



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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TEXTS FOR THE SELF-CONSTITUTION THEORY

By J. C. Settlemoir

[Editor's Note: This well-written and thoroughly-researched article was written by Bro. Settlemoir more than a year ago and was submitted to this paper for consideration for publication. At the time, I had scheduled other material for publication and did not publish it immediately. Inadvertently, because of the way I title and file articles for publication, I overlooked the fact that I had never published this. I apologize for my lateness for it would have been better had it been published shortly after it was written. However, it is so worthy of your consideration, I am publishing its four parts and conclusion in three installments. As you read it, please keep this in mind: "When a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth he will either quit being mistaken or cease to be honest." (Author Unknown). (RWC)]

PART I A KIND REPLY CONSIDERED

In the June issue of the excellent paper "Voice in The Wilderness", the editor, a good friend, a kind brother, and an able preacher, made reply to an article I wrote on the "Constitution of Churches" which appeared in PP, [4-1-'00]. This brother was kind enough to write me and send me a copy of his article before he printed it in his paper. His reply was published in the June 8 issue of the Voice. It was also picked up and published in The Berea Baptist Banner [Aug. 5, 2000, p. 1]. I shall be (See Constitution, page 5, right column)

POLITICS AND THE CHURCH

By Billy Holladay

(Originally Published September, 1994 but still as timely as ever in the new millennium.)

(Editor's Note: In the event you ever wonder why we say little about politics and world conditions and events in this paper, the following article expresses very succinctly the opinion of this editor. It is my conviction that I should not occupy my "pulpit time" nor the space in this paper with political issues. We may expose false religions and false doctrines that are held by some who carry their religion into the political realm as do the Muslims, but our primary goal is always the proclamation and promulgation of truth as set forth in God's Holy Word. I spend less than a miniscule amount of my time in the pulpit and even less of the space in this paper to advance my political views or to harangue the political views of others. Please read Bro. Holladay's article carefully and I believe that all lovers of God's truth will have to give it a hearty "Amen!") (RWC).

We are being bombarded as never before with political rhetoric from all the media—radio, TV, newspapers, news magazines, even the mail. I do believe President Clinton is the most reported-on/commented-on president ever! And isn't it amazing how differently a conservative like Cal Thomas and a liberal like Ellen Goodman report on the same event? The left-wing liberals have mounted an all-out attack on the "radical religious right." But, it seems to me, the right-wingers give as good as they get in the way of vicious innuendo and unsubstantiated allegations.

While there is essential unity among us doctrinally, there is great variety in the political views represented in this congregation. There

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are those who strongly supported the present president, and still do. There are others who just as strongly opposed him, and still do. The same goes for our senators, governor, health-care proposals, gun control, and any number of other political figures and issues.

Opposite political views within the same assembly is nothing new; it was true of the first church. Simon Zelotes, as his name suggests, was likely a Zealot - an extreme right-winger! The Zealots opposed the Roman government and its local officials in every way they possibly

could. The Jews who made their last stand at Masada were Zealots. At the other end of the political spectrum was Levi, whom we know as Matthew. A publican - a Jew who collaborated with the Roman government to fleece his fellow Jews in taxes. Possibly no group of people was more despised by the Zealots than the publicans! But here they were in the same small congregation; and who put them there? Maybe Jesus didn't know about their politics and their extremism...(?), or maybe it just didn't matter! The point is, one's political views do not qualify him for Christ's call or membership in His church, but, thank God, neither do one's politics disqualify him! If my political position differs from yours, remember God chooses from both extremes and all shades in between.

The main point I'm driving at is, Christ Jesus did not establish His church as a political entity at all - left, right, or middle. The Lord's church was commissioned politically neutral, apolitical, a political nonentity. The reason for that is simple: the mission and message of His church is far, far higher than the partisan politics of this world. Paul's admonition to the church at Colosse is still applicable to all the Lord's churches: **"Set your affections on things above and not on things on the earth" (3:2)**. Using that criterion, do you know of any political issue that qualifies for the affections (the mind) of His church?

It is difficult not to be caught up in all the hoopla, the charges and the countercharges, etc. It is, in fact, easy to become almost addicted to the constant stream of "news," to wait anxiously for the next report to see what "our side" has uncovered about the "other side," and what lies the other side is spreading about our side. (Doesn't the other side **always** lie about our side?!) But God's people should keep all these in perspective by calling to mind that we are not of this world (John 15:19), and that **"the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1)**. Is there any limitation to that statement? True, He hasn't seen fit to always tell us why he put **"the powers that be"** in office, but believing that He did certainly casts the political situation in a different light, doesn't it?

One of the most amazing things about the

New Testament, and a testimony to its Divine inspiration, is its nonpoliticalness. It was written during the heyday of the Roman Empire - Caesars reigned, were assassinated and replaced; high governors came and went with great rapidity; intrigue abounded; political repression was a way of life; and yet only the barest mention is made of just a few of these things, and then only parenthetically, as they relate directly to the main theme (e.g., Acts 18:2). If the Bible were the only history we had of that period, we would not even know that cruel and lascivious men like Caligula and Nero ever reigned! That ought to tell us something of the ultimate importance of politics, politicians, and political views!

I know it's hard for preachers to keep their political views out of their sermons. Indeed, many with radio programs seem to feel that they are specially gifted with political insight and that their calling is to sermonize on political figures and partisan issues. I suggest there is neither precept nor example for such in the New Testament, much less any direct command.

God-called preachers are to proclaim a more worthy message: "preach the word" is the call, "in season and out of season." I don't suppose that the original Greek of that meant "in election season and out of election season," but I think there might be an application there! Jesus once asked the question, "**What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**" (**Mark 8:36**). So, too, although a church and her pastor should work diligently for an issue or candidate, and actually influence the outcome of an election, yet what the church would lose by bringing in partisan politics would be far greater than what would be gained. I will just briefly discuss four ways the preaching of partisan politics from the pulpit adversely affects the Lord's church.

First and foremost, partisan politics usurps the Lord Jesus Christ as the central figure of the message of the church. "**I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified**" (**I Cor 2:2**). True preaching of Jesus Christ and His eternal provision for His people will, by its very nature, deemphasize political issues and other worldly concerns. The hymn writer understood this when he wrote, ". . .

the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Thus also did another write, "*Far below the noise of strife upon my ear is falling....doubt and fear and things of earth in vain to me are calling . . .*" Conversely, when the emotions of the people are stirred with political rhetoric (which is noise of strife indeed), it is Christ who is defocused and more or less relegated to the background. What politician or political issue is worth that? How many of the Lord's churches have already left their first love (Rev 2:4) during this campaign season? "**Ye cannot serve two masters,**" the Master said (Matt 6:24).

Secondly, partisan political issues are generally presented in such a way that the Lord's sovereign control over the affairs of the world is minimized in the minds of the people. Pastors should be striving for the very opposite effect - if the political situation is all that dire, then God's people need to know that He is in control; if they already know it, put them in remembrance of it (II Pet 1:12). We get most of our news from a "NO GOD" media that report everything as though God did not even exist. As Americans we have been steeped in the idea of "government **of** the people, **by** the people, and **for** the people" since childhood. Even Christians' thinking can become so warped that God is virtually excluded, and we suppose our well-being depends on the political maneuvers of depraved men. But Psalms 75:7 tells us, "**..God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.**" We may be sure that no one has yet stole the vote and sneaked into office without the Lord's sanction! God's people need to know that. Of those already in office, Proverbs 21:1 informs us, "**The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.**" He caused one pharaoh to show extreme favor to a people, and another to oppress the same people unmercifully (Gen 45:17-20, Exodus 1). In retrospect we see how wisely He ruled and overruled in both cases. "**I have made the earth, the man, and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet to me**" (**Jer 27:5**). Daniel tells us that He sometimes chooses to

give it to the **"basest of men" (Dan 4:17)**. We can confirm that by observation! But the point is not the calibre of the men God gives political office to, but the fact that it is God who does it, and for His own good purposes whether we **see** them or not. God's people need the comfort of that message.

Thirdly, the message of partisan politics in the church robs God's people of peace and calmness of soul. This is the natural fallout from failure to give Christ the preeminence and to recognize God's sovereignty in the affairs of man. The Saviour said, **"Let not your hearts be troubled,"** and He directs our attention to Himself, to the Father, and to Heaven (John 14:1-3). But the political message, always presented with such a great sense of urgency, redirects our attention to things of earth, and the heart most certainly becomes troubled. Have you ever known anyone who was all absorbed in a political issue who wasn't troubled about it? The Lord spoke of **"men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26)**. Whatever else that may refer to, it does seem an apt description of the political arena today, doesn't it? God has better for His people. Again I quote Col 3:2, **"Set your affection (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth."** Phil 4:6 tells us to be careful (anxious) for nothing; how many of God's people are so very anxious over the current political situations and the upcoming election?

The preaching of political issues gives people the impression that our ultimate well-being is dependent on a vote in Congress or the outcome of an election. We sometimes tend to think, if things keep going like they're going, we're going to lose all our rights, all our political and religious freedom; they'll be persecuting us, etc. Personally, I hope not, but if such does happen, God will have a purpose in it. I'm reminded that what was once said of Israel has also proven true of the Lord's churches down through the centuries, **". . . the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (Exodus 1:12)**. The Lord's true churches have thrived spiritually under persecution more than they have under accommodation and toleration. If God does choose to put us through

such treatment again, He will have the ultimate good of His church and His people in mind - we have Romans 8:28 on it!

Partisan politics in the pulpit also robs God's people of peace by causing needless tensions in the congregation. Generally, one of the Lord's churches is made-up of a cross-section of the community. There will be Democrats, Republicans, Independents, nothings (politically), closed-shop union people, right-to-work advocates, etc, etc. It is virtually impossible to discuss a hot political issue in a partisan way without rubbing somebody the wrong way. **Then why do it?** Is a politician or a political issue worth a breach among members of the same body?

Now, I'm not advocating political inactivity on the part of God's saints. Our form of government demands that we vote, so vote; write letters on matters that concern you, etc. (I have a rather large stack of letters to/from senators and representatives on a variety of issues ranging from health care to an EPA-proposed ban on lead in fishing sinkers). But the precious time allotted to Bible study and preaching should not be wasted with such mundane things, nor should another be made to feel badly or defensive if he doesn't agree with my very uninspired views on such matters. Just as an example, suppose I'm for the President's health-care plan and use this time to tell you how great it is. Some of you would feel the blood start to rise in your neck because you already have excellent coverage and don't want any change. On the other hand, if I condemn health-care reform as a bad thing, I know some of you have had the bad experience of losing insurance and of not being able to obtain other coverage because of preexisting conditions, so your neck would begin to warm. In fact, as this is at best a temporal matter, I'd hope your blood pressure would start to rise over **any** partisan discussion of it here, regardless of whether you are personally "fer" it or "agin" it.

Fourthly, partisan politics taints the reputation of the Lord's church - His Bride! It is a self-evident fact that partisan politics is dirty business; a church cannot get into that business without getting dirt on her. Ephesians 5:27 tells us of the Lord's purpose to **"present it to**

himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Is it not a blemish (or worse) for an assembly of the Lord Jesus Christ to grovel in the muck of partisan politics during time set apart for His worship and praise? Is a church keeping itself **"unspotted from the world"** (James 1:27) when worldly concerns occupy center stage? The very idea - Baptist churches in this city regularly invite out-and-out politicians to make political speeches from their pulpits! It incenses me; just think how God must feel about it! It seems downright criminal that time dedicated to the preaching of Christ would be wasted on partisan political issues! No such message is worthy of the church He **"purchased with his own blood"** (Acts 20:28), and no such message will provide any real help to His people.

Folks who attend the services of a Baptist church, or listen to its message via radio/TV, ought to **expect** a Biblical, Christ-centered message. I dare say, have a **right** to hear a Biblical, Christ-centered message! If instead they are subjected to the preacher's view of the latest political issue, the reputation of that church—and **all** the Lord's churches—suffers. In my opinion, no one has done more to taint the reputation of Baptist churches in this regard than Jerry Falwell.

God forbid that we should ever entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life (II Tim 2:4), and account politicians and their messages as worthy of taking time from Christ and His message.

(CONSTITUTION, Cont. from P. One)

glad if I can but approximate his gentle and Christ-like spirit in my reply.

Some other brethren have also criticized my article in message and print. I appreciate every one of these brethren and esteem them highly. Let me emphasize my considered opinion concerning discussions such as these. I verily believe they can do nothing but contribute to our better understanding of Scripture and enable everyone of us to more perfectly align ourselves with the truth of God, provided we enter into

such discussions in the right spirit. This is what I earnestly am seeking to do and I cannot question the honesty or scholarship of those with whom I differ. Nor can I believe they take a position different from mine because of ulterior motives. And I want every brother to know I am not discussing individuals but only the principles that they teach. They are welcome to preach in our church and I say this with the full knowledge that I am now excluded from most of their churches and from their fellowship because of my stand on these issues. **"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets...."**[Acts 24:14].

MISUNDERSTANDING

My brother misunderstood my definition of theory. My definition is "a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action" [Web. 10th Collegiate Dict.]. **Theory** can as readily be used for my position as for the other, so it should not be offensive to any one, properly defined. I certainly did not use the word derogatorily. Furthermore, please keep in mind I devoted a paragraph to precisely define what I meant by this term.

COMPLAINTS

He also complained I was trying to prove my position from the forefathers. Again he has misunderstood. The position that I always and everywhere proclaim and maintain is — **the Word of God is the sole authority in doctrine and practice**. I accept nothing, preach nothing, and want nothing which I cannot find clearly stated in the Word of God. I also clearly stated this in the introduction.

AUTHORITY THEORY VERSUS THE OLD LANDMARKS

He also complained that I gave no scripture proof for the self-constitution of churches. He wrote: "If there is so much scripture and it is so clear that churches are self-constituted, then why wasn't just a little bit of it used in this

article.” The answer is, first, there was Scripture given but he overlooked it. Some of the men referred to quoted Mt 18:20, [P&P, p.8, 9,10] not merely citing this Scripture but explaining it. Secondly, the reason I didn’t give Scripture is very simple. I was not trying to establish my position in that article but only seeking to show that the authority theory is not the position of Landmark Baptists. I gave conclusive evidence that the authority theory cannot co-exist with the old Landmarks!

Thus, I believe this brother misunderstood the whole thrust of my article. The main thrust of my article was to show that there is an **irreconcilable difference** between the authority theory and the Old Landmarks which the great Landmark Baptists of former times spelled out and defended in both pulpit and print for many decades. Those who believe the authority theory **cannot be Landmark Baptists** in the sense these men, such as Graves, Pendleton, Dayton, and Cole were. I believe this is beyond question! I know my brethren will not admit it, but the question is, why will they not admit it? They are like the Jews of our Lord’s day when they say, **“We cannot tell,”** that is, they won’t do it because they fear the consequences! [Mk 11:33].

AUTHORITY THEORY NOT PRACTICED BY BAPTISTS

It is essential for every reader to get in his mind what the authority theory demands. This theory means that if every church **did not get authority to constitute** from another church then it cannot possibly be a scriptural church. This further means that this doctrine not only must be taught in Scripture, but it must have been maintained all through Baptist History, church to church without a break!

But if by any means this theory was **not in practice** among our churches (for an extensive period of time), there can now be no true churches on the face of the earth because the churches in days gone by, for whatever reason, did not carry out this essential practice. And when churches were multiplied, as they were, they did not follow this essential doctrine and hence were not true churches. Now let this be

extrapolated up to our times and the whole thing becomes impossible! This is the actual case. **Baptist churches** did not believe this theory and consequently did not practice it. Landmark Baptists leaders of the eighteen hundreds deny the theory root and branch by stating that **churches are necessarily self-constituted**. Therefore the authority theory has fallen with Humpty Dumpty consequences. Their whole system is broken in pieces like a China doll in a rock crusher. Not one single man among the authority brethren is willing to take this argument and deal with it. My good brother in the article I am reviewing said:

“I have read what five men have written, and out of the five men and what they have written, or at least, what he has included, I found one or two verses mostly unrelated to the authority issue. These are great men of God. They are even referred to as Baptist giants. They have no doubt earned such respect, andI must add, that these are men. They are fallible. What they say is not infallible. They can make mistakes, if indeed that is what they truly believed. I have seldom ever tried to justify my position in the Scripture with what other men have said. If I cannot find it in the Scripture, then I should remain silent.” [Voice In The Wilderness, June 8, 2000. Hereafter Voice].

First let me respond to my brother by saying you did not object to passing out the pamphlet “The Historical Position of Baptists on God’s Sovereignty” when we were in the Philippines. Why do you now object to my quoting old Baptists on a different subject? I am glad you recognize that these men are but men. Indeed they could be wrong. They were fallible. They did make mistakes and I disagree with them on some points. But what you need to recognize is that you brethren also are subject to some foibles. You too can be wrong. You brethren are also fallible, and can make mistakes and in the case of the authority theory why not admit to yourselves that you could be wrong? Would you be so kind to publish in the next issue of your paper just what you have stated about these five men— but apply it to those who believe the authority theory? Is it not true that you brethren are just men too? But lest anyone think this is too evident to mention, I need only remind you

that one of these brethren was humble enough to write an article in defense of the authority theory, and others printed it, in which he maintained that if men were only honest in this matter they would all agree with him! The editor of the Voice has never pontificated in this manner, I am glad to say.

Let me put it on record once more. At no time, neither in message, print, secret thought, dream, or otherwise, have I ever tried to prove what I believe or justify my position on any Scriptural subject by what other men have said or written. And that is not what I am doing when I quote others. What I am doing when I quote other men is showing that my position is the same position these brethren of by-gone days believed. Or I believe they have a specially good point and I want others to know about it. When I quote old Baptists on the sovereignty of God, I do not seek to establish that doctrine from the pen of men, but rather to show this is the historical position of Baptists on this subject. I seek to show Baptists in History stood where we stand and consequently this is the Baptist position. And when I quote these old Baptists on the self-constitution of churches I am only showing **the real Landmark Baptist position!** I also wished to show the authority theory, which these brethren are now teaching, is not what our forefathers taught and I could not be honest if I did not quote Landmark Baptist leaders on this subject. My brethren have been mis-quoting them for years. They say in essence, "We believe it now, so the Baptist forefathers must have believed it"! With this kind of reasoning I can prove George Washington was a Communist!

AUTHORITY BRETHREN REJECT GRAVES, DAYTON, PENDLETON

My brother here writes as if he does not quite believe I have correctly quoted these writers, i.e., J. R. Graves, J. M. Pendleton, A. C. Dayton, C.D. Cole and E. T. Hiscox, for he writes: "I have read what five men have written... or at least, what he has included..."[Voice, p. 66]. First he complains that I quote these men— and then complains I don't quote enough of them! May I suggest that these

brethren should read for themselves what these old writers say and if I have quoted them incorrectly, point out the misquote. Why don't these brethren tell us what Graves and these other writers really believed if I have misquoted them? The Landmark Baptist rug has been jerked out from under their feet and consequently they cannot call on these men to help them. Men will not knowingly subpoena witnesses who oppose their case, hence they unwillingly recognize these men oppose their position!

Let any reader review my previous article and he will see I quoted these men correctly and gave the documentation so anyone can check for himself the accuracy of the quotes. Is this not fair? If I have misquoted a single man, I will publicly retract it. Let my brethren cite the place. But if I have correctly quoted them, then let them honestly face the issue—the authority theory will not allow its proponents to recognize these Old Landmarkers as sound Baptists! They would not let J. R. Graves, J. M. Pendleton, A. C. Dayton, C. D. Cole, nor thousands of other Landmark Baptists preach in their churches! Yet, they are inconsistent enough to claim the Landmark title and call those who agree with these Old Landmarkers by less than flattering names! For them we pray.

THE DILEMMA OF THE AUTHORITY THEORY

These brethren have virtually declared non-fellowship with those of us who do not accept the authority theory. Most of them will not allow us to preach in their churches. They claim those who believe the authority theory and receive it as an essential of church-constitution are Landmark Baptists and those who don't are "Neo-Landmarkers." But in spite of these claims and the name-calling (the editor of the Voice has not descended to such, I am thankful to say) the undisputed leaders of Landmark Baptist reform in the eighteen hundreds, not only **did not espouse the authority theory but opposed it!** Now every reader must feel the power of this argument that if J.R. Graves, J.M. Pendleton, and A.C. Dayton (to mention only these noted leaders) removed one of the

essential Landmarks, then they can hardly be hailed as the champions of Landmark Baptists in the eighteen hundreds and responsible for resetting the Old Landmarks! **“Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.” [Job 24:2; Prov 22:28].** Nor can these old writers be **Landmark Baptists** in the definition of the authority brethren! Heretofore, the authority brethren have tried to ride two different horses going in opposite directions but now they must declare which horse they will ride. This dilemma will cause them many sleepless nights.

Let them honestly face this issue.

Both groups cannot be Landmark Baptists! If one group opposes the authority theory and excludes it from the Landmarks they reset and for which they earnestly contended while the other group maintains the authority theory is essential to the constitution of churches and is an essential landmark—surely even a child can see at a glance that we are here dealing with two distinct and divergent groups. **The Old Landmarkers taught that two or three can constitute a church** without any outside help while the authority theory brethren teach only a mother church can constitute a new church. **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” [Amos 3:3].** Yet these brethren pretend they are Old Landmark Baptists but at the same time repudiate and detest the Old Landmark Principles!

In the *Great Carrollton Debate*, held in 1875 at Carrollton, Mo., Jacob Ditzler, the Methodist, debating with J. R. Graves, contended that Christian people, baptized or not, could constitute a church [p.944]. J. R. Graves gives the Landmark Baptist position. Remember many well-known Landmark Baptists preachers were present at this debate. Listen to Graves' answer:

“Now I wish Elder Ditzler to know that there is a world-wide difference between originating an organization different from anything that can be found in the Bible, different from anything the world had ever before seen or heard of, and calling it a Church, and organizing a Christian Church. It is true that two or three baptized individuals can organize a Church, provided they adopt

the apostolic model of government, and covenant to be governed by the sole authority of Jesus Christ.”— p. 975.

Furthermore Graves had been defending this method of church constitution for **twenty five years** at the time of this debate [*New Great Iron Wheel*, p. 9; with *Old Landmarkism*, p. xi] and for thirty years when he published *Old Landmarkism* in 1880, [*Old Landmarkism* xiii] Now if in thirty years there was any outcry from Baptists on this method of church constitution, why is it that the authority brethren can't find it? Will my brethren “fess up” or will they continue to pretend?

They—those who say the authority theory is essential to the constitution of churches—are not Landmark Baptists! Either Graves, Dayton, and Pendleton (and hosts of others too numerous to mention) were not Landmark Baptists or the authority brethren are not, and I do mean to press this issue. These men (yes, they were **just men**, but men who did not hesitate to spell out what they believed on this issue) and have left on record what they believed. Their books are available. My brethren have them in their studies. They sell them in their papers and at their conferences and yet they exclude us for believing the same thing these men believed! This dilemma will not go away! And let me say that these brethren are **deceiving their readers and their churches** when they refuse to set the record straight. Let them state in public that these men are not sound Baptists, in their view, or let them produce the quotes where these men support the authority theory! They won't do the first and they cannot do the second! The rope is too hot to hold on to and they are too high to let go!

What will they do?

Silence here will be a mute form of dishonesty!

My brother also complained that I did not in my article give any textual proof of the self-constitution theory. Of course not. I was but answering **their arguments**. Nor did I in that article consider the texts which they mutilate and warp in an attempt to make them support the authority theory, for that was not my purpose, but, the Lord willing, I will take them to

task for this also.

This dear brother also suggested that I have no proof for my theory. But whether I have proof for my theory of self-constitution of churches was not the issue in that article. Even if the self-constitution theory were false, it does not help the authority case. For example, if one should argue that eight times eight is thirty-eight and I argue that the correct answer is fifty-eight. Does the fact that I have the wrong answer make his answer correct? Of course not! It is irrelevant. If an answer is wrong, it is always wrong and nothing can make it right. So in that discussion whether my view was correct or not has nothing to do with the correctness of the authority position. The situation with the authority theory and self-constitution is not an either/or. Any doctrine, and especially any **essential** doctrine or practice, which cannot be supported with an express declaration from Scripture is to be cast to the bats and moles and as a Baptist I cannot understand how this principle can be questioned, [Isa 2:20].

Some men use Scriptures to support false doctrines which sound like they really do support them. For example. Some say Peter got the keys to the kingdom and this means he was elevated to the high position as head of the church. Now Mt 16:18 **sounds** like it is saying this but it isn't. And it was six hundred years after our Lord uttered these words before anyone ever claimed it was saying this! John 6:53-56 sounds like it is speaking of the Lord's supper but it isn't. I Cor 11:24,25 sounds like the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ but they don't. And my brethren can sort these texts out and show their correct meaning with clarion voice. Yet when they take up the authority theory, which has not a single verse that even **seems to teach it**, they stutter and reel in an exegetical vertigo. They make wild claims and try to bluff those who ask for proof for this theory. Some of them (not the editor of the Voice) hurl scurrilous terms at us and say we only take our position because of ulterior motives but we will not reply in kind, but heed the words of our Savior, [Mt 5:11]. Why do they do these things? The cause is, as I pointed out before, there is no text for their theory,

hence, they either must admit this or raise a lot of dust. And dust it is!

AUTHORITY THEORY IS THE OLD CATHOLIC ARGUMENT

For example what about authority for marriage? The Catholic Church argues that Christ gave the authority for marriage to the church. There is no Scripture for this. It too is just a tradition. They argue authority is in the church, while we Baptists maintain **some authority** was given to the church. The Catholics then go on and **make the quantum leap** and maintain this means all authority is given to the church! Governments are subject to the church, kings are subject to the church. War is subject to the church. Treaties are subject to the church. Courts are subject to the church. Everything is subject to the church and this applies to marriage! Therefore if anyone gets married without the authority of the Catholic church, they are living in sin and their children are illegitimate! This is precisely the same argument which the authority brethren use. The only difference is what they put in the blank. The Catholic church writes "marriage"(and other things) but the authority

Bouquets and Brickbats

We were blessed with several pages of very encouraging bouquets this month. And, there were a few brickbats. But, due to other material planned for this paper, we simply could not get them in. If possible, we will get them in next time. Here is a sample of what they were like.

TEXAS: Amen Brother!!!! Thank you for allowing Bro. Settlemoir to speak through your paper. I don't know him well, but am praising God for what he wrote in that article. May God use this article to rally brethren together who embrace the truly Baptist perspective on church constitution. Away with the popish smelling pseudo-Baptist thinking of many who pride themselves as "the bride."

Could you send me Bro. Settlemoir's e-mail address so that I can write him personally? Thanks.

THAILAND MISSIONS

THE STORY OF THE CHURCH IN PA KOE VILLAGE

By Wayne Camp



One view of Pa Koe Village

Some of the accounts you hear of the beginning of a church among the Hill Tribes of northern Thailand will amaze you. On some occasions people in a village miles away from a village where we already have a Landmark Baptist Church will hear of it through the jungle grapevine and will send a man from the village to the village where the church is and ask for someone to come to their village. Bro. Anond, the missionary of the Pa Sak church usually goes to the village and surveys the situation,



Another View of Pa Koe Village

preaches there, and soon there are saved folks whom he baptizes and forms into another New Testament church.

Such is the story of the Bethel Baptist Church

in the village of Pa Koe, a predominantly Lisu village, with some La Hu people. There are also some Dai living nearby. A relative of one of the young preachers in the work told Bro. Anond of a village where there were no Christians. In December, 1999, Bro. Anond visited this village.

He says, "That time I just visit and looking how I can do, after I came back home I kept praying for this village if GOD'S WILL I will follow GOD'S WILL. After I visited one old man called me and said, 'Please send one minister to preach the gospel in our village.' That time I was teaching a young Lisu man. I asked him if he would go."

At the request of Bro. Anond "Moses" went to Pa Koe and began to preach. Bro. Anond also made frequent visits to Pa Koe to preach and folks were saved. When a small number were saved and baptized, under the leadership of these two brethren, they covenanted to work together as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Congregation of Members, Visitors, and Children
October, 2000

In October, 2000, Bro. Bill Lee, Sis. Janice Lee, Bro. Jack Green, and this editor made our first visit to Pa Koe. The group above gathered for the services. Of course, not all these are members but it gives a good idea of the potential in this village. There is a cost to serving Christ in this village. The worship of evil spirits is strong there, though it has diminished

some.

While the folks were clearing off the ground and building the building, they had opposition from three spirit worshippers. But, one of them stole some medicine that was for a dog and thinking he would get high on it he ate it. It sent him into mad fits and the Thai police came to take him to jail. In the effort to arrest him, they shot and killed him and arrested the other two men who were consequently banished from the village. That did not end all opposition but it seriously curbed it.



Land For Which We Negotiated

While in Thailand in March, 2001, I helped negotiate for a piece of land on which to construct a building. The picture above shows a portion of that land with Bro. Anond and the owner holding to a marker on one corner of the land. I do not recall the amount of acreage but it was more than sufficient for the building of a church. From funds received from supporting churches, Bro. Bill Lee sent money to purchase the land and we were able to close a deal for about \$700.



Again with the assistance of sister churches and individuals we were able to send the money to commence construction of a building in which the church could meet.

When these folks knew they were going to have the money necessary to construct their building, they quickly began the work of clearing the land and leveling it (see previous picture) for pouring a slab and constructing the building.

While the group was in Thailand in October, 2001, the building above was dedicated to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is now the regular meeting place of Bethel Baptist Church of Pa Koe.



Bethel Baptist Church Building

Barefooted, as is the custom in houses and church buildings, Bro. Matthew leads the congregation into the building for the dedication service (See next picture, P. 12). The custom is to leave the shoes at the door, though there are times when we Americans are allowed to overlook this custom. Frankly, however, in most places I enjoy the custom. Growing up on an Arkansas cotton and rice farm, I spent a good deal of my childhood barefooted.

God continues to open doors in Thailand. In an e-mail I received this week, Bro. Anond told me that two folks in two more villages have contacted him, asking him to come or send

someone to their village to preach the gospel to him. There are some young men whom God has called to preach whom he has been teaching the Bible who can go. He has sought my advice on whether or not to send them. There are no older preachers whom he can send, and he cannot do it all himself, so he will probably have to send one of the younger men into these villages. There is not a Timothy there who has known the Holy Scriptures from a child. Would to God there were, but with his help and guidance one of the younger men will, with

God's help, declare the gospel in these villages where it has not yet been preached.

Other villages, like Pa Koe in December, 1999, await the preaching of the gospel. I continue to be amazed at the open door there is among the Hill Tribes of Thailand. It seems that God is putting into the hearts of many of them to break out of the chains of Evil Spirit Worship but they must hear the gospel and they cannot hear without a preacher. Bro. Matthew pastors at Pa Koe and is carrying the gospel to other villages as well. He rides a small motorcycle that was bought him in April. Pray that God will continue to raise up men among them who can be taught and sent forth when "Macedonian" call is heard.

I have said before, "This work is not perfect , but neither was the work of Paul and Barnabas and then Silas, Timothy and Titus. Paul was regularly correcting errors in the churches he started. But, as was Paul's, I believe with all my heart that this is God's work and he will establish it as these brethren grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Thailand is not the Bible Belt but at the rate God is blessing and with a lot of teaching and preaching, this could easily become the Bible Belt of northern Thailand.



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Matthew, Pastor of Bethel at Pa Koe