others on the facebook list who were taking Miller to task? It was simply to get vengeance for his failed attempt to defend Miller. Wren apparently has not read Romans where Paul wrote, **“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”** (Rom. 12:19). Jimmy’s entire point of contention was that he did not believe my “illustration” was true and wanted information about the congregation to contact them. He argued that it was either an “illustration” or a true story. He did not believe that it could be both. He wanted me to name the congregation and her eldership so he could contact them to verify the story. I refused then and I refuse now to do so. This happened over 20 years ago and most, if not all in that eldership are dead. A preacher is not under obligation to give the names of every story or illustration told from the pulpit. I cannot even imagine questioning a preacher about every single illustration used in a sermon. Brethren, this is ludicrous.

More of Wren’s Dishonesty

Throughout this exchange, Jimmy Wren, Sr. proved himself to be dishonest. On more than one occasion, he was not only deceitful, but outright lied in this discussion. He was continually trying to cover his tracks, but was doing a very poor job of it. Notice an email sent to me on Friday, April 29, at 1:21 pm: “One cannot teach the truth by telling lies[,] John. I am trying to help you. Jimmy.” Pay close attention to what he said in that email. He accused me of “telling lies” in my sermon illustration that upset him so much. This email was a response to my initial email to him that I quoted in the previous paragraph. On Monday, May 2, Michael Hatcher responded to Wren and said in part:

Do you not remember writing John on April 29? ‘One cannot teach the truth by telling lies[,] John. I am trying to help you.’ John said it was a true story which he used as an illustration. You have stated that you do not believe it to be true.

Toward the end of his email Wren responded to Hatcher with: “I would like to point out that a statement ‘one cannot teach the truth by telling lies’ is far from calling someone a

liar.” Jimmy, are you sure about that? This is the kind of dishonest person that I dealt with for almost a week. He called me a liar, then denied calling me a liar. But notice more of his lies. He wrote the Bellview elders in response to my first email to him (outside the Facebook discussion): “I believe John is lying about this and did it from your pulpit. Someone needs to investigate this and call John to repentance” (April 29, 1:52 pm). In another email to Michael Hatcher he denied ever calling me a liar. This will be brought out later in this article.

Jimmy Wren, Sr. continued to spin his web of deceit when he wrote me on Saturday, April 30, 3:31 pm. He wrote in part: “If you would like for this to come to an end have brother Michael and brother Dub email me me (sic) that they are ‘convinced’ that the story you told on the 2010 lectures (sic) about the eldership...is indeed a true one and I will drop it.” One would think that it would have ended Saturday, but this discussion did not end until Monday. I am not giving the discussion in chronological order for a reason. I want the reader to see that this could have ended earlier, but Wren, through his dishonest acts, kept this discussion going. Michael and Dub had already written telling Wren that they believed my illustration. On Saturday, April 30, 10:50 am, Dub wrote Wren and stated: “I must be missing something in your complaint about John West’s sermon. I heard the sermon and had not the slightest doubt about his use of the incident or what it illustrated.” Remember, he said that if Michael (Hatcher) and Dub (McClish) “are ‘convinced’ that the story...is indeed a true one and I will drop it.” I reminded Wren about that email and he responded: “I never said one way or the other about what brother Dub McClish believes” (Saturday, April 30, 4:03 pm). This was a direct response to him saying that he will drop it if Dub verified that he believed it. It can be a little frustrating dealing with a person who says that he will drop it if the story is verified, then writes that he does not care what the person verifying it believes. This was on Saturday. Then on Monday, May 2, 9:19 am, Wren wrote Michael Hatcher and said:

Michael I have respect for both you and brother Dub and if you and Dub will both email that you are “convinced” that the story John told on the 2010 lectures about the eldership... is indeed a true recall of events...I will be glad to drop it.

Michael Hatcher answered Wren with:

Jimmy I am convinced that what John said is a true account of a real situation that occurred...I am defending it as being a true account of aciton. Now Jimmy try being a man of your word and “drop it” (Monday, May 2, 9:42 am).

Jimmy Responded:

Okay brother Michael. In view of your faith in the truthfulness of brother John’s story I will drop the matter. I do insist that a listener has a right to question a speaker and the speaker is obligated to prove the truthfulness of what he says or writes which brother John refuses to do. I would like to point out that a statement ‘one cannot teach the truth by telling lies’ is far from calling someone a liar. Jimmy.

Wren stated that a “speaker is obligated to prove the truthfulness of what he says or writes,” but I doubt he will follow his

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on edict. I proved the story was true, but Jimmy wanted names and places, which I refused to give. Therefore, he said I was lying about the whole situation. Is a speaker truly obligated to give every single detail about an illustration for it to be true? Notice what the director of one of our “brotherhood” schools wrote, when I asked him if a preacher is under obligation to give the name of a congregation in an illustration. He wrote:

The Apostle Paul used an example of “a man” who he did not name (2 Cor. 12:2ff). I often use examples of things that happened in the past that I am aware of that I say, “I am not going to tell who it was or what congregation.” The simple answer to your question is, no, not any more than Paul was obligated to tell us who the “man” was in 2 Cor. 12. Just because it is difficult to believe that an “eldership” would fire a preacher over such a thing shows the lack of knowledge this man you are writing about has. By they way, what are the names of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus? Many examples could be given from Scripture like this.

I wonder if Wren would take this preacher to task for his answer? Whether Wren likes this or not, I will not give the name of this individual, just like I did not give the name of the church and eldership where the event happened. The one who wrote this response to me knows who he is and can publicize his name if he so choses.

Why would I write this article about and publish my correspondence with a preacher over such a matter? The answer is a simple one. Wren was engaged in the kind of dishonesty

with which many of us have been dealing since 2005 regarding the Dave Miller matter. I have never met Jimmy Wren, Sr. and would not know him if he knocked on the door to my house. His entire correspondance with the Bellview elders, Michael Hatcher, Dub McClish and me was ridiculous, absurd, a waste of time, and downright wrong. But he and no one else determined his course of action. He sought to hurt (or destroy) my good reputation. He was upset because he could not sucessfully defend Dave Miller’s erroneous belief and conduct regarding his participation in the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders as it was taught and practiced on two separate occasions by the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas. Is this the way that Dave Miller and his supporters deal with opposition to his belief and practice of said error? *Indeed, it is!* If a person will ignore adequate evidence proving one to be a false teacher in order to defend said false teacher, that person will resort to about any kind of lowdown tactics to accomplish his sinful goal. That is exactly what Jimmy Wren, Sr. and his cowardly cohorts of the internet did.

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(Continued from Page 3)

The same sentiments as that expressed in the preceding Scriptures are manifest in the following ones. **“Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people”** (Deut. 32:43). **“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked”** (Psa. 58:10). **“But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause”** (Jer. 11:20). Furthermore, in the days of Esther, when the Jews’ enemies were destroyed, they rejoiced at the downfall of their enemies (Esther 8:15; 2 Kings 11:20).

How does Ezekiel 33:11 harmonize with these other Old Testament passages revealing Israel rejoicing at the destruction of her enemies. As we continue our study, let us see if we can find the answer to the preceding question.

Paul informs us that God ordained civil government. A part of the work of civil government is to be God’s instrument whereby He executes judgment on wicked people (Rom. 13:1-7). With these points in mind, what did the United States government do regarding the wicked Osama bin Laden? To ask the question is to answer it. Indeed, for such a punitive action against Osama bin Laden, Christians can and ought to rejoice—rejoice because justice was done.

I do not rejoice that Osama bin Laden or anyone else is in torment, but I do rejoice when I see God’s Will being done and thereby justice served. Are we to believe that the Bible teaches Christians not to rejoice when the sword of God’s justice is properly applied to the wicked? If it is the case that we are not to rejoice when civil governments do what God put them on earth to do, then what should be our attitude toward them when they exercise the power God gave them to be a terror to the evil? I only pray that all civil governments will consistently and in all cases do what God set them up to do regarding their dealing properly with the wicked. If and when they do, I will rejoice in that fact.

We also learn from the inspired Luke that the early church referenced Psalm 2 as part of their collective prayers after Peter and John were beaten (Acts 4:23-30). In their prayers they requested that the Lord heal, and perform signs and wonders in the name or by the authority of Jesus. But, this same Psalm represents God as laughing at the enemies of His anointed one because they dared to rebel against Him (Psa. 2:4). Clearly the Bible teaches that we should not rejoice because a wicked person dies and goes to hell. But, the New Testament authorizes Christians to rejoice when justice is meted out to the wicked.

For the person who thinks that Christians should not rejoice when the application of justice removes a wicked man from this world, should we then rejoice when justice is not done and such a wicked character as Osama bin Laden continues to be on earth, planning and carrying out his diabolical business? Certainly not. I would that all such men experience

the justice that God ordains civil governments to exercise on them. Therefore, by the authority of the New Testament (Col. 3:17), I will rejoice when any and all such wicked characters get their just desserts—**“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”** (Gen. 9:6).

John reveals God rejoicing at the fall of Babylon the great (Rev. 18:20). In Rev. 12:12; 15:3 and 19:1-4 there is rejoicing because at the destruction of God’s enemy. The song of Moses is referenced in John’s revelation. Indeed, in the worship of the church we too voice our praise to God when we speak of our victory in heaven, declaring in song, **“Sing the song of Moses and Lamb by and by and dwell with Jesus evermore.”** I strongly suggest that some study and learn what the song of Moses was all about.

Have we failed to notice an important message from Paul in the following Scripture?

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2 Thes. 1:7-10).

Therein Paul is informing Christians to take comfort in knowing that God will take vengeance on the wicked, some of whom have persecuted the church. Pray tell what kind of comfort does a Christian get from the words Paul wrote to the Thessalonians? Remember this is the same apostle who penned the great love chapter, 1 Cor. 13? Surely what he wrote in said chapter does not contradict the passage quoted above. Is this Scripture teaching to rejoice because the enemies of God, His Christ, His Word, and His family will be justly punished for their evil deeds? If Paul’s words do not say that, what words would the Holy Spirit have directed Paul to write in order to say as much?

Too many brethren have fallen victim to the wicked influence of a corrupted and twisted concept of love, mercy, and kindness. They view love as an emotional, subjective, sick, sentimentalism that moves them into adopting the false philosophy of Romanticism whereby they view the events of life and the Bible. Until we can get these devilish sentiments out of the minds of men in general and the church in particular, we will continue to have people and our brethren afraid to rejoice at the final victory of the Lamb and the eternal destruction of evil and the source of it.

—David P. Brown, Editor

“I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.”

—Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

MAINSTREAM MANIA

Charles Pogue

The word “mainstream” refers to the present prevailing thought, condition, or activity enjoined by the majority of a particular class or group. The mainstream of thought includes the notion that one who is not in the mainstream is an extremist. In the political realm, it may be more accurate to say that many individual politicians (primarily some on the left) consider themselves in the mainstream, and those who disagree with them are extremists. Generally, those in the mainstream, are identified as those whose position lies somewhere in the middle. That is what dad would have called a fence-straddler, or a fellow standing on the middle stripe of the highway where his exposure affords him the distinct possibility of a transformation from humanity into the status of an unusual hood ornament for a Peterbilt. *The worst thing about the mainstream is this—it offers no guarantee of being correct, true, or even desirable.*

Discussing “mainstream” as it refers to the churches of Christ is not only all the raving mania of some, but it is also something of a greasy slippery word. This is the case because the body of Christ is rife with division. Even some smaller groups cannot resist the urge to declare themselves in the mainstream. Some are willing to amble a bit to the left (is it not strange how the left and the mainstream are so often closely related?) to justify themselves in their mainstream claim.

The majority of congregations still claiming to be churches of Christ are really no longer identifiable as the church because they have rejected the exclusiveness of the New Testament church, questioned or abandoned the plan of salvation, and deny the pattern nature of the New Testament that sets out the organization, worship, and work of the church. Their plea is diversity in obligatory matters and they glorify their agnosticism. Further, their mainstream of thought bears no resemblance to sound doctrine and practice. Although, these assert they are in the mainstream of the Lord’s church, they are actually nothing more than an emerging, if not a fully developed, denomination. Thus, they are more correctly in the mainstream of sectarianism. Moreover, false humility is all the rage in the mania of mainstream.

For several decades, a small percentage of congregations has correctly identified the above described churches as apostate. However, there has now developed within this small contingent of churches those who declare themselves to be in a “mainstream” of sorts. This “mainstream” has begun to turn away from the New Testament authority regarding the Christian fellowship. These brethren deny Dave Miller’s error and his role in the unauthorized practice of re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders. Some of them continue to lament the spread of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit doctrine (although some seem to have softened in their concern about the matter), or the erroneous view that the Christian Church denomination are our brethren, but they continue to invite those who either hold these errors or fellowship those who do, into their pulpits. While the former group of congregations has removed the ancient landmarks altogether, these wallow in the self-declared validity of

merely stretching them a mite, and drift lazily and happily along in the mainstream of their making, branding those who refuse to wobble to the right hand or the left, as extreme.

This, though, is not the sole fellowship error of which this small mainstream (please excuse the oxymoron) is guilty. They now question whether actions they once correctly identified as sin are sinful. But they continue to maintain their fellowship with those who recognize their sinfulness enough to expurgate material questioning their evil classification from their lecture-ship books, but then print the expunged material in their church bulletins. Please halt the mainstream merry-go-round and let me recover from my dizziness.

Regardless of whether the “mainstream” references the larger former group of congregations, or the latter smaller contingent, the mainstream of thought, condition, or activity within either group, stands in opposition to the teaching of scripture. Therefore, a congregation which identifies itself as being in the mainstream of churches of Christ has condemned itself as unfaithful to the Lord.

Recently, a Texas congregation advertised an opening for an outreach minister. This congregation advertised the opening with the long apostate, but getting back into the good graces of the tiny mainstream, Sunset International Bible Institute. In the advertisement the congregation identified itself as a “warm, loving, main-stream congregation of 150.” So mainstream is this congregation, its preacher was a speaker on the 2008 Schertz, Texas Church of Christ lectures, whose preacher, Stan Crowley, has publicly taught error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage that he has never repented of or retracted. One whose nostrils are open may just catch the scent of a convergence of these two mainstreams. Let them merge if they must. After all, both of them view faithful brethren as extremists.

The primary guilt of the mainstream is the denial that truth is absolute. One who believes the Bible’s identification of homosexuality as an abomination (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) is an extremist. One in the mainstream may well assert that while he does not choose homosexuality himself, to identify the activity as sin, is extremism. One who actually practices the withdrawal of fellowship from those who “walk disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6) is thought an extremist. We suppose it is not extreme to teach the truth on the matter, just to practice it. Mainstream mania attempts to, as the old saying goes, “have one’s cake and eat it too”. James’ rebuke of those who would be hearers only and not doers (Jam. 1:22) would apply to speakers only as well.

Our Lord pointed out in the Sermon on the Mount that not everyone who cries out to Him, “**Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven**” (Matt. 7:21). Only those who actually do the will of the Father will enter into the heavenly city. Let us see now, only a few will go into heaven. That means the majority, the mainstream, if you please, will go the other way. While in this life the lure of the mania of mainstream imposes upon conformists the error that it is okay to agree to disagree, but when these stand before the Lord in judgment, how do you suppose they will take it when the Lord agrees with their self-admission, “I am one of the mainstream?”

—P. O. Box 592
Granby, MO 64844

Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, 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—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; 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.

-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.

-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.

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 and the internet school, Truth Bible Institute. www.churchesofchrist.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.