



# Northside church of Christ

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## ELDERS

Bobby Hall

Ron Hall

Terry York

## DEACONS

Perry Dixon

Eddie Jones

## MINISTERS

David B. Smith

Terry York

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Brother Dave Miller has been marked as teaching error on MDR and revaluation and reaffirmation of elders. His false teaching on these issues have been fully exposed in several publications including The Gospel Journal, CFTF, The Defender and a website called Brown Trail Truth at <http://www.brown-trail-truth.com/>. The evidence of his errors and participation in them is overwhelming. Since brother Miller has been marked as a false teacher he should repent before faithful brethren use him in their meetings and lectureships or appear with him on such programs. The Bible clearly teaches us how to deal with a false teacher (Romans 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). After reading the evidence provided by the brotherhood papers noted above and the website, one should be able to draw his own conclusions as to the error he holds.

Northside's concern with Dave Miller involves his violation of God's law on fellowship. Our dealings with brother Miller began in October 1999 when he conducted a meeting at the Calhoun Church of Christ in Calhoun, GA. The faithful had departed from this congregation six months earlier (April 1999) because of doctrinal error, which was documented in our "Open Letter" and "Reasons Why We Left" journal.

Prior to brother Miller's coming to Calhoun, some of our Northside members who had left the Calhoun congregation contacted brother Miller and provided him with a copy of our "Open Letter" which we had sent to the Calhoun elders on April 18, 1999. In this "Open Letter" we documented the doctrinal reasons why we left. We also sent brother Miller a copy of the audio tapes Jerry Dyer (a marked false teacher) had presented at the Calhoun Church of Christ in February 1999, in which he taught at least seven doctrinal errors. When the Calhoun eldership were asked if they agreed with what Jerry Dyer taught, they stated before thirty men in a meeting on March 22, 1999, that they believed and supported what Jerry Dyer taught. We knew then it was time to withdraw ourselves from that apostate eldership.

The Northside brethren had been gone six months when brother Miller came as scheduled to the Calhoun Church of Christ and conducted a Friday-Sunday night meeting. On the last night he praised the Calhoun elders for their soundness and good leadership. He also praised the Calhoun preacher as a good man and encouraged the congregation to "hang in there" with these good men. He went on to say that he knew they had just been through a tough time, but in time things would get better. The sad part to all brother Miller's praises and endorsements of these brethren was the fact that he had all of the evidence that this was a marked apostate church for some five months before coming to Calhoun and he bid them God's speed anyway.

As a result of brother Miller's comments two of the Northside members called Dave Miller and asked him why he endorsed this apostate congregation in light of the documents he had been provided showing their doctrinal errors. His response was, "I don't have time to read or listen to all the stuff I

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receive". His attitude toward them was short and as if he didn't care about our concerns. Needless to say, he closed the minds of the Calhoun members that had been concerned about the soundness of the Calhoun Church of Christ. After that night, all doors that had remained open to teach and explain the doctrinal errors that existed in this apostate congregation were closed.

Three weeks after Dave Miller left Calhoun, the apostate church paid the expenses to move Avon Malone to Brown Trail School of Preaching from Oklahoma Christian University. It would appear that money was part of the motive for Miller's holding this liberal apostate leadership up in high esteem.

Dave Miller was reminded of the Calhoun problem again in 2003. David B. Smith, minister of the Northside church of Christ, along with other preachers, refused to speak on a lectureship with brother Miller because of the controversy surrounding him. Brother Smith wrote brother Oscar Craft, director of the Palmetto Bible Lectureship, Greer S.C., which was scheduled for October 12-16, 2003, and told him about the situation here in Calhoun and provided him with information about brother Miller's false teaching. Upon receiving this information, brother Craft wrote a letter of cancellation to brother Miller and asked him to repent of his error and correct the situation he had created in Calhoun. As of August 30, 2005 we have not heard from brother Miller concerning this situation.

The participation with and endorsement of a known apostate church by brother Dave Miller is a violation of God's law on fellowship (2 John 9-11). This is yet another error brother Miller needs to repent of before he can be received by the faithful.

Our prayer is that brother Miller will repent of all the error he has taught and of his participation with liberal congregations. We pray that he will repent and stop the division he is causing in the Lord's church. We hope he will live up to the man he presented himself to be in his book, *Piloting the Strait*. We pray that faithful brethren everywhere will uphold the marking that faithful brethren have placed on brother Dave Miller until he makes a public acknowledgment of repentance.

Elders, Northside church of Christ  
Calhoun, Georgia

Bobby Hall  
Ron Hall  
Terry York

# Brown Trail Truth Web Site

<http://www.brown-trail-truth.com>

Purpose of this site is to get out the truth about what happened to the Brown Trail Church of Christ of Bedford, Texas. This congregation has been divided over the issue of Dave Miller. Nobody there argues with that fact. However, was Dave the instigator of division? Or was Dave the victim of a conspiracy? A huge controversy has developed around those questions with a number of brethren on both sides. Where does the evidence point? This site will inform you so you can decide for yourself.

Unfortunately, the remaining four elders of the Brown Trail congregation have been trying to suppress information about this sad situation. They have made it clear that they do not want people discussing it. Is there something to hide? The church of Christ is not a secret society. The brethren need to know what happened. Here you will be able to access documents that reveal what really happened. Please keep all involved with this congregation in your prayers.

This site is not affiliated with the Brown Trail Church of Christ. However, it presents authentic documents collected by members and former members of the congregation, including three former elders.

This site is operated by Ashley Williams and James French.

## THE NECESSITY OF EXPOSING ERROR

Dan Flournoy

**[Note: Dan Flournoy began teaching in the Brown Trail School of Preaching in 1997. He worked as minister of education/evangelism at Brown Trail from May 15, 2001 to Oct. 4, 2002. He was present and saw first-hand the events regarding the division at Brown Trail. He is not an "outsider."]**

Jesus warned of false prophets who would come in the innocent garb of sheep (Matt. 7:15). Paul cautioned the elders of the Ephesian church about the “grievous wolves” that would enter among them, “not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). The loving apostle John wrote saying “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world” ( 1 John 4:1).

Exposing error and false teachers has never been a pleasant task. Yet it is a necessary one. God’s faithful messengers have always been called upon to expose the false doctrines of men (Isa. 58:1; Tit. 1:9-11). Some, rather than to reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2), would preach the smooth things (Isa. 30:9). While Jude would have preferred to write about the common salvation, he found it necessary to exhort the brethren to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

God has placed his “watchmen” upon the walls of spiritual Zion to warn the wicked that they might be saved (Ezek. 3:17ff; 2 Tim. 4:1-4). Gospel preachers and godly elders have a responsibility to sound out the warning before digression and apostasy overrun the people of God (Tit. 1:9-14; 1 Tim. 1:3). This sometimes involves exposing error (Eph. 5:11), marking those who cause division and occasions of stumbling (Rom. 16:17), and sometimes it necessitates rebuking folks publicly (1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:13; Gal. 2:11). Many, however, who should be watchmen, have grown blind, ignorant and have fallen asleep! “His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isa. 56:10).

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Far too many preachers and elders in the Brotherhood are like these dumb watchdogs that cannot bark! If a watchdog can not or will not bark, of what good is he? To further complicate matters, often these “dumb dogs” attack the very ones who are courageous enough to speak out against sin and error within the church. Oh how they can then bark about the “judgmental and unloving” attitude of those “keepers of orthodoxy” and “church regulators.” One is reminded of an article that appeared in a newspaper a few years ago. While two thieves burglarized a house, the owner’s big old watchdog lay in the shade and watched! When the police arrived, the watchdog attacked them, and the burglars escaped!

Preachers and elders need to wake up and watch! They need to sound out a warning against sin and error. They need to identify and mark the false prophets who ravage the flock of God (Rom. 16:17-18). Today, perhaps more than ever before, we need watchmen on the walls of spiritual Zion who will lift up their voices like a trumpet and cry out against wickedness (Isa. 58:1). --Dan Flournoy

### APPLICATION

As we look at the situation at Brown Trail over the past five years, it seems to this writer that there were those who sought to gain control of the Preacher Training School for their personal aggrandizement. Dave Miller systematically eliminated the core faculty and replaced it with part-time instructors. He turned over much of the control of the school to Everett Chambers a recent graduate of the PTS. Cultish practices began to be reported by students in the PTS. (Read for a “tip of the iceberg” view). An, “in your face” type of discipline emerged. (See distributed to the students, ). Three faithful watchmen, Daryl Barker, James L. French and Jimmie McKenzie tried to make corrections and were continually thwarted. (Read the documents on this website that demonstrate Dave’s contempt for the authority of elders).

Three additional elders, Guy Elliott, Eddie Parker and Phil Pope were added in January 2002. These three, along with Bobby Watts, ignored the clear evidence that things were wrong in the PTS. They, like the dumb dog in the above article, refused to bark out a warning. Instead, they turned on those who were trying to do what watchdogs are supposed to do! In an effort to save Dave’s job a plan was formulated to oust the other three elders.

First, there was a concerted effort by three deacons, Ed Allen, Kevin Kogucz, and Brian White to undermine these three elders who opposed Dave Miller. They interviewed numerous individuals trying to ascertain if anyone had ought against these three elders in particular. In so doing, they sowed discord by placing doubts in the minds of many in the congregation regarding Barker, French and McKenzie.

Next, a plan to reaffirm the elders was set in motion. Dave Miller called a meeting of some thirty hand picked men to give them his side of things. (For Dave’s view, read his on this website). Included in this meeting were four of the seven elders, Eddie Parker, Guy Elliot, Phil Pope and Bobby Watts. The only defense given by the four elders for attending such a meeting was that “we didn’t act on anything discussed at the meeting.” The implication is clear: Dave wanted them to act on something!

The congregation was then asked to evaluate the elders. They were not given any reason as to why this was necessary. Part of the congregation, however, had been involved in the meeting that Dave Miller called. In essence what happened was that the congregation was asked to sit as a jury and render a verdict on each of the seven elders. Since the “jury” had already been tampered with, the outcome was pretty well guaranteed. As it turned out, two elders, Jimmy McKenzie and Daryl Barker resigned before the final “vote.” The third was forced out by elders who had resigned one Wednesday night and then reinstated themselves the next Sunday with the help of their preacher, Maxie Boren.

Charges were made against James French including the charge that he was contentious and sowing discord. When brother French tried to answer the charges, Maxie Boren told him he couldn’t speak because he had spoken the previous Wednesday night. (No wonder brother French called Maxie a

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preacher-ruler!) No charges had been made against brother French on the previous Wednesday night and he had every right to speak to the congregation. Now, the only way brother French has to defend himself and to answer their false charges is by way of this web site. Maxie has called the web site despicable. What is despicable is the ungodly way he and the four remaining elders treated brother French and others who stood in opposition to their cover-up of Dave Miller and Everett Chambers.

What is the result of all this? Dave Miller has moved on to greener pastures working for Apologetics Press. Everett Chambers continues to pursue his career in law school. The church at Brown Trail has been split to the point that those remaining are ashamed to publish the attendance figures. (The first six months of 2002 the average attendance was over 500. Now, as we approach the end of 2002, the average attendance is close to 300). Members who left Brown Trail have been scattered among about eight different congregations. They are happily working for the Lord and contributing to the growth of the Kingdom. They have discovered that there are indeed sound congregations in the area! Those who have left Brown Trail have been characterized as "leaving in a huff." Well, they didn't leave in a huff. They left with broken hearts! These members were not trouble makers. Some had been members at Brown Trail over thirty years. It was not easy for them to leave. They simply could not tolerate a leadership so obviously in error.

The damage that has been done by those bent on upholding the cultish practices of Dave Miller and Everett Chambers may never fully be known. However, those who take the time to read the documents on this web site can see that what brothers Barker, French and McKenzie were trying to do was exactly what godly elders are suppose to do, **warn the brethren!** They simply stood up and called for repentance on the part of those who brought erroneous and divisive practices into the church at Brown Trail. They call for repentance on the part of those who continue to cover up sin in the camp.

Brothers Barker, French and McKenzie led no faction. They upheld no man. They simply stood for Truth! Their only purpose was to protect the flock of God. Even **now**, they only call for repentance on the part of those who have taught and practiced that which is contrary to the word of God (Rom. 16:17-18). **Now**, they are simply marking those who have brought cult practices and division into the Lord's church at Brown Trail. Exposing error is not an option, it is mandatory! Thank God for godly watchmen on the walls of spiritual Zion. --Dan Flournoy

## The Brown Trail Church Mess

By David P. Brown

**The following article appeared in the October 2002 edition of *Contending For The Faith***

Someone ask me the other day what I thought about the turmoil in the eldership, among the preachers (now former preachers), and some of the membership of the Brown Trail Church of Christ in Hurst, Texas. My reply to the question was and is: "If the people of that church who are guilty of sinful conduct do not repent before they step into eternity they are going to be lost."

The only doctrinal error that I know of that had somewhat to play in the recent fiasco and the fall out which continues on, is the re-evaluation of the elders doctrine. This is not new with those brethren. Although some of us thought they had learned their Bible better since it has been over ten years since they practiced elder re-evaluation the first time. But alas, such was not the case.

At present the powers that be at Brown Trail are trying to say everything is A-OK. But I have not seen any sign of repentance from anybody for anything. Unless the Brown Trail elders want us to believe the goings on over the past several months are exemplary of Christian conduct and a pattern for all churches to follow, somebody needs to repent.

Of course someone may say this trouble concerns only the Brown Trail congregation—it is an internal matter. That is simply not the case. Brown Trail has too many works that depend upon the brotherhood

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for them to function. Therefore, there mess and whoever made it becomes a concern for all faithful Christians. Remember Pearl Harbor—No, wrong catastrophe—I mean remember the Herald of Truth and Highland.

For example, under date of September 9, 2002 a letter from **Ed Allen** addressed to "Dear Friends" was mailed far and wide. Note the first sentence in the letter. "This is a plea four your congregation to consider giving a significant amount of money to Truth in Love to position it financially as we launch into a new chapter of her existence." The first sentence of the second paragraph reads, "As you know, Truth in Love is a work of the church and is entirely supported by the church of Christ." The first two sentences in the eighth paragraph read, "What I am asking your congregation to give to the Truth In Love is a one-time lump-sum donation of \$5,000. Additionally, I am asking you to consider giving \$250 per month for the next year." The Truth In Love is a work of the Brown Trail Church of Christ. In making this plea for financial support and telling the churches that the Truth In Love is a tool that the churches may use to reach the lost makes what goes on in and with the Brown Trail eldership et al. of interest to every faithful child of God. And, this does not begin to consider the thousands of dollars over the years from throughout the brotherhood that have helped students go through Brown Trail School of Preaching, which students leave Brown Trail to work among the churches.

The letter from which I have previously quoted is seeking financial help from the brotherhood in the amount of approximately **\$826,000.00**. This money is to be overseen and administered by the Brown Trail elders. Yes, when a church seeks support of the brotherhood what goes on in the eldership and among the preachers, etc. is the concern of the faithful whom that church calls on to support them.

We do not need an Enron Church of Christ whose elders do not indicate that in a fiasco that was long in coming to a head in the Brown Trail Church that no one involved therein is guilty of sin. Why will people think that they are worthy of the trust of the brotherhood when they go right on as if nothing wrong (sinful) happened? Where is the person or persons at Brown Trail who will say that every person involved in all the trouble that has transpired therein did no sin and therefore need not repent of anything? Moreover, if they do admit that people sinned and they have not repented, why is not church discipline being carried out? The thing that upsets me the most is that some people think they can dismiss the whole thing as if nothing ever happened, attempt to sweep it all under the proverbial rug, and this will satisfy the brethren. While such may satisfy some brethren, for those brethren who desire things to be done according to the Bible it will certainly not satisfy them.

—David P. Brown, Editor-in-Chief

## Change Agents and Leadership

By Marvin L. Weir

**The following article appeared in the October 2002 edition of *The Gospel Journal***

Change agents have made it their mission to restructure the Lord's church to suit their own whims and wishes. Most of these erstwhile brethren are well educated in worldly wisdom and use such wisdom in their attacks upon the body of Christ. To be successful in peddling false doctrine, change agents must undermine or negate the authority of godly elders. Thus, nothing is more crucial to the spiritual well being of the church than having faithful men overseeing the flock. If elders would take their Scriptural task seriously, it would end the liberalism and immorality that runs rampant in many congregations. However, "holding to the faithful word" (Tit. 1:9) is not appealing to all and is thus rejected by many so-called "elders" as not conducive to filling the building. What a shame and tragedy that many brethren are more concerned with physical numbers than with spiritual needs!

**AUTHORITY OF ELDERS**

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Qualifications for elders, found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, tell us that God intends for qualified men to serve congregations as overseers and shepherds. Many readily admit that the Bible authorizes elders but then quickly state that the only authority they possess is in being good examples to the flock. Most certainly, Peter forbids elders from “lording it over the charge allotted” to them and demands that elders be “ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). Every Christian is obligated to be a godly example (cf. Matt. 5:13–16). The question is, does 1 Peter 5:3 deny elders of the authority to make decisions in behalf of the congregation they serve? Absolutely not!

The Scriptures forbid elders to abuse their authority by using it for their own personal agendas. They are always to “rule” (Heb. 13:17) in the best spiritual interest of the congregation. An arrogant, dictatorial, power-hungry rule is **never** condoned or approved by God. The fact that some elders have abused authority delegated to them by the Scriptures does not make right the unscriptural position of the “**example only**” advocates.

One fallacy in this most crucial area is the idea brethren have that the decisions of the elders must concur with the thinking of the majority of the members. Such reasoning dispenses with the authority of elders and allows the congregation to vote on every matter to be settled. The elders who are to be the “overseers” now become the “overseen.” Thereby the door is opened wide for those who disdain the Bible pattern to recruit support for their ungodly agendas.

The Bible forever settles the authority issue regarding elders (cf. Psa. 119:89). First, the often overlooked verse preceding the one stating that elders are to be examples says: “Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:2).

**Second**, the writer of Hebrews affirms the authority of elders in commanding brethren to “remember them that have the rule over you” (13:7, KJV), “obey them that have the rule over you” (v. 17), and “salute them that have the rule over you” (v. 24). How can elders “rule” a congregation and not have authority to make decisions? According to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*, the word *rule* quoted above in the three passages from Hebrews means “to rule, to command, [and] to have authority over.”

**Third**, an elder is accountable for ruling “well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity” (1 Tim. 3:4). Anyone admitting to truth knows that **authority** must be exercised if one is to rear children successfully! Either the parent or the child will be in control. This is precisely Paul’s point: “if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God” (1 Tim. 3:5)?

**Fourth**, elders are to “tend the flock of God...exercising the oversight...” (1 Pet. 5:2). The word *tend*, according to *Thayer*, means “to feed...to keep sheep, to rule [and] to govern.” The ones “exercising the oversight” are called “overseers” in Acts 20:28. *Thayer* defines the word for “overseer” as “a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly....” Will anyone be so bold as to argue that a godly example is all that is necessary to keep “grievous wolves” from devouring the flock? Will a mere Christian example keep men from speaking “perverse things” and drawing “away the disciples after them” (vv. 29–30)?

No, godly **elders** do not make laws, but they do boldly and conscientiously enforce **God’s** laws! Why? Because the mouths of false teachers must be stopped and the precious bride of Christ kept pure. The apostle Paul uses words that cannot be misunderstood in saying that an elder must be ...holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake (Tit. 1:9–11). If elders can effectively tend the flock under their charge, having no authority, a shepherd might as well use wolves to guard his sheep. Believe it only if you are unwilling to accept the Word of God.

### WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The fruit of having elders with no authority is seen in the decision of more and more congregations to utilize women in leadership roles. Decisions made by the courts of our land declaring “discrimination” to be evil, oppressive, and unlawful have caused many to “rethink” their position of not allowing women to serve in leadership positions within the church. Most mainline denominations are now declaring that today’s culture demands the use of women in leadership roles within “the church,” and many who profess to be members of the church of Christ have decided to give full support to such apostasy.

It does not matter that the majority of our culture believes that a woman has the right to do everything that a man can do in the church. Since when do baby-boomers become the voice of God and the current culture the pattern for New Testament Christianity? What does matter is that which God has declared to be right. A faithful child of God has the obligation always to “speak the things which befit the sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1).

**First**, women cannot rightly serve as preachers, elders, and adult Bible class teachers in a class composed of males and females because God has not given them the authority to do so. It matters not one bit whether it makes sense to the younger generation or if the majority of people believe it to be right. God’s Word is valid and binding even if the entire world argues that it is outdated and obsolete.

**Second**, women are to “...keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a women to speak in the church” (1 Cor. 14:34-35). In an attempt to make Bible commands look foolish, some declare that accepting this verse for what it says will forbid a woman to sing during the Lord’s Day assembly. A distinction must be made, however, between engaging in congregational singing (a command from God) and standing before the congregation in a leadership role (teaching, preaching, serving at the Lord’s table, etc.).

**Third**, God has given the position of leadership within the church to the man. The Scriptures affirm such in saying, “Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness” (1 Tim. 2:11–12). *Thayer* defines the word translated “to teach” as meaning “...to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses, to discharge the office of a teacher, to conduct oneself as a teacher...to impart instruction...or to explain or to expound a thing.” This definition leaves absolutely no wiggle room. A woman never has God’s permission to teach or “have dominion over a man” in religious matters.

It is also worth mentioning that when engaging in prayer (whether in worship at the building or at other gatherings) men are to lead the prayers when both males and females are present (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8). Chain prayers where both participate in the prayer are unscriptural even if they have the blessings of the elders (or of an elder’s wife). What is sorely needed is more respect for sacred matters

### LEADERSHIP AND ELDER “REAFFIRMATION,” ETC.

The practice of "reaffirming" elders was begun several years ago by change agents. Unfortunately, this unscriptural process has been adopted by some whom we would not number with them. Brethren across the nation have long supported many good works overseen by the elders of the Brown Trail Congregation in Bedford, Texas. Supporters have a right to know that they have repeatedly used the elder "reaffirmation/reevaluation" practice. **On April 8, 1990 Dave Miller preached a sermon at Brown Trail advocating this process. Paul Drum, an elder at the Rowlett, Texas, congregation, discussed with him the fallacy and dangers inherent in this practice. Paul understood that the "reaffirmation" process would be discontinued. However, it was recently repeated at Brown Trail, even though some of the Brown Trail elders objected to it.**



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Not only did existing elders voice objection, but others not members at Brown Trail who were concerned with the Truth, the School of Preaching, the television program, and the congregation pleaded with certain brethren to use their influence to stop a practice for which there is no Scriptural authority. I have permission to quote from one such person who met with brethren at Brown Trail for approximately two hours to ask questions and voice concerns. Dub Mowery, a gospel preacher from Drumright, Oklahoma, states: **I visited with Dave Miller and Maxie Boren in Maxie's office at the Brown Trail church building on Wednesday, July 17th. Both...defended the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders.** In fact, brother Boren acknowledged that he had initiated the process of the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders for the four remaining elders during that period of time. I pleaded with those two brethren to use their influence to stop that process at Brown Trail. They both upheld that unscriptural practice. A night or two after that, I called Bobby Watts, one of the remaining four elders at Brown Trail, and pleaded with him to stop the process of the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders. He simply stated, "I think that everything will be settled this Sunday night" (referring to a statement made to the congregation on July 21, 2002).

According to the "reaffirmation" guidelines, if an elder did not obtain a 75 percent or more approval from the congregation he would be removed from the eldership. The results were announced on July 10, 2002, and one elder was forced out of the eldership on July 14.

Something else to consider is that in the midst of this internal turmoil, two of the current elders resigned and soon thereafter rescinded their resignations. If words have meaning, and they do, elders who willingly resign are no longer elders. By what Biblical principle, then, does one "rescind" his resignation and remain an elder? Some Scriptural process must be followed when elders are first appointed to serve, but appointing oneself as an elder is not Scriptural.

Please consider these pertinent points: First, and most important, there is no Scriptural authority for the elder "reaffirmation" practice.

**Second**, there is a Scriptural pattern for confronting elders who are guilty of sin and refuse to repent. The apostle Paul says, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear" (1 Tim. 5:19–20). Anyone who sins and refuses to repent must be marked and withdrawn from (Rom. 16:17–18; 2 The. 3:6). The same people that select one to serve as an elder because he is Scripturally qualified (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–11) can also reject that one because he no longer meets the Scriptural qualifications. Existing elders can and should reject a fellow elder who is no longer qualified to serve. The "reaffirmation" process, however, is **not** based upon **Scriptural** objections. The "I feel that one is doing a bad or good job" is totally subjective.

**Third**, "reaffirmation" opens wide the door for those disenchanted with the Bible pattern to accomplish their liberal agendas. It is absurd to demand a "reaffirmation" of existing elders just because a congregation now has members who were not a part of the selection process. Members come and go but that does not disqualify one who was and still is qualified to serve as an elder. Who, unless he has a personal agenda, would want to keep a godly, qualified elder from serving? Elders who boldly uphold Bible Truth will make enemies. Family members will become upset because sin was not tolerated among their relatives. One can quickly lose his popularity when he stands steadfast and unmovable for the cause of Christ, but such does not mean he should step down from serving as an elder. To do so simply allows those who do not respect the Word of God and desire to restructure the Lord's church to have their own way in regard to these matters.

**Fourth**, the influence of the Brown Trail School of Preaching is far reaching. How many students who graduate from the school will be determined to defend and implement the "reaffirmation" process in the congregation where they labor because of the influence and example of Brown Trail? This

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dangerous and unscriptural process does not need to infiltrate congregations, as did the Crossroads movement.

**Fifth**, when 75 percent approval is required to retain godly elders, only 26 percent of the congregation is in the driver's seat. The folly of man in choosing such an arbitrary number to determine who is an effective leader should be obvious to any Bible student. What if the children of Israel had been allowed to practice the "reaffirmation" process with reference to Moses and Aaron (cf. Exo. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:41)? You know the answer— there would have been an immediate leadership change. **One** valid objection disqualifies a man from serving as an elder. However, where is the Scripture or wisdom that necessitates that an elder who has been selected by the congregation and who meets the Holy Spirit's qualifications can/must be periodically "reaffirmed?"

CONCLUSION ... May brethren realize the tremendous need for godly elders who watch in behalf of souls "as they that shall give account" (Heb. 13:17). We salute elders who refuse to compromise with error and take the time necessary to oversee, feed, protect, and be godly examples to the flock that selected them to serve. A day of reckoning is coming for every child of God. Our prayer is that all who have strayed from a "thus saith the Lord" will repent and once again be content to walk in the light of His Divine Truth. —5810 Liberty Grove Road  
Rowlett, TX 75089

## DAVE MILLER

Holger W. Neubauer

Though Simon Peter was a key figure in the early church, taking the role of apostle, elder, and preacher, he found himself in a fellowship controversy with the apostle Paul that needed correcting. Consequently, Paul rebuked Peter publicly for his part in the dissimulation (Gal. 2:11-14). Paul followed his own inspired admonition in Ephesians 5:11 which said to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Paul had the courage to reprove Peter publicly because Peter's sin was public and he would not work openly with Peter until Peter had repented. If those who are in position to do the same today did so, much of the hypocrisy concerning the fellowship issue facing the present church would be taken care of. Had Brother Dave Miller done as Paul did with Peter on the many occasions he has appeared with known false teachers, we would have no controversy with him.

Dave Miller is the present Director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching which is located in Bedford, Texas. Brother Miller has had partnership with many liberal venues over the years. In 1995, Dave Miller worked with the International Bible College Lectureship. The same year's lectureship included Willie Franklin who earlier that same year was a Jubilee participant. Jay Lockhart participated on the 1995 IBC lectureship and believes that "God never required an individual to live a celibate life" and "God never required anyone to break up a marriage." Jay Lockhart participated with Joe Beam on the Red River encampment in New Mexico. Charles Hodge, who denies the authority of elders and called Max Lucado "the best religious writer in the world" was also on the 1995 IBC Lectureship. Brother Miller went back to IBC in 1996 and spoke with the false teacher David Lane, who believes those outside of Christ are not amenable to God's marriage laws. Gary Bradley spoke on the 1996 IBC Lectureship and was a participant in the 1993 Jubilee. Why did not Brother Miller protest publicly about these things? He certainly believes that men who teach false doctrine ought to be marked and avoided. In Brother Miller's book *Piloting the Strait*, a section dealing with false teachers says:

Rather than being duly noted and avoided (Rom. 6:17), they continue to operate freely and even function in influential capacities (e.g. staff writers for publishing companies and magazines). They are

## Dave Miller Controversy

given latitude to voice their false ideas through major brotherhood publications. They continue to be used as guest speakers in pulpits and on lectureship platforms. We no longer call for repentance as John did (Matt. 3:7,8). (p. 505)

If Brother Miller had followed his own advice he would have called more than a dozen men to repentance before or while appearing on lectureship programs with them. Perhaps one of the greatest inconsistencies Brother Miller has been involved in is his appearance with Everett Ferguson on the 1997 IBC Lectureship. That very year Brother Miller reviewed Ferguson's book at the Spiritual Sword Lectureship in Memphis. Now, if brother Ferguson needed to be exposed in Memphis in October, why did he not expose him in September in Florence? Brother Miller had this to say about Ferguson's book, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*:

Secondly, the book comes forth from an institutional environment that would seem to be an unlikely source for clear thinking about Bible teaching related to the church of Christ. We should be grateful for every university professor who remains true to the "old paths" even though surrounded by wholesale abandonment of Bible truth. No assumptions should be made about a person's faithfulness simply because he or she remains in such an environment. Nevertheless, the favorable allusion to academic colleagues (whose doctrinal soundness has been seriously questioned) in the Preface creates the impression that disagreement over doctrine as it relates to the church should not be allowed to disrupt fellowship.

This is an understatement. Brother Ferguson is professor emeritus at Abilene Christian University. Ferguson has participated with the so-called "Christian Scholar's Conference" at least five times; the last appearance was in 1996. 1996 was also the last time Ferguson appeared at the ACU Lectureship. How could Brother Ferguson possibly be obeying Ephesians 5:11 if he is a regular speaker at the programs where heretics most often frequent? Why does Brother Miller even bother to write up Ferguson if "no assumptions should be made about a person's faithfulness simply because he or she remains in such an environment"? Brother Miller criticizes brother Ferguson for those whom he chooses to commend his book. This criticism is just, but Brother Miller does not tell us that Ferguson is commended by Baptist W. R. Estep and the ACU Press. However, is not an implicit commendation made toward ACU and the Christian Scholar's Conference by Ferguson's not reproving them? Brother Miller partners with Ferguson at IBC by working with him on that program and by not saying one thing about Ferguson. However, Brother Miller already prepared his manuscript for the Spiritual Sword Lectures in which he would rebuke Ferguson for those Ferguson recruited to commend his book. Is this not hypocritical? Brother Miller needs to learn that fellowship is not open-ended. If Ferguson was wrong for receiving recommendations from false teachers, then Miller was wrong himself for not reproving Ferguson of the same error when he participated with him at the liberal IBC lectureship.

Having perused Brother Ferguson's book myself, I find it significant that Miller said nothing about Ferguson's errant statement concerning baptism where Ferguson confuses water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism as one and the same. Ferguson on page 193 says, "To be dipped in the baptismal water is to be dipped in the Spirit." This is false doctrine. On page 403, Ferguson says, "Paul in I Corinthians 1:13-17 protests against any view of baptism which would make it a badge of distinction among Christians instead of a unifying act." Ferguson is involved in double-talk. Of course baptism is a "badge of distinction." Of course New Testament baptism separates the world from Christ and is also a source of controversy and division for those who will not obey the truth (Rom. 9:33; Matt. 15:12-13). Ferguson leaves the impression that the Holy Spirit still gives gifts today. Notice this quote on page 407: "There is one spirit, who unites all in baptism (I Cor. 12:13), gives gifts (I Cor. 12:4), and seeks to

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fill believers (Eph. 5:18)." No, Brother Ferguson, the Holy Spirit does not give those gifts today. Why did not brother Miller bring these and many more points of error to the light when his assignment was to review Ferguson's work at the Spiritual Sword Lectureship? Miller said too little about Ferguson in Memphis, and he failed to say anything about him in Florence when he participated on the same program with him. He should have at least said what he said in Memphis. The legs of the lame are not equal.

This material is presented with no ill will but only with the desire that all brethren will speak the same things in every venue they find themselves. If a man deserves public rebuke 100 miles away from his face, he also deserves it "face to face."

## Maxie Boren's Open Letter, November 20, 2002

*The following document was distributed at Brown Trail in November 2002. It also appeared on the Brown Trail . There are some slight variations in the two documents. The PDF version is a scan of the paper version while the text below was copied from the Brown Trail website on January 24, 2003.*

### OPEN LETTER FROM MAXIE B. BOREN

#### GOSPEL PREACHER, BROWN TRAIL CHURCH OF CHRIST

Because of the malicious rumors about Brown Trail which have been circulating throughout the brotherhood for the past several months, I feel compelled to respond. The elders and myself have tried to take "the high road" and not lower ourselves to the level that a goodly number of our accusers have done. But there comes a time, when so many untrue things have been said and continue to be said that an answer must be given. That time has come.

Please understand that it is almost impossible to clearly communicate in writing to a broad reading audience on a matter of complexity, and especially one concerning which so much misinformation has been distributed. But in spite of that difficulty, **the following is a humble and sincere effort to simply set forth the facts concerning the handling of the problematic situation that arose at the Brown Trail congregation and thus, hopefully dispel the distortions circulating against us. This is going to be a "one and only" response to all the misinformation being disseminated, far and wide. We don't intend to become embroiled in an ongoing controversy with brethren over an internal matter that was handled as best we knew how to handle it.** We believe the Biblical principle of local church autonomy certainly applies in this matter pertaining to Brown Trail...where each congregation is free from a human hierarchical system to handle its own internal affairs in the light of Scripture as is deemed wise. **The bottom line is we did the very best we could, with profound respect for what God's word teaches and guided by its precepts, to solve the internal problem we had as best we possibly could under the circumstances.**

**In setting forth the facts, may I first of all "lay the blame" where it belongs...upon Satan!** As you know, the Scriptures depict him as a "roaring lion" walking about in search of prey (I Pet. 5:8). That certainly conveys the idea that he is a formidable adversary because the lion is the "king of beasts." Thus, the apostle referred to him as the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). Satan is indeed the "deceiver of the world" (Rev. 12:9) and the "father of lies" (John 8:44). Satan has many "devices" in his arsenal with which to attack us (II Cor. 2:11). The devil's design for all of us is to bring us to spiritual bankruptcy and eternal ruination. **Satan wants to divide the church and stir-up all kinds of problems for the Cause. Therefore, the instigator of the trouble that came to Brown Trail was Satan!** Tragically, his greatest and most successful ruse was to "take the whole matter" far beyond this congregation and use brethren "near and far" as his pawns to spread rumors from person to person in conversations and in Emails on the Internet, etc. Many brethren, who could not possibly have known

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all the "ins and outs" as only those of us who were here could know, took pens in hand, stood in judgment from afar, and commenced to condemn us based on "what they had heard." Like sharks on a feeding frenzy, they attacked Brown Trail. How sad, how sad. As Stephen, I pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Satan saw Brown Trail, with all its growth and good works (i.e., the School of Preaching, "The Truth In Love" TV program, the annual Ft. Worth Lectureship, etc.) as a prime target. Dating back about four years ago, he set his plan in motion within the School of Preaching, capitalizing on such human frailties as pride, ego, less than good attitudes, stubbornness, the misuse of the tongue, and such like, to create problems. Over time, Satan managed to exploit these traits even further, and to drive wedges between brethren, fracture long standing friendships, and sow dissension within the congregation itself in the Spring of this year. How tragic! **By late June and early July of 2002, the turmoil Satan caused reached a point where "something had to be done" by stouthearted Christian men if the congregation with all of its worthy undertakings was to survive. Up until that point in time, streams of tears had been shed, earnest prayers prayed around the clock, and MUCH effort expended to resolve the matter. All to no avail.** We had tried repeatedly to reason with our brethren in hopes of resolving the crisis. But sometimes, all the well-intended efforts put forth still do not succeed. Finally, with no desire at all to "take sides," but with only the urgent need to solve the problem so we could get on with the Lord's work, **as a last ditch effort to salvage an impossible situation**, I proposed to a hopelessly divided (4/3) eldership to let the congregation express itself as to which of the elders they believed to have remained qualified or which they believed had disqualified themselves in view of I Tim. 3:1 ff. and Titus 1:6 ff. **The reasoning was this: if in fact the members of a local congregation are asked to express themselves in the selection process of elders, why not allow them to express themselves in an "impasse" situation like we had, on whether or not these men so appointed had disqualified themselves or not? The next day, the eldership, as a whole, agreed on the letter.** (In all fairness, only six of the seven elders were present when the letter was discussed in detail...one was home sick. At the conclusion of the meeting, four of the seven elders signed the letter. Two said they would take the letter to the elder who was ill, and indicated the letter would be brought to the church office the next morning. When it arrived, none of the three had signed it. Later that afternoon, the wife of one...who had gone out of town on business... came by and printed his name beside the place for his signature, with a printed reservation beside it.) With that development, the four elders who did sign it, in complete frustration, gave instruction that the letter be sent anyway. (The next Sunday evening, two of the elders opted to resign.) **This letter was called an "expression of sentiment," giving the congregation an opportunity to express itself. As there are no explicit instructions given in the New Testament as to an exact "selection process" of elders, neither are there explicit instructions given as to how to remedy a "problem of magnitude" like Satan had managed to create at Brown Trail. We do not subscribe to the concept of "once an elder always an elder," believing it no more valid than "once saved always saved." An elder can disqualify himself, just like a preacher can default and disqualify himself. When that occurs, such a "situation" must be handled. But how? The Bible does not specifically tell us how. We exercised our best collective judgment in dealing with our specific problem. The ones "from afar" who have taken pens in hand to criticize and condemn us **COULD NOT POSSIBLY KNOW** the "ins and outs" of our internal problem like we did. And yet they from afar sit in judgment as if they were eye witnesses to every action, conversation, and meeting that was held to try to resolve our problems. **There is a lot more in the Bible about NOT bearing false witness, NOT judging falsely, NOT having a condemning spirit, etc., than there is about HOW to solve a problem like we faced.** It might be well for our self-appointed critics to consider that fact.**

For example, brother Marvin Weir, a brother whom I respect, and consider a friend, wrote an article in the Oct., 2002 issue of "The Gospel Journal" entitled *Change Agents And Leadership*, wherein there is much with which I agree. But on page 25, I believe he is wrong on two things: #1---he insinuates that

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Brown Trail has adopted the "reaffirming" of elders process of the "change agents." By implication, this "suggests" to the brotherhood that we are imbibing the "change agent" movement, **which is absurd! This congregation stands for the truth as faithfully as any I have known in 48+ years of preaching.** What good for the Cause of Christ is to be gained by leaving the impression that Brown Trail has abandoned fidelity to God's word, when such is absolutely NOT true? Why try to discredit us before the brotherhood, Marvin? That is unfair, uncalled for, and very wrong; and #2---he then makes an ill-informed, absolutely false assertion: "Supporters have a right to know that they have repeatedly used the elder 'reaffirmation/reevaluation' practice." Dear brother Weir, that is just plain NOT true! You make it sound like every year or two we "reaffirm/reevaluate" elders. That is **NOT** the case at all. Wherefore, I ask, **what motivated you to make such a false charge?** Why do you seek to cast a dark cloud over a faithful sister congregation? **The FACTS are: On two occasions, under extreme conditions in each case, we have asked brethren to express themselves in order to try to solve untenable circumstances. Once, in 1990, when Johnny Ramsey, Dave Miller, Don Simpson, and Gary Fallis were asked by the elders that were then serving to help solve a similar problem that existed then, akin action was taken. The only other time was in the more recent situation (June/July of 2002), as noted in the above paragraph. That is a far cry from "repeatedly" using a "reaffirmation/reevaluation" process as Marvin charged. We do NOT subscribe to such as Marvin implies we do, and with just a simple phone call, he could have learned better. On the two occasions mentioned, 12 years apart, we gave the members of this congregation an opportunity to express themselves concerning complex problems of divided elderships. Both times, it was done to try to help solve problems within divided elderships so the church could be at peace and get on with the Lord's work.**

It is interesting to note this statement by brother Weir in the article he wrote under examination, on page 26 of The Gospel Journal, Oct., '02: "The same people that select one to serve as an elder because he is Scripturally qualified (I Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11) can also reject that one because he no longer meets the Scriptural qualifications. Existing elders can and should reject a fellow elder who is no longer qualified to serve." **WOW! And AMEN!** Why then, Marvin, do you condemn us for doing what you indicate we had the right to do? We did exactly what you approved in that statement. The majority of our elders (four of the seven we had in June) approved and facilitated the action I had suggested, allowing the congregation to express itself. Brother Charles Moore, in his book, "Functioning Leadership In The Church," stated, "**When the elder in question is strongly self-willed and takes the position, 'I will never resign,' the church has an extremely difficult and dangerous problem on its hands. It is impossible to present a formula guaranteed to work in the solution of this problem.**" Well, that was the problem we had...we could find no set "formula" in the New Testament as to how to solve it, though **WE DID THE BEST WE KNEW HOW TO BE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN IN SCRIPTURE.** Brother Moore further observed, "**When an elder is asked to resign and refuses, there will always be some who rally to his support. Division within the congregation is inevitable.**" That is exactly what happened at Brown Trail. We regret it profoundly. It broke our hearts, and still does. We didn't want any of this tragic sequence of events to happen. As far as we who are still at Brown Trail are concerned, the "situation" was forced upon us. We had to do something and we did. Whether our judgment was flawless or not, is admittedly questionable. Neither myself, or the four elders that remain, claim infallibility. Thus, we readily admit that the way the "whole thing came down" may not have been the wisest way to handle it. Hindsight is "20/20!" But I can sincerely say that I earnestly tried to the best of my ability to help solve the most difficult church problem I've ever faced.

By the way, before leaving brother Weir's article, let me observe that he quoted from Dub Mowery, a preacher from Oklahoma. **In that quotation, brother Mowery states concerning Dave Miller and myself, that "Both defended the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders." That is just plain NOT true! What we did defend was the right of a congregation to try to solve an extremely complex**

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**and difficult internal problem, in the light of Scripture, as best it can.** There is a very BIG difference between Dub Mowery's charge and the facts! He further states, "I pleaded with those two brethren to use their influence to stop that process at Brown Trail." That statement is so far-fetched as to be ludicrous. How can you stop a process that had already been implemented, and that brother Mowery knew had been implemented? What could possibly have been brother Mowery's motive in leaving the impression that he had tried to stop what we had already done? I can't say with certainty. But perhaps he wanted others to think he really "set us straight." The facts are, that in the course of our meeting with him, while he did express himself as being opposed to what we had done, yet he acted very understanding and sympathetic toward our rationale of trying to solve a very difficult problem, **and indicated he would do his best to help allay the criticism that was rampant over the Internet Emails. Instead, within a few days, he was writing such tripe himself.** In an Email he wrote, that was forwarded to us by one of the recipients, he stated, "**...I know that Maxie, Dave, and the four remaining elders are in error in upholding and using the reevaluation process. All of these men need to repent of this unscriptural method of retaining elders.**" In writing such, brother Mowery set himself forth as being "the authority" on the matter. He declares that he "knows" and boldly asserts that what we did was "in error." Well, I don't agree with brother Mowery. I don't think he is the final authority. We believe that our action in the matter falls into the realm of "opinion/judgment/expediency." While we make no claims of having handled our problem perfectly, yet we reiterate, we did the best we knew how and do not believe we were unscriptural in the way we handled it. But several of our critics, including brother Mowery, have said unequivocally that what we did was unscriptural. But ironically, as brother Weir did in his article, brother Mowery in his Email said, "An elder who becomes disqualified should step down from serving in that capacity. However, many refuse to do so! Therefore, the congregation that selected them when they met the qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), has the right and responsibility to reject them as elders when they no longer meet those qualifications." That is almost verbatim to Marvin's statement. And again, I say, that is exactly the kind of action we took in doing what we did. And yet, brother Mowery accuses us of using "an unscriptural method." What is unscriptural about it? What is unscriptural about allowing a beleaguered congregation to express itself on such a crucial matter as disqualified elders who by their actions are tearing the church apart? Question: had our critics been "in our shoes," based on what we knew were the facts, and dealing with the "impasse" of personalities we were dealing with, I wonder how they would have handled it? While many are quick to condemn what we did as unscriptural, yet they have not offered any "clearly delineated" Scriptural alternative. I'm dubious of fellows who seem to think they "have all the answers" and who are so quick to judge others.

In his excellent book, "Church Administration," the late and honorable **Walter H. Adams**, who served as Dean of Abilene Christian College for years, affirmed that an "elder, deacon, preacher, or teacher may be unqualified or **become disqualified for the position he holds and should, therefore, resign or be relieved of his duties.**" He then quoted from another past preacher of note, **Leslie G. Thomas**, who had written, "If some condition should arise which would cause an elder or deacon to become a detriment to the church, he should remove himself from his position voluntarily; **but if he will not do that, then the congregation, following the principles set forth in I Cor. 10:31 and 14:40, should see to it that he is retired.**" To these conclusions, surely we all agree. A man can become disqualified as an elder without necessarily committing overt sin. How do you deal with such situations? Neither of these esteemed brethren set forth a clear cut answer to that question. If in fact sin is the cause of disqualification, then I Tim. 5:19-21 applies. And that was the case with one elder at Brown Trail: he had disqualified himself in the light of two Scriptures: I Tim. 3:3 and Titus 1:7...being contentious, self-willed, and soon angry, and had sinned in view of Prov. 6:18-19, yet refused to resign although confronted with these facts. Thus, in keeping with I Tim. 5:19-21, he was removed as an elder. **Each congregation which unfortunately faces these kind of situations, should be able to handle it as the**

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elders deem wise, following the principles set forth in Scripture. Further, brother Adams, in his book, gave several reasons justifying the removal of an elder...one of which was this: **"When he loses the following of a sizeable portion of the congregation. Just what this portion should be is, of course, a matter of opinion."** Brethren, the above is essentially what we did at Brown Trail. Given the "impossible" set of circumstances which had arisen, we gave the congregation an opportunity to express itself, in view of the Scriptural qualifications of elders, which ones they felt were still qualified and which ones they felt had disqualified themselves in one way or another. This was done "decently and in order" and "objectively" with no "partial slant" given one way or the other. **What is wrong with that?** Brother Adams also quoted from the renowned preacher, **G.C. Brewer**, who had written, **"If an elder becomes unacceptable to a congregation, he should be retired if he will not voluntarily resign.** A man cannot be over people who will not be under him."

I have conversed with several highly respected gospel preachers about "how" to handle a situation like Brown Trail was in. Some said they felt our action was flawed, which perhaps it was. Some thought we handled the matter about as well as we could. **Not one of them showed me definite instructions (a "pattern" dealing with such matters, except for the "sin" context of I Tim. 5:19 ff) from Scripture as to "how" it should be done.** Each one replied somewhat like this, "Well, I don't know exactly, but I think....," and from there varied opinions were given. Brethren, that is exactly the way we felt. We didn't know exactly what to do, but we did what we felt was best in order to salvage what we could from the "storm" that had passed through our midst. Please don't lose sight of "local congregational autonomy."

And yet, brother David Brown, wrote an article in "Contending For The Faith" (Oct., 2002), **which was very unfavorable toward Brown Trail.** I'm certain he does NOT know all the facts. He was NOT here when all our problems started in the School four years ago, neither was he here when they escalated and "spilled over" into the congregation, nor was he here when we took stringent measures to resolve the matter in June/July of 2002. Yet, he sits from afar, with pen in hand, and renders judgment against us. **Brethren everywhere, I ask you, is that right, or fair? I think not.** Yes, I suspect David "has heard" a bunch of half-truths, distortions, and slanted opinions from those who have become enemies of Brown Trail, because some brethren have spread malicious rumors "all over everywhere." But why didn't he at least show the courtesy of finding out the "rest of the story?" One thing he would have learned had he called me or one of the four present elders is that they and myself, while we tried to do the best we could in the exceedingly difficult circumstances we faced, have sincerely, humbly, and with heartfelt tears flowing, publicly confessed before God and our brethren here that no doubt we made mistakes and fell short of God's glory from time to time throughout the whole "mess." It would have been nigh unto impossible not to have in view of what we were subjected to day after day after day. For whatever human frailties of which we are guilty, we are exceedingly sorry, and have so stated before God and men, and have sought forgiveness. We all have been humbled through all this horrific experience, and we are sincerely penitent, regretting any and every wrong doing we may have committed. What more can we say than that? **But what does brother David Brown do? From afar he writes, "At present, the powers that be at Brown Trail are trying to say everything is A-OK. But I have not seen any sign of repentance from anybody for anything."** How could he? He has NOT been here through any of this, and he does NOT know all the facts, and he certainly does NOT know our hearts! Best you should read Matt. 7:1-5, David. **The facts are: at present, the four elders and myself have one desire...to put this whole nightmare behind us and press on in the Master's work. We are NOT trying to whitewash anything, or sweep sin under the rug, as we have been charged. We are just trying to do what Paul did (Phi. 3:13-14)...forget the past, having sought forgiveness for any mistakes made, and "press on." And that is exactly what we intend to do...to get busy again in "the Father's business."**

To the brotherhood, may I say a few things:



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#1---Be it known that Brown Trail still stands for the same truth for which we have always stood. With deep conviction, we believe the truth, preach the truth, and stand for the truth of the New Testament. The School of Preaching here has some of the finest preachers in the brotherhood teaching in the School. For example, for the Quarter starting in January, the following men will be teaching in the Brown Trail School of Preaching: Robert Dodson, Avon Malone, Tom Gaumer, Eddie Parrish, Owen Cosgrove Perry B. Cotham, George Bailey, Charles Billingsley, Gerald Ball, Hardeman Nichols, and myself. A similar lineup is presently teaching. **There is no reason for the brotherhood to have anything but confidence in this School.** Others who have recently taught, or will soon be teaching again include Robert Waller, Ken Hope, Bob Stapleton, Furman Kearley, and Kenton Harvey. Others too, will be added as needed. Those are all faithful gospel preachers representing MANY YEARS of experience and great Bible knowledge. **Why would any Christian want to destroy this School that has been in continual operation since 1965? And yet some obviously do! Such is nothing less than reprehensible and tragic!**

#2---I make a plea to my brethren everywhere---please, let the "biting and devouring" of one another cease! Read Gal. 5:15! At very best, the number of us who believe with all our hearts that the Bible is God's word, and who do our best to preach the truth and stand for pure New Testament Christianity, are very few, relatively speaking...especially in view of some 6 billion people on earth today who KNOW NOT THE WAY OF THE LORD. Brethren, we need to be "pulling together" instead of tearing each other down! Yet, there is an element among us that spends much of its time "picking out flaws" of other brethren whether they be real or imagined. For lack of better terminology, I call them "the circle drawing mind-set." If you don't dot every "i" and cross every "t" like they think you should, then in their eyes you become "suspect" and they commence a campaign against you. While I believe the "liberal left" has done much harm to the Cause of Christ, I must say that the "circle drawing mind-set" has done just about as much harm on the other extreme. These brethren have really hurt the conservative stand for Biblical soundness by their splinterizing, knit-picking attitudes, breeding suspicion and dividing us yet further. In our case at Brown Trail, how comforting it would have been to have heard from brethren who said, "We've heard of the problems there and are so sorry about it, and our prayers are with you in this battle with Satan. If there is anything we can do to help, let us know." **Thankfully, we got some calls and letters like that.** But sad to say, there have been more critics who have been condemning and unkind, almost as if they were happy about the pain we have been going through. Sad, sad. If brethren would spend their time praying for one another instead of spreading rumors, the Cause would be a lot better off!

# 3---I want to thank dear friends and fellow preachers of the gospel who have been so very understanding and supportive of me personally, and sympathetic toward Brown Trail for what we've been through. Three great gospel preachers in particular, have been such an encouragement to me in offering their understanding and moral support...brothers Wendell Winkler, Dan Jenkins and Frank Chesser. Thank God for Christian men like them! Also, on behalf of the elders, sincere thanks is expressed to each congregation and each individual who has helped and/or is helping us with the School of Preaching and "The Truth In Love" TV program. They want to assure brethren that Brown Trail is still worthy of your confidence and your continued support. That I believe with all my heart. Together with the supporters of these works, a great good is being done. Don't allow harping critics to convince you otherwise.

#4---I would like to close on a positive note. Though we lost approximately one hundred members, which is deeply regrettable, yet approximately three hundred and fifty chose to stay at Brown Trail. That should tell the brotherhood a lot. The ones that are here are very happy to be here and peace prevails again. Thank God!

#5--- This is the final word from me on this matter. I've tried to concisely set forth in this "open letter" what happened at Brown Trail and why we did what we did. The whole "mess" has made me sick at

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heart because I know that Satan has caused the whole thing, including the division. At this point in time, I'm weary of it all and have chosen to "explain it" this one last time by this letter instead of over and over again in phone calls or by personal letters. As far as I'm concerned, people can think/believe what they want to about it, as I'm convinced most will anyway. Hopefully, honest Christian hearts will be receptive to the contents of this letter and help us put to an end all the misinformation, rumors, and hurtful gossip that has been rampant. I know in my heart I've done the best I could through it all. Have I made mistakes? Surely so. Have I said and/or done things that probably I shouldn't have? Yes, I'm quite sure I have. Am I sorry for anything/everything wherein I was perhaps wrong? Yes indeed. Have I asked God's forgiveness? Most assuredly.

This letter was written in consultation with the elders of Brown Trail, and with their approval.

Most sincerely, and in Christian love, -Maxie B. Boren, gospel preacher

## **Randy Cook's Response to Maxie Boren's November 20, 2002 Open Letter**

### **An Open letter to Maxie Boren**

In a open letter sent to many congregations, including the one where I worship and Don Simpson preaches, Maxie B. Boren makes some further accusations. He states that the purpose of the letter is to set forth the facts. I wish to elaborate on some of these "facts."

Maxie, you start out your letter referring to rumors. This word, along with "gossip", has been used over and over to refer to anything that is against Dave Miller and his supporters. To them these words have no bearing on the factuality of the statements, just who is being talked about. Any statement, factual or not, said by these people are facts, not rumors nor gossip. These words are used to stop the spread of information. This is the root of the problem at Brown Trail from the beginning to the end (if there is such a thing).

Maxie, you claim that you and the remaining elders have taken the "high road." Please explain to me how secrecies, lies and misinformation are the high road. Please explain how the revealing of the truth is the "low road." As you say, there comes a time when so many untrue things have been said that an answer must be given, that is why there are so many that are speaking up. Your problem is the truth is being spoken and you don't like it.

Maxie, or should I say Flip Wilson, you blame Satan for what has been done and leave the impression that no person is responsible for what has going on. It is true that Satan has a hand in all of this, but so do people. There are many who have sins to answer for, including you. I don't think God will accept "The Devil made me do it?" Through out this open letter of yours you say you must have made mistakes, but you never admit to any sin. I get the impression that you don't know of any sins related to your actions or the others involved. Is the other side the only ones that can sin? So often the supporters of Dave Miller say that they don't believe that he could do the things he is accused of. The accusations are never answered, only ridiculed and answered with anger and lies. The requests for an outside audit have been met with anger from the remaining elders. My first letter, which pointed out the lies in Dave Miller's resignation was first said to be all lies. When I asked Phil to go over each point with me to show me how they were lies, he was too angry. (It was James French who was removed for being angry.) Later, in an elders meeting it was called my opinion. Nothing was said against any point of my letter, it was just condemned for being divisive. Truth is often divisive! It is because of the truth that Elijah preached that he was called the troubler of Israel (I Kings 18:17).

Maxie, you promote the rumors that you accuse others of spreading. Whenever a person does not explain what they are doing and why, they leave themselves open for speculation. The elders have continually refused to meet with other elderships to explain the situation. You have cut people off who have tried to ask you what is going on, even members of the congregation. The problem that you are

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facing is the result of not letting the facts be known. But if you did that, you would have a whole new set of problems. You would have to explain the defense of a man who slandered others and abused (mentally) students.

You are right, by this spring something had to be done, because one man continued to fight the eldership and stirred up others to his cause. Even in leaving Dave did more to divide the congregation than anyone else. (See Dave Miller's resignation.) Yet you say it is people like me, who made known what they know, who are the problem. Because you and the remaining elders refused to make known to the whole congregation what the real problems were, you had to do something underhanded like vote elders out.

You claim that some of the elders had disqualified themselves, yet the details were not given to the congregation, neither were the elders in question allowed to give an answer to the charges against them. Maxie, you told James French to sit down and he would be given time in the evening to address the congregation. Instead, the list of his sins, as briefly given as in your letter, was read and it was announced he was no longer recognized as an elder. The microphones were turned off so no one could hear any response from him. The reason that you considered him contentious was because he wanted to call sinners back to God.

The congregation was not asked to resolve the issues, but to make an uninformed decision on which elders to get rid of. This is a resolution akin to divorce. It is the getting rid of problems rather than solving the real issues. The congregation was never informed of the issues, except by the former elders, who were condemned in doing so.

Maxie, you try to justify the reevaluation of elders because some had become dis-qualified in your opinion. Yet you overlooked the objections raised against the new elders and ordained them anyway. These elders are the ones you support.

You talk about what the scriptures say and don't say. Why was not the sins of the elders presented before all and these "sinners" given a chance answer them? Accusation against Dave Miller could not be heard unless he was present to answer them, why not give this right to others? The answer to this seems to be that you and others do not want the truth to be known.

Maxie, you are constantly pointing out that these people are criticizing from afar. Sometimes that is the best point of view for a problem. Those who are having marital problems would like the decisions about the scripturalness of divorce to be decided by those who are emotionally involved in their problems. Is it not the elders who have children who are divorced that most often support divorce? Paul was often writing from afar when he addressed problems.

You state that there is a "lot more in the Bible about NOT bearing false witness, NOT judging falsely, NOT having a condemning spirit, etc ..." This is true, yet you continue to violate these passages. You have refused to expose these sins in those that you support.

Paul wrote in Romans 2:1 "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest practice the same things." Maxie, does this apply to you? You condemn Marvin Weir as misrepresenting Brown Trail, but you in fact misrepresent what Marvin Weir has written. You condemn him for implying that Brown Trail is imbibing the 'change agent' movement. You fail to mention that when he mentions Brown Trail, he states "Unfortunately, this unscriptural process has been adopted by some who we would not number with them."

You accuse Marvin of making "it sound like every year or two we 'reaffirm/reevaluate' elders." You fail to point out that he states exactly when you have used this practice. To those who have read the article, there is no question but the reevaluation occurred just twice. It seems that you are the one who is misrepresenting the facts.

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You state that four men, associated with the school, in 1990 had a part of the reevaluation. Don Simpson denies being asked to help, except to count the ballots. I have not talked to any of the other men you mentioned.

You talk about hindsight being 20/20. Please let us know what you think should have been done, now that you have had a chance to look back.

Maxie, you say that you and Dave Miller did not defend the reevaluation of the elders. Is that not what you are doing with this open letter of yours? This whole defense smacks of situational ethics. You state that you are not defending the practice, but since the situation demanded it, you did it. An act is either right or it is wrong. Have you not preached this?

You state that Dub Mowery's statement is ludicrous. Then you ask how can you stop a process that has already been implemented. Dub Mowery had made the statement that this should be stopped prior to the counting of the ballots. The answer is simple, if pride does not stand in the way. Simply stand up before the congregation and say it was a mistake and ask that the ballots be thrown away. It is pride that says we have committed to this path and we can't change.

In your letter you mention brother James French, although you do not name him. You name his sins as being contentious, self-willed, and soon angry. These sins you name are a result of his stand against sin. He refused to give in to the sinners. He was contentious like he was told to be in Jude 3. When faced with sin and those who stand for sin, should not a man be angry? All of these sins you lay at James French's feet belong at the feet of several of the remaining elders.

You state that David Brown does not know all of the facts. This is true, otherwise he wouldn't have bothered with the voting. There are so many other sins that are much greater that need to be exposed.

Maxie, I do not claim to know all that went on. You and the others have done your best to hide what has been going on. On the other hand, I was there in the congregation and more involved with these problems than most. I am not writing from afar, I was there.

You state that David Brown is not in a position to know if you and the elders repented. I have heard your "public confessions" which amount to little more than what you express in this letter. I have contact with many of those whom you and the remaining elders have falsely accused, and they have not received any apologies or requests for forgiveness.

You have repeatedly referred to this as an internal problem, implying that other congregations do not have any involvement with this problem, but they do. Brown Trail does not support the School of Preaching and the Truth In Love all by themselves. These are works that are supported by the brotherhood at large, and they should know about the problems relating to these works. This division started from within the school, as you stated, and not the congregation. These problems revolve around Dave Miller, who directed the school and the Truth In Love at one time. Dave Miller still preaches on the Truth In Love. The eldership (and apparently you) still defend Dave Miller. If congregations support these works, then they have a part in these problems.

A second reason why it is their business, is that they are brothers. We do not live isolated lives, else what business did you have preaching to me about my sin? If the sins at Brown Trail are not the business of others, then neither was my sin. That cuts down on a lot of sermon material.

A third reason why this is the brotherhood's business, is because the sinners involved are out in the brotherhood. They need to be known as sinners, so that individual congregations can decide if they want to be associated with them and their works. It is called marking a brother. I cannot make the brotherhood reject you, Brown Trail or Dave Miller. I can publicize what I know to be true and let others decide on their actions.

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You state that the congregation is happier than it has been in months, yet there are people who are still leaving. The reports that I have heard indicate that people are not happy, but rather, look sad. If you wait long enough, you will be left with those that refuse to look at the facts and they will be ignorantly blissful. It is an unfortunate fact that you can find a following no matter what you teach or practice.

You condemn those who speak out, but you are quick to use those who are quiet as proof of your innocence.

You list men who are still involved with the school as proof that there is no problem. I have believed for several months that one reason that there are part-time teachers in the school is to keep the instructors ignorant of what is actually going on. I cannot answer for every man, but I know that Avon Malone expressed his opposition to the voting on elders. Why he stayed, I don't know. Perhaps he feels that he can do more good by staying and trying to teach the truth than leaving in protest. I don't know. Perhaps these men think, as you have been trying to tell us, that the problem is gone. Perhaps they feel (out of ignorance) that what went on was a congregational problem and they are dealing with the school. That was the attitude of at least some of 1990 instructors. I don't know. But I do know that staying is not a blanket endorsement of all that went on.

Maxie, you say that we should be "encouragers and NOT discouragers (see Philemon 7)." Are Christians to be encouragers of sinners in their sin? Many have encouraged you to repent of your sin, along with the remaining elders. How many people, through the years, could say the same thing to you? They want to be encouraged, even when they are doing wrong. Have you not discouraged the sinners?

You say that you have set forth what happened at Brown Trail. I am still waiting. All you have talked about is the reason why you voted on the elders. You didn't mention all of the members who did not fill out the ballots, but wrote that they thought the process was sinful and that the elders who supported it should resign. You didn't mention that the ballots were counted and destroyed. You didn't mention that the comments that the members made on the ballots were never seen by the elders, even though you asked for them. You didn't mention that some, if not all, of the remaining elders resigned. Did they reappoint themselves? Did you re-ordain them in private?

Maxie, you are wrong. We do not want to see Brown Trail, the school of preaching or Truth In Love destroyed. They were good works and I believe they can be again. We want you to go to heaven. We want you to repent of your sins. I know that you will think of this as act of hate, but it is an act of love for you and for the brotherhood.

Randy Cook  
former member of the Brown Trail church.

## **THE REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS**

**GARY W. SUMMERS**

In the past few months the topic of "reaffirming elders" has come to the forefront, primarily because of the problems that the Brown Trail Church has experienced. This article does not seek to attack anyone there personally. Maxie Boren, who preaches and works with the Brown Trail Congregation (he also writes excellent articles in *Waymarks*, their church bulletin), has been both kind and friendly to me over the years I have lived in this area. Twice I have spoken on their lectures and occasionally taught a three-hour class to the preaching students. I also spoke at the last chapel service of this year's spring session. At that time tensions had been running high, but it was prior to the resignation of two of the elders. This article, however, is not about their internal problems per se (except as they reflect on the topic); commenting on those events would serve no useful purpose. Having been through a similar (though lesser) turmoil once, I know how emotional and intense these

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matters can be; it is always unfortunate when brethren begin treating each other as enemies and start doing battle against one another.

Certainly, no one should want to harm the influence of either the *Truth in Love* television show or the Brown Trail School of Preaching. But these programs do depend upon support from others, and those who contribute have a right to expect that they will continue to stand on a solid basis. The Brown Trail Congregation has now twice used what may be called a "reaffirmation" process. Maxie says they used it twelve years ago and have not repeated its use until this summer. While this information is, of course, true, there is an additional factor that those not from this area should know.

Many brethren criticized the practice the first time it was used. Brother Dub McClish documents some of these objections in his chapter, "Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders?" in the 1997 Bellview lectureship book, *Leadership* (89-103). And for a number of years, many of us have been told, "They will never do it again." Some members of the Brown Trail Congregation were under this impression and have given others this assurance. Many people in this area agreed with this assessment. As recently as a year before the reaffirmation was repeated, one individual was allegedly told by one of the elders (who remains) that the practice would not be repeated. So, imagine everyone's surprise to hear that it had, in fact, occurred once more!

Now the practice is being defended, and many wonder what kind of detrimental effect this idea may have upon brethren. Before me are two documents: The first is my transcript of an Open Forum that occurred in Longview, Texas in August of this year. The second one is a nine-page "open letter," sent out by Maxie Boren, with the approval of the current eldership at Brown Trail. It is not our desire to accuse anyone of improper motives. The men taking this position publicly proclaim the Truth boldly in all other major areas. Our goal is to get them to reconsider this issue, or (failing that), at least try to persuade others concerning this doctrine.

### The Longview Forum

Following is the question posed to the panelists: "Is it Scriptural to have a reaffirmation of the serving elders? If it is Scriptural, shouldn't the reaffirmation use the same authority--outlined in Timothy and Titus--as when they were installed as elders, instead of popular vote? So, what about the reaffirmation of elders?"

Before we look at the answers to the question, we might point out that we do not know what the purpose of the questioner was. He (or she) may have had in mind what Brown Trail had recently done, or the inquirer may have been thinking about what some liberal congregations practice on a periodic basis (see pages 83-88 in *Leadership*). None of the answers drew any distinctions between these two possibilities.

Denny Petrillo: I'm going to answer yes to that question. I do believe that it is a process that the church can enact. It's not that there's a book, chapter, and verse that we can turn to because there's not--just like there's not as far as the installation of elders to begin with.

What is the basis for this rationale (in the second sentence)? Do we all agree that something should be done in a congregation in which an elder becomes disqualified? Yes. But how did the need to do *something* evolve into a *reaffirmation process*? What is being presented to brethren is the false dichotomy that *either* the church must have a reaffirmation process *or* we must allow disqualified men to remain in the eldership.

Those are not the only two choices; ironically, Petrillo mentions the Scriptural approach when he refers briefly to 1 Timothy 5. This passage sets forth God's plan for dealing with problems concerning an elder. The first two verses below supply the context, but the next two are the ones applicable to this issue.

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Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,*" and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest may also fear (1 Tim. 5:19-20).

What wisdom shines forth in these two verses for dealing with a charge against an elder! The first step is to ascertain that there is a genuine problem--not just the gripes of a disgruntled, unspiritual member. If the elder is guilty, he should be publicly rebuked. Then what? Presumably, he repents. But what if he refuses to humble himself? Did not the Lord already deal with that possibility? He was not specifically talking about elders, but they would certainly be included.

"But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that '*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matt. 18:16-17).

Where, in these Scriptural solutions, do we find a hint of the "reaffirmation process"? Petrillo argues:

Does the church have any kind of means at all in which to, as the body of Christ, address the problem of a man serving who is not qualified? And the reaffirmation process is one of those. It is still heavily Bible-based.... As a matter of fact, the congregation where I come from in Bear Valley recently did this. We did have a reaffirmation form based upon the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

How is "reaffirmation" Bible-based at all? And what is the authority for it--especially in light of God's inspired Word, which provides a different (and better) solution? The Bible provides no authority for "reaffirmation" every two years--or every twelve years! In fact, there is no authority to do so even once. Some brethren are beginning to equate the removal of an unqualified elder with reaffirmation, as though this unauthorized process were a viable option--as though 1 Timothy 5:19-20 and Matthew 18:16-17 were not part of "the faith," for which we are to contend.

Tom Gaumer agreed with these sentiments:

I thought a reaffirmation might come in handy where there's some elders who should have never been put in in the first place. I had that experience several years ago. I was preaching on weekends for a congregation in Ohio, while I taught at Ohio Valley College (that was my regular job). And they had two elders, and the two elders were obviously not qualified for several reasons....

Maybe if we had had some kind of reaffirmation, to get the congregation to do it, that they might have become aware of the fact that these two men were not qualified. I did try to talk to both of 'em and get them to step down, and they wouldn't do it....

Question: if these two men were *obviously not qualified for several reasons*, why had the congregation not done something already? If the congregation was not concerned enough to take action on their own, how would a reaffirmation process have made any difference? As a preacher of the Gospel, why did Tom not present a study on the qualifications of elders, after which he could have publicly rebuked the men, as Timothy was instructed to do? It appears that there were two problems here: 1) unqualified elders, and 2) members who did not care. If they would not do the right thing, as per a Biblical commandment regarding those men, why substitute that which is not authorized in its place and expect better results?

Maxie Boren was also on this panel at Longview:

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There are some things that are not addressed in the Bible in specific ways, and there are some things therefore left up to the realm of judgment as to how you handle a particular situation.

Brethren certainly agree; not everything is specified in the Scriptures. There is a certain amount of leeway in appointing or removing an elder. But God also gave us some specifics, such as the two passages already mentioned. Some of us cannot wedge the "reaffirmation process" into those two verses or figure out in what way they would even imply one.

Brother Boren provides an example of an elder disqualifying himself.

The bishop must be blameless; he must not be self-willed; he must not be soon angry, and etc. Well, what if a man, when he was selected as an elder, gave every appearance of not being a man of anger, not being a man that was contentious, and not being a man that was self-willed, but then after he was placed in the position of being an elder, he begins to manifest those characteristics. It seems to me that the passages that qualify a man to become an elder would also disqualify a man who does not live his life in keeping with those things.

We agree totally that something should be done, but such examples do not prove that the reaffirmation process is valid. First of all, his fellow elders ought to be concerned, along with the preacher and the members. Those who are in authority should publicly rebuke the man, if he refuses private exhortations. Such an action harmonizes with the Scriptures. Inventing a reaffirmation process (or borrowing it from liberals) does not fit the Divine plan at all.

Ironically, Maxie provides an example in which precisely the right action was taken in a certain congregation (albeit several years too late):

Well, finally, finally, the brethren had enough of it. And they wrote down definite things that he had done that disqualified him, dating back twenty years. And they signed their names to it. "I saw him," for an example (I remember one of the charges), "hand out bottles of liquor to people in the minority community to get them to vote the way he wanted them to vote." And people signed their names to that. People heard him use God's name in vain in conversation numbers of times, and people signed their names to these charges. Well, you don't find anything in the New Testament about that. I don't find anywhere, anywhere in the New Testament where people dealt with a situation like that, but it was a bad situation. It needed to be corrected.

Yes, it did! And the course of action followed was in harmony with 1 Timothy 5:19-20. The evidence, which showed that he was not qualified to be an elder, was gathered against this man. This procedure lays the groundwork for rebuking him, which could not have been done without proper evidence. When the mouths of two or three witnesses have spoken, the man can then be rebuked and (if he refuses to repent) be removed from the office (work) which he has disgraced.

Gathering evidence in this manner, however, is an expedient; it is a legitimate means by which to fulfill God's command, which makes it authorized. In what possible way can a reaffirmation of all elders be considered an expedient in rebuking one who is guilty of sin?

Maxie continues his defense of reaffirmation:

But when you analyze it, why would it be unscriptural to allow people to express their sentiments in regard to whether a man is qualified or not. After all, when elders were selected, people in the congregation expressed their sentiments.... And then the eldership usually has a screening committee to take the ones that are most often mentioned and have the greatest support within the congregation, and those are the names that are generally put forward.

But where do you read anything in the Bible about all of that procedure? You don't, but good judgment tells you that's probably the best way to do it....



\*Send comments or questions concerning this article to . Please refer to this article as: "THE REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS" (12/22/02)."

## **THE REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS (PART 2)**

**GARY W. SUMMERS**

We all know that God gave the qualifications for elders but left the procedure for selecting them up to the judgment of men. Some congregations have exercised poor judgment in the means of obtaining elders, which is not God's fault. Every man seeking the work should be evaluated by the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. All who are qualified should be appointed elders; those who are not should not be. Most congregations ask the members: "If you know of a Scriptural reason why any of these men should not be allowed to serve, please state your objection to the current elders" (or to some temporary committee if elders do not currently exist). Thus, there is a 100% approval if no damaging evidence against any of them is brought forth. All of these things fall under generic authority in the task of procuring elders. Exercising good judgment in this procedure in no way justifies the reaffirmation of elders. Brother Boren continues:

Now if the congregation was allowed to express themselves in that regard, let's just move on down the stream of time for ten years, and some of these men that were put in have proven themselves totally disqualified and are causing dissension within the body of Christ and about to divide the church, are we just going to sit by and do nothing? Or should we say to the congregation, "Examine your Scriptures, and see whether these men have remained qualified." If they've disqualified themselves, please express yourselves.

If there are men in the eldership who have *proven themselves totally disqualified and are causing dissension within the body of Christ*, then why not rebuke them before all? Gather the evidence, let the congregation know, and implore them to repent. If they do not, the church should withdraw fellowship from them. How does this problem remotely relate to the idea of reevaluating all the elders in the congregation and requiring a certain percentage of the popular vote in order to remain an elder?

The Nine-Page "Open Letter"

Recently Pearl Street and many other congregations received a nine-page letter responding to some of the criticism Brown Trail has received in handling their recent turmoil. Maxie Boren sent out a very well written letter, dated November 20th, explaining their rationale. Once again we want to deal with the issue, and in no way do we intend our comments to be a personal attack. Neither are we taking sides in their internal controversy; we shall only (for the most part) consider the material set forth in the letter.

Maxie lays the blame for these problems on Satan, and we could not agree with him more. We have all seen good works torn asunder; it is tragic to observe and painful to endure. Our prayer is that brethren can learn to disagree without forgetting that we have a Divine command to love one another, as Christ has loved us (John 13:34-35). If we allow adversarial relationships to develop in a congregation (or outside, for that matter), we are only issuing an invitation for Satan to triumph. The devil, however, never makes progress without men being willing accomplices. We have no accusations to make here; each person involved will have to determine how much, if any, he did the bidding of Satan.

After describing the heart-wrenching problem that had arisen and the failure of certain attempts to resolve the situation, brother Boren writes:

Finally, with no desire at all to "take sides," but only with a strong sense of urgency to solve the problem before absolute disaster came upon us, **as a last ditch effort to salvage what had become an "impossible situation,"** I proposed to a hopelessly divided (4/3) eldership that a carefully written letter be sent to the congregation giving members an opportunity to express themselves as to which of the elders had disqualified themselves in view of 1 Tim. 3:1ff and Titus 1:6ff. **The reasoning was this: if in fact the members of a local congregation are**

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**asked to express themselves in the selection process of elders, why not allow them to express themselves in an "impasse" situation like we had, on whether or not these men so appointed had disqualified themselves or not?**

This is precisely the place where the Scriptures were abandoned, and we want to raise clear and loud objections to this procedure. First of all, this unfortunate situation was not "hopelessly divided." A 3/3 split would have been hopeless. Four elders constituted a majority, as evidenced by the fact that the reevaluation letter was sent out on the basis of the decision of these four men. Maxie explains that none of the three (who have since left Brown Trail) signed it (although the wife of one did--with a reservation included).

Why did not the four gather sufficient evidence against the three and rebuke them before the congregation, as 1 Timothy 5:19-20 teaches? They were in the majority.

Second, what could a "reaffirmation" form hope to accomplish? If members were not aware of the division within the eldership, how could they determine who was not qualified? If they had no evidence of disqualification, how could they remove anyone? Should they receive their information through gossip passing among the members or from a public rebuke?

If, on the other hand, members were involved in the turmoil and had taken sides, how could ANY of the men expect to be reaffirmed? The two sides would cancel each other out. But if the members already knew who was the source of the problems, then once again, why not rebuke them publicly, as the Scriptures teach?

Third, what percentage of approval did an elder need to be retained, and what percentage was grounds for disqualification? Was it not 75% and 25% (the open letter does not say)? Who selected these numbers? Do not such arbitrary figures stretch the idea of expediency? If only a few members were aware of the problems, what would happen if all three now-Scripturally unqualified men (as this letter indicates--we are not taking sides) only received a 23% negative vote? Then, on the basis of a 77% majority, unqualified men, who should have been rebuked publicly, remain elders, and the turmoil continues.

Conversely, what if two of the four solid elders only received a 74% favorable vote? The possibility is that if two good elders were not reaffirmed and only one disqualified one was eliminated, there would be a two-two tie and a genuine hopeless deadlock. What if the three disqualified elders did some major politicking and all got reaffirmed while two of the others fell by the wayside? (After all, if they are *that* unscrupulous, what would prevent them from lying?) Then these men who should have been rebuked now control the eldership and the congregation by a three to two margin. The possibility for such disasters could be avoided by following the Biblical pattern.

Fourth, are the members expressing their sentiments **informed** fully before making their evaluations? Or are they operating on the basis of hearsay and rumor? If they comprehend that three men have disqualified themselves, then there is no need of reaffirmation; the four qualified elders should publicly rebuke them and call on them to repent. If the congregation is being asked to evaluate on the basis of hearsay, how **informed** would such a decision be?

Fifth, if only 1% of the congregation knows a Scriptural reason why a man should not be an elder, then he should be rebuked and removed.

Sixth, when elders are appointed, does anyone use a 75% approval rating? How can a church follow someone when 25% of the members do not think he is qualified? For that reason most congregations ask for a Scriptural objection to be made known, and if none are forthcoming, the man is appointed (since there is 100% tacit approval). If the rationale for reaffirmation rests upon allowing the congregation to express their sentiments as they did when men were appointed, how can anything less than 100% approval be required this time around?

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These six observations deserve a thoughtful reply and should not be dismissed with a mere wave of the hand. Only a few comments need be made on the remaining seven pages of the "open letter." Maxie writes:

**An elder can disqualify himself, just like a preacher can default and disqualify himself. When that occurs, such a "situation" must be handled. But how? The Bible does not specifically tell us how. We exercised our best collective judgment in dealing with our specific problem. The ones "from afar" who have taken pens in hand to criticize and condemn us COULD NOT POSSIBLY KNOW the "ins and outs" of our internal problem like we did.** And yet they from afar have sat in judgment as if they were eye witnesses to every action, conversation, and meeting that was held to try to resolve our problems. **There is a lot more in the Bible about NOT bearing false witness, NOT judging falsely, NOT having a condemning spirit, etc., than there is about HOW to solve a problem like we faced.** It might be well for our self-appointed critics to consider that fact.

We have no way of knowing the amount of or kinds of criticism Brown Trail has received, and certainly our intention here is not to "pile on." Maxie is right that few know the "ins and outs" of the situation. Hence, we have no desire to be critical or judgmental. Furthermore, we do not question anyone's motives in saying that they thought this was the best way to resolve their problems. As we stated previously, both Maxie and Brown Trail (to our knowledge) have usually taught and stood for the truth. And we surely pray that we will not be lumped in with self-appointed critics when we object to a practice that lacks Biblical authority and which invites a multitude of problems.

In fact, brother Boren writes that Brown Trail did follow 1 Timothy 5:19-20 with respect to one elder:

...he had disqualified himself in the light of two Scriptures...1 Tim. 3:3 and Titus 1:7...being contentious, self-willed, and soon angry, and had sinned by doing at least three of the seven things God hates, as listed in Prov. 6:16-19. Yet, he refused to resign although confronted with these facts. Thus, in keeping with 1 Tim. 5:19-21, he was reprov'd, and removed as an elder.

We find no fault at all with this procedure, since it follows precisely what the Bible teaches (even though no specific formula is provided). In fact, we applaud its being handled this way. But why not do it in every case? Why rebuke one man publicly but then call for a reevaluation of all the elders in other circumstances? Would not consistency have served them better?

### Suggestions

First, my fervent prayer for Maxie and the remaining elders at Brown Trail is that they reconsider the reaffirmation process. Is it an expedient that falls under 1 Timothy 5:19-20, or is it a different approach altogether? Is it so hard to see that gathering evidence and rebuking a disqualified elder is not at all identical to a reevaluation of the elders? Furthermore, there is no need to have a periodic reaffirmation of the elders because **ANY** time members of the church have a viable charge against a bishop is *exactly* the right time to take care of the situation.

Reconsider the problems that are set in motion by using percentages and being satisfied with anything less than 100% (tacit) Scriptural approval. If, after a reevaluation of the process you were willing to use, you conclude that the procedure is not in harmony with the Scriptures, will you please write a statement to that effect so that brethren may know it? As mentioned previously, many of us thought you had already repudiated the practice. We would like to be sure this time whether you will continue to defend it or admit that it lacks Biblical authority. Many brethren think that a rejection of the reaffirmation process and an assurance that it will not be repeated would do much to restore your credibility and silence your critics.

Second, we call upon all brethren to think through this matter, disassociating it from the turmoil Brown Trail has experienced. The practice is not wrong because they chose to do it; neither is it correct. The

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reaffirmation process needs to be decided, as every practice does, on the sole basis of what the Scriptures teach. Other men are defending it (as demonstrated by the Longview Forum). Is it right and defensible or wrong and therefore dispensable? For many, this is a new topic, by virtue of its not having been an issue before. Now it is, and we need to determine its soundness before it spreads to other congregations.

Denny Petrillo said that reaffirmation was recently practiced where he lives, and now we have an open letter to brethren from Brown Trail defending the concept. Now is the time to examine carefully whether or not this idea is Scriptural and has merit or lacks Biblical authority and should be forsaken.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

\*Send comments or questions concerning this article to . Please refer to this article as: "THE REAFFIRMATION OF ELDERS (PART 2)" (12/22/02)."

### **Dave Miller's False Marriage Doctrine Endorsed by Brown Trail Leadership**

By Ashley S. Williams

Dave Miller advanced a Catholic-inspired marriage doctrine at Brown Trail, both in the school and the congregation. Maxie Boren and the four elders (Bob Watts, Eddy Parker, Phil Pope, and Guy Elliott) have wholly endorsed Dave's view on marriage. The elders even released a letter upholding Dave's teaching, attributing it to Thomas B. Warren. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Dave Miller's marriage doctrine is unmistakably Catholic in origin. It completely lacks Biblical backing but is being unscrupulously portrayed as the Bible's definition of marriage. Furthermore, it is being dishonestly attached to the late Brother Warren. Bible teaching on marriage, and on other covenants, shows Dave Miller's doctrine (and its two underlying premises) to be false. Come let us reason together.

Question Concerning "Immigration Scoundrels"

**"If two people marry for the sole purpose of obtaining one of them's citizenship in another country, would those people be married in the eyes of God?"**

Dave Miller:

"If in fact marriage is defined in the Bible and in the dictionary as two people mutually agreeing to marry each other for the purpose of having a marriage—for the purpose of loving and adoring and all the things that are said in vows, but if they go through that ceremony in a counterfeit fashion where that's not their purpose—they are not doing that to get married—they both know they are not doing that to get married—they're doing that as a subversive ploy to cheat the government, to fool the government—then I do not believe they would be considered married Biblically or even from the dictionary perspective. ...merely going through an external service or ceremony does not mean that marriage has occurred."

Maxie Boren:

"Ditto [to Dave]. I definitely believe that intention to marry is very much involved. If you don't intend to marry someone as a lifelong companion, and you've gone through the ritual for some invalid reason, I think would negate the idea of what marriage is all about."

Question Concerning Jacob and Leah

**"If intent is a prerequisite, then was Jacob married to Leah in God's eyes?"**

Dave Miller:

“If he understood that he was...If he had no knowledge of that, he could have rejected that marriage, as a marriage. But apparently, he felt that he was tied to that, and therefore he viewed it as a marriage. It’s still intent. Every example you bring up from the Bible still comes down to intent. You have to have decided to do that. The implication, by the way, of that Genesis text is that his father-in-law Laban made marriage of Rachel dependent upon Leah. It’s not like he [Jacob] could have said, ‘All right. Forget her [Leah] I want her [Rachel].’ He [Laban] would say, ‘No.’ Remember, in fact, he [Jacob] approached him [Laban] and said, ‘I did not bargain for her [Leah].’ ‘You don’t get her [Rachel] if you don’t take her [Leah].’ That’s when the marriage, then was secure in his [Jacob’s] mind.”

Open Letter to Brotherhood

Guy Elliott, Eddy Parker, Phil Pope, & Bobby Watts:

“No one considers a marriage ceremony between an actor and an actress in a movie to be binding on the parties involved since their intention is to pretend and act—not to actually get married. Dave Miller’s teaching on this matter is not unscriptural in any way.”

*See [www.brown-trail-truth.com](http://www.brown-trail-truth.com) for full of the Miller marriage doctrine, including the complete sources from which the above quotations were taken.*

The Miller Marriage Doctrine...From Heaven or Rome?

Dave Miller’s position that internal thoughts and purposes (“intent”) have the ability to nullify spoken marriage vows harmonizes well with Catholic theology. The following quotes are from official Catholic declarations of doctrine.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1629

For this reason (or for other reasons that render the marriage null and void) the Church, after an examination of the situation by the competent ecclesiastical tribunal, can declare the nullity of a marriage, i.e., that the marriage never existed. In this case the contracting parties are free to marry, provided the natural obligations of a previous union are discharged.

The Code of Canon Law (1983), Canon 1101

§1 The internal consent of the mind is presumed to conform to the words or the signs used in the celebration of a marriage.

§2 If, however, either or both of the parties should by a positive act of will exclude marriage itself or any essential element of marriage or any essential property, such party contracts invalidly.

The formal language above authorizes Catholic matrimonial courts to annul marriages when it can be shown either (a) at least one party did not intend to be married at all or (b) at least one party did not intend to be married in the full Catholic sense.

The Miller doctrine teaches that God does not recognize a marriage to have occurred if (a) at least one party does not intend to be married at all or (b) at least one party does not intend to be married for the “purpose of having a marriage.”

**Miller Doctrine = Catholic Doctrine**

**Marriage occurs when two people INTEND to marry each other for EXERCISING DUTIES & PRIVILEGES OF MARRIAGE. If the VOWS ARE MADE WITH MENTAL RESERVATION, the result is a MARRIAGE NOT RECOGNIZED BY GOD.**

Language Used By

Dave Miller Maxie Boren Catholic Church

INTEND “view themselves as getting married”A

“intent”A, B, C, D

“intention of both parties”B

“mutually agreeing”E

“purpose”E “I agree with Dave, it’s something that is intended, and one enters into it.”C

“intention”E “internal consent of the mind”

EXERCISING DUTIES & PRIVILEGES OF MARRIAGE “marry each other for the purpose of having a marriage—for the purpose of loving and adoring and all the things that are said in vows”E

“marry someone as a lifelong companion”E “essential element of marriage or any essential property”

VOWS ARE MADE WITH MENTAL RESERVATION “go through that ceremony in a counterfeit fashion”E “gone through the ritual for some invalid reason”E “should by a positive act of will exclude marriage itself or any essential element of marriage or any essential property”

MARRIAGE NOT RECOGNIZED BY GOD “I do not believe they would be considered married Biblically”E “negate the idea of what marriage is all about”E “contracts invalidly”

“render the marriage null and void”

“nullity of a marriage”

“the marriage never existed”

A – Brown Trail Open Forum, June 21, 2000, Excerpt #1

B – Brown Trail Open Forum, June 21, 2000, Excerpt #2

C – Brown Trail Open Forum, July 5, 2000, Excerpt #1

D – Brown Trail Open Forum, July 5, 2000, Excerpt #2

E – Brown Trail Open Forum, August 20, 2000

How can someone who took a marriage vow (a clear declaration of intent) claim he did not intend to be married? Catholic theology has a concept that conveniently accomplishes just that—“mental reservation.” The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes “strict mental reservation” in the following way:

In the strict mental reservation the speaker mentally adds some qualification to the words which he utters, and the words together with the mental qualification make a true assertion in accordance with fact.

The implication is that someone can take a marriage vow without intending to keep it, and God will not hold him accountable to it. God would bind him to his “true” vow (spoken words + unspoken thoughts) and not his apparent vow (spoken words only). Since his “true” vow made no commitment, he is bound to nothing. Clearly “mental reservation” is pure sophistry.

The Miller marriage doctrine rests squarely on Catholic “mental reservation,” though its defenders reject labeling it as such.

How Consistent is Dave Miller in Applying His Doctrine?

The Catholic marriage doctrine envisions application to numerous situations. Are Dave, Maxie, and the elders willing to accept the full implications of their stated beliefs? For example, the Catholic Church confidently asserts that a man who married with the intent of later divorcing his wife, never actually married because he did not intend to commit for life. Would Dave Miller agree?

The inconsistency in Dave’s reasoning is emphasized when one reads his other writings on marriage. Dave has a reputation of being a logician and a Bible scholar. He generally teaches the Bible truth on marriage and not the cheap Catholic view (in which practically any marriage can be annulled).

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However, if something suggestive of the “immigration scoundrels” case is brought up, Dave reaches into Catholic doctrine and pulls out a defense. What makes it worse is that he drilled this doctrine into Brown Trail preaching students when he served as director. When pressed, he adamantly defends his position—even to the point of absurdity!

It is a noteworthy observation that Everett Chambers, native to Jamaica, married an American citizen to stay in the United States. Apparently, they did not live together as husband and wife, and the marriage was generally kept secret—even from the Brown Trail elders. Some years later, when Everett divorced her, it became known at Brown Trail. Concerns were expressed that Everett made a mockery of marriage, lied to the government, and lied on his preaching school application. Despite these concerns, Everett continued to hold positions of trust at Brown Trail, including Dean of Students and Director of Education. Note also that Dave has a well-documented habit of defending Everett as vehemently as a man would defend his wife. Lavish praise for Everett is sprinkled throughout Dave’s writings and stands in stark contrast to his reproach for coworkers, students, and elders. Perhaps this devotion to Everett sheds light on why two Brown Trail preachers and four elders have dipped their ladles into the fetid waters of Catholic doctrine.

Did Thomas B. Warren Teach the Miller Marriage Doctrine?

The Brown Trail elders (as well as Dave) claim Dave’s teaching on marriage is the same as is expressed in Thomas B. Warren’s book, *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock*. Taking quotes from chapter 5 of his book, they claim Warren taught their concept of “intent.”

First, some observations are in order to put Brother Warren’s statements in context. The stated objective of *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* was to analyze the doctrine of Dr. James D. Bales on divorce and remarriage. The stated objective of chapter 5 was to determine the point in time when “God-approved marriage” occurs. Bales taught that marriage occurred when it was consummated sexually. Warren taught marriage occurred at the wedding ceremony. Warren clearly stated at the beginning of the chapter that he did not intend to say “all that *might* be said” on when marriage occurs. The “mental reservation” doctrine was outside the scope of the chapter, so one should not expect to find a definitive statement of Warren’s position on it.

Bales had ridiculed the necessity of a wedding ceremony, so Warren felt it necessary to establish the need for such a ceremony. His case was as follows:

(2) It is true (a) that God did not specify details of a marriage ceremony and (b) that God did not specify who was to “say” the ceremony, but it is also true (c) that some sort of ceremony is demanded (otherwise the couple would never know just when they became husband and wife....) and (d) that men are to obey civil law (Rom. 13:ff), as long as that law does not violate God’s law (Acts 4:18; 5:29).

In his brief handling of the subject, Warren taught the following about when God joins a man and woman in marriage:

The couple must be scripturally eligible.

Some sort of wedding ceremony is required.

The Bible does not spell out the specifics of the ceremony, so it left up to civil law and the couple’s discretion.

Completion of the ceremony is the point at which the couple is married in the eyes of God.

The Brown Trail elders wrote,

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Brother Warren spoke of “an eligible couple who have clearly agreed to the significance of the ceremony and the concluding pronouncement” and “in the face of their mutual understanding of the significance of such.” He further noted that “some sort of ceremony is demanded (otherwise they could never know just when they became husband and wife.)” Likewise, all brother Miller has said is that the two parties to a marriage must possess the “intent,” i.e., *the mutual understanding and consent* to the act of marriage. The first two quotes the Brown Trail elders referenced are in the context of a human figure pronouncing the couple married.

It is altogether proper (in spite of Bales’ efforts to ridicule the necessity of any sort of ceremony) that a preacher (or, say, a justice of the peace) say (to an eligible couple who have clearly agreed to the significance of the ceremony and the concluding pronouncement), some such statement as, “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” When that pronouncement is made to (or over) such an eligible man and an eligible woman (in the face of their mutual understanding of the significance of such), that man and the woman will be “joined together” (by God) as husband and wife. Warren envisioned a scenario in which the preacher, based upon the words spoken by the couple, ascertained whether they consented to marriage and made his pronouncement accordingly. God then acknowledged the pronouncement made by the preacher and joined the couple in marriage.

What if the couple expressed their consent publicly but withheld it privately? Which expression (public or private) would God use to determine their marital status? Warren simply did not explore that issue here. One would have to look elsewhere to definitively determine Warren’s position.

It is interesting to observe that Dave places marriage completely in the realm of the couple’s minds and out of the realm of civil law. The all-important issue to Dave is whether the couple purposes in their minds to marry for the “purpose of having a marriage.” In Dave’s teaching, one’s marital status under civil law is only loosely related to one’s marital status in God’s eyes. Warren, on the other hand, gave civil law a more prominent role. Warren presented the wedding ceremony as demanded by both God’s law and civil law. It was to be officiated under the jurisdiction of civil law. In the case of a scripturally eligible couple, God recognized the same outcome civil law recognized.

### Dave vs. the Bible on the Definition of Marriage

Dave asserts, “marriage is defined in the Bible and in the dictionary as two people mutually agreeing to marry each other for the purpose of having a marriage.” He further clarifies the prerequisite purpose as “loving and adoring and all the things that are said in vows.” Does Dave accurately portray the Bible definition of marriage? The Bible does teach there should be love, respect, subjection, duty, and fidelity in marriage (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7, Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:2-5). However, marriage can exist without all these elements. Leah was not loved, but she did not cease to be Jacob’s wife (Gen. 29:31). A wife may be contentious, but the marriage continues on in misery (Prov. 19:13). Adultery of itself does not terminate a marriage (Hosea 1-3), but a subsequent death (2 Sam. 11) or divorce (Matt. 19:9) would.

Does God demand “intent” before joining together a man and woman? Jacob intended to marry Rachel and went through the ceremony, thinking he was marrying Rachel (Gen. 29:18-21). However, the next morning, he realized he had married Leah, so he confronted Laban about it (Gen. 29:25). Clearly, Jacob had no intention to marry Leah, but they were married nonetheless.

Throughout human history, people have married with a wide variety of purposes in their hearts. Consent to be married was not always present. Just as slavery can be forced upon a free man, marriage can be forced upon an eligible person. The Old Testament typically speaks of fathers giving their



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daughters in marriage, sometimes as a prize (Josh. 15:16). Such a practice does not necessarily rule out the bride's consent, but it does allow for a girl to be married against her wishes. There is an account of girls being abducted and then married (Judges 21:16-25). Similarly, captives of war could be taken as wives (Deut. 21:10-14). In one specific case, the Law of Moses forced two people into marriage (Deut. 22:28-29). If the Miller marriage doctrine were correct, numerous couples in the Old Testament days were in unauthorized marriages (for lack of intent) and thus living in sin.

A definition of marriage more consistent with Biblical usage (and the dictionary) would be “the human relationship in which a man and a woman are joined together as husband and wife.” A scriptural (God-authorized) marriage occurs when civil law recognizes a scripturally eligible man and a scripturally eligible woman as married, regardless of their consent. Marriage is of necessity a matter of public record, so witnesses (perhaps even government officials) would be required. Not all marriages are authorized by God (Mark 6:17-18), so there are eligibility requirements for a scriptural marriage. Dave Miller clearly misses the mark in his representation of the Bible (and dictionary) definition of marriage.

### “Intent” In Making Covenants

The Miller marriage doctrine is based on a second flawed premise—that a person can make a statement (or clearly express himself through an action), understanding its meaning in context, but not be held accountable. Let us take a Biblical look at the concept of “mental reservation.”

In the case of the “immigration scoundrels,” Dave holds that the couple is not married in the eyes of God because they did not intend to be married in the eyes of God when they went through the ceremony. That is the same as signing a contract and claiming, “I just wrote my name. I did not agree to anything.” Actions have meanings, and we are not always free to redefine their standard meaning. Dave alluded to this principle in his discussion of Halloween, writing, “...what God holds us accountable for are the **current** cultural connections [of our actions].” He went on to cite this principle to explain the seemingly strange Old Testament prohibition of boiling a goat in its mother's milk.

The case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego really underscores this principle. These righteous men refused to fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol, even under threat of death (Daniel 3:13-18). Why did they not appease both man and God by employing “mental reservation”? They could have bowed down and worshipped the idol while thinking in their minds, “Jehovah, I do not really mean this.” However, they knew such actions inherently had meaning, and God would hold them accountable for idol worship.

The Bible is full of other accounts where “intent” could have come into play, but it did not. Isaac intended to bless Esau, not Jacob, but he recognized he could not nullify the blessing after it was spoken (Gen. 27). Jacob intended to marry Rachel, not Leah, but he recognized he could not nullify the marriage (Gen. 29). The Israelites thought they were making a covenant with a distant nation, not their neighbors, but they could not nullify it (Josh. 9).

Scripture makes no provisions for unbinding someone from a vow because he did not really mean it (had “mental reservation”) when he made it. Notice that Numbers chapter 30 makes a number of provisions for nullifying vows, but the “mental reservation” concept is nowhere to be found. The truth is God condemns those who swear falsely (Zech. 8:17; Hosea 10:4). Let us give the Lord the final word on the doctrine of “mental reservation.” When He rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for their own brand of “mental reservation,” did He bind them to (a) their intent or (b) their spoken words?

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Woe unto you, ye blind guides, that say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind: for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that hath sanctified the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is a debtor. Ye blind: for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And he that sweareth by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by the heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. (Matthew 23:16-22, ASV)

### Absurdity of the Miller Marriage Doctrine Illustrated

How much of God's teaching on marriage must one intend to keep to possess "intent"? If, on the day of the wedding, a bride intends to keep all of God's teaching on marriage except subjection to her husband, does she have the necessary "intent" to be married that day?

Suppose two people married for the sole purpose of cheating the government. While in that "sham" marriage, they fall in love with each other and decide they want to have a real marriage. Would they (a) be able to retroactively change their "intent" or (b) need to marry each other again?

Dave stated that Jacob could have rejected his marriage to Leah but that his conversation with Laban secured the marriage in his mind. Was that marriage in some sort of limbo state before Jacob and Laban talked? Did Jacob and Leah commit fornication during that time? If Jacob got out of bed angry, purposing to reject the marriage, were they unmarried at that point in time? If Jacob changed his mind after talking to Laban, was that sufficient to restore the marriage (i.e. retroactive "intent")? Would they be required to repeat the ceremony with "intent"? If not, how long would the Lord give Jacob to arrive at his final decision?

A woman could marry a millionaire for the sole purpose of taking his estate. She could divorce him for any cause and scripturally marry again, as she was never really married the first time.

If a couple goes through a wedding ceremony, but only one of them has "intent," are they married? What if it takes years before the true intent of both parties surfaces?

The "immigration scoundrels" must go through a divorce before marrying others. If that divorce were not for fornication, would either of them be scripturally eligible to marry again?

### Conclusion

In *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock*, Thomas B. Warren mentioned several ways of proving a doctrine to be false. Two of these read as follows: (a) "Any doctrine which denies plain Bible teaching is—and must be—false." and (b) "any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is itself false." In light of this, the Miller marriage doctrine is proven false the following ways:

The Miller marriage doctrine denies plain Bible teaching that consent is not required for marriage (Deut. 22:28-29 et al).

The Miller marriage doctrine denies plain Bible teaching that men are bound to covenants made without intent to keep it (Matt. 23:16-22 et al).

The Miller marriage doctrine implies that Jacob and Leah were not married in Genesis 29:23, as Laban gave Jacob a girl he did not intend to marry.

Clearly, the Miller marriage doctrine is false, having its origins in Catholic theology, not the Bible. Furthermore, the techniques by which it is being promoted are shameful. It is being drilled into people's minds by repeating over and over that it is the Bible definition of marriage (a false claim). No scriptural argument is put forth to back it. Worse, when scripture is brought up to challenge it (i.e. Jacob and Leah), the Bible text is twisted to conform to the doctrine. Also, there is the attempt to hide

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behind the reputation of Thomas B. Warren by dishonestly attributing the doctrine to him.

On the matter of marriage, Dave Miller and Maxie Boren are not “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Likewise, the Brown Trail elders (Bob Watts, Eddy Parker, Phil Pope, and Guy Elliott) are neglecting their duties to protect the flock from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9-11).

[1] available online at

[2] available online at

[3] This is inferred from Dave’s treatment of the Jacob-Leah marriage. Jacob did not intend to be married to Leah at all, and Dave upholds Jacob’s right to reject that marriage on those grounds.

[4] “Mental reservation” comes in two flavors—wide and strict. “Wide mental reservation” excuses the use of vague language (equivocations) and half-truths. “Strict mental reservation” excuses outright lies.

[5] “Mental Reservation.” *Catholic Encyclopedia* available online at .

[6] Incidentally, “strict mental reservation” was developed in the sixteenth century to defend Titius, who had perjured himself. It seems unfortunate for Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) that the “strict mental reservation” defense (as well as the Catholic Church) did not exist in the first century.

[7] Guy Elliott, Eddy Parker, Phil Pope, and Bobby Watts, “,” (July 16, 2002) p. 2.

[8] The Catholic Church may grant annulment for numerous other scenarios (i.e. for retaining the option to divorce, for lying about one’s past, for not keeping a promise made before marriage). For further study in the Catholic grounds for annulment, see “Determining Grounds of Nullity” at .

[9] See *Piloting the Strait* chapter 31 as well as “Are All Divorced Persons Eligible to Remarry?” available online at . Dave’s writings mention nothing about marriage not occurring when someone does not intend to be married for life. If such a “loophole” existed, it would most definitely be relevant in contemporary America where many marry and *expect* to be divorced after the “love wears off.”

[10] Note that a foreigner who marries an American citizen must file form I-751 with the Immigration and Naturalization Service to be allowed to stay in the U.S. permanently. The current version (5/26/02) of I-751 contains the following text above the petitioner’s signature: “I certify, under penalty of perjury...that the marriage...was not for the purpose of procuring an immigration benefit.” The I-751 form is available for viewing online at . The general procedure for legally entering the U.S. based upon marriage is described at .

[11] Prospective students at Brown Trail School of Preaching are required to disclose their marital status as well as circumstances surrounding any prior marriages. This also applies to students’ wives.

[12] It is ironic that Everett was assigned the responsibility of screening out problematic students. Students were threatened to be thrown out for not submitting to authority, for talking to elders about the school, for sowing discord, and for having a “bad attitude.”

[13] See , pages 4, 7, 10, 14, and 15. See also Dave’s “” handout, an entire document that defends Everett. Both documents are available at [www.brown-trail-truth.com](http://www.brown-trail-truth.com).

[14] Dave quoted from *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* during the 26th Annual Fort Worth Lectures, Open Forum On “Marriage And The Home,” January 13, 2003. See Disk #6, starting at time 27:10.

[15] Thomas B. Warren, *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* (Jonesboro, Ark: National Christian Press, Inc.: 1980), p. 20.

[16] Thomas B. Warren, *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* (Jonesboro, Ark: National Christian Press, Inc.: 1980), p. 25.

[17] Guy Elliott, Eddy Parker, Phil Pope, and Bobby Watts, “,” (July 16, 2002) p. 2.

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[18] Thomas B. Warren, *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* (Jonesboro, Ark: National Christian Press, Inc.: 1980), p. 24.

[19] Throughout the centuries, there have been numerous young girls given away in marriage, though they had no desire to leave their parents and little understanding of the marriage covenant.

[20] If marriage were not a matter of public record, how would God's people (Israel in OT, church in NT) enforce adultery laws (Lev. 20:10; 1 Cor. 5)?

[21] Context plays an important role in communication. In a joke, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily held by the speaker. Similarly when one is acting or quoting, he is not speaking his own words.

[22] See Dave Miller, *Piloting the Strait* (Bedford, TX 1996), p. 258-259. Dave connects the prohibition in Exodus 23:19 to a pagan practice. Similarly, he connects the ritual cutting of hair (Leviticus 19:27) to idol worship.

[23] We have no indication Jacob ever purposed to reject the marriage. This is just a supposition made for the purpose of analyzing Dave's position.

[24] Thomas B. Warren, *Keeping the Lock in Wedlock* (Jonesboro, Ark: National Christian Press, Inc.: 1980), p. 38.

[25] To address this implication and the apparent lack of a second wedding ceremony (with clear "intent"), Dave devised a notion that could aptly be called "retroactive intent." Dave said that Jacob's conversation with Laban made the marriage "secure" in his mind. This notion opens another "can of worms" (see #3 of previous section) with implications beyond marriage. Could someone change his past denominational baptism into baptism for the remission of sins simply by retroactively changing his purpose for the act of water immersion?