

Dave Miller's Reevaluation and Reaffirmation of Elders

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INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time we have seen the drifting away from God's standard. When Cain and Abel made an offering to God, Cain's was not acceptable to God. Moses records: "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5). God tells him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (4:7). When we come to the time of Jesus and the New Testament, we have repeated warnings concerning false teachers who will lead others astray. Paul reveals to us that the day of Christ would not come till there "come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 The. 2:3). As Inspiration defines this "man of sin...the son of perdition" most brethren believe it refers to the papacy of the Great Apostate Church (Roman Catholic Church). It is no wonder for Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). Thus, we see the first great apostasy in the Lord's church came out of the leadership and organization the Lord placed within the church.

GOD'S ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

God (the Divine Three) created the world (Gen. 1) and all things in it (Exo. 20:11; Acts 17:24). As Creator, He has ownership rights over His creation (Jer. 18:1-6; Rom. 9:21) including man. God, prior to creating the world, established a plan to reconcile man back to himself when

man sinned. To accomplish this task the Second Person of the Godhead humbled Himself and was made in the likeness of man and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi. 2:6-8). In this death, He purchased the church (Acts 20:28). In being raised by the power of God, He was given all authority as He stated to His apostles: “All power [authority—ASV] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat. 28:18). God “raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23; cf. Col. 1:18). Thus, Christ is the head of the church and as the head (the only one and not sharing it with anyone else), He has complete “right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.” He is the one in control. God has established His laws and revealed them to man in the Scriptures.

Within a local congregation, there must be the expediting of the laws of Christ. Thus as Paul writes to the Philippian brethren, he sets forth the organization in the local congregation: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phi. 1:1). Within a local congregation of saints, there are bishops (we generally call them elders and also called pastors, overseers, or shepherds) and deacons. Paul tells the bishops of the congregation at Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter exhorts them to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:2).

Likewise those who the elders oversee are to humbly submit to their oversight. The Hebrews' writer states: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (13:17).

DEPARTURES FROM GOD'S PLAN

It was previously mentioned that beginning in the latter part of the first century there were some who had a Diotrephes spirit (3 John 9) bringing in the great apostasy resulting in the Roman Catholic Church with its sinful organizational structure.

Society went through a time of rebellion to authority in the 1960s. This rebellious attitude made its way into the Lord's church. The Crossroads movement by-passed the elders of a congregation (God's delegated authority) to establish a higharchal system like the Roman Catholic church, first under Chuck Lucas then under Kip McKean. (This group is now referred to as the International Church Of Christ.)

In the late 1970s two brethren attacked the authority of elders within the local congregation. Reuel Lemmons, then editor for *Firm Foundation*, wrote an editorial titled, "Who Calls the Shots" (August 2, 1977). Around the same time frame, Waymon D. Miller wrote a book titled, *The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church* (my second edition has a copyright of 1980). Both of these works attacked the authority of New Testament elders, and they taught the only authority elders possessed was through their example. Miller wrote, "It is well to remember that there is not one occasion in the inspired record of a body of elders independently arriving at a decision about **anything**. There is, therefore, **no New Testament authority or precedent for elders serving in the decision-making role for churches**" (47). Later in his book, Miller has a section titled: "A Tenure For Elders?" In this section he advocates, "There is a solution that has practical merit. It is that elders be appointed for a specific tenure—say for a period of two or

three years.... At the end of the two or three year period the church could have the option of re-electing an elder, or of not doing so, as it felt his performance record justified. In the event the church did not see fit to re-elect an elder, his tenure would be terminated” (61).

While not as germane to this discussion, there was another attempt to destroy the authority of the elders within the local congregation by Alvin Jennings in his book *3R's of Urban Church Growth*, (dated 1981 and with an introduction by Jule Miller) which he later revised under the heading, *How Christianity Grows in the City* (1985). These books advocated one central eldership for numerous congregations. It was reviewed by brother Wayne Coates in his book *A Critique of "How Christianity Grows in the City* and sent to all congregations in the United States because of the dangerous views of this book.

This background (especially the Waymon Miller book) brings us to our topic under consideration for this chapter.

DAVE MILLER'S ELDER REEVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION

First, we need to understand that if one wants to see what Dave Miller (hereafter DM) meant in his sermon, he needs to observe the application of the sermon as practiced by the Brown Trail Church of Christ in Bedford, Texas (a suburb of Fort Worth, TX) (hereafter BT). This principle is often seen in the Scriptures. When Jesus set forth the terms of receiving the remission of sins (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47), we learn that one must believe, repent, and be baptized to have that salvation. We know this is the correct understanding when we go to Jerusalem and see the apostles' application of Jesus' teaching (Acts 2). While there are other examples, this demonstrates the principle. DM preached a sermon regarding elder reevaluation/reaffirmation (hereafter elder r/r). He preached that sermon specifically for the BT congregation and their practicing such. We can determine what DM meant in his sermon by seeing what BT practiced. You cannot separate the one from the other. Thus, as we consider this

matter, we will consider both Miller's sermon and BT's application or implementation of his sermon.

Background

Second, there is need for some background information relating to BT Church of Christ. At the beginning of 1989, the BT congregation had eight elders. Four of those elders were liberal while four of them were conservative. Tommy Hicks wrote to Maxie Boren: "Can you imagine my disappointment when you told me that Brown Trail's elders are 'split right down the middle,' that four of them are 'moderates,' that four of them are 'too far to the right,' and that your thinking was in agreement with the 'moderates?'" Maxie, you even told me the names and how you classified them. You said Barnum, Lauderdale, Peterman, and Tyson are the 'moderates.' And, you said Cain, Clark, Watts, and Whitten are the 'right wingers.' While you did not tell me who you thought the 'leader' of the 'moderate' group was, you did say that Eddie Whitten was the 'leader' of the 'right wingers'" (5). However, because of health reasons, toward the end of 1989, Graham Cain (one of the "right wingers" according to Maxie Boren) had to resign because of health reasons. This left a situation where the four liberal elders were in control. Events within the eldership forced the resignations of Whitten and Clark (two of the other "right wingers" according to Boren) in the first part of November 1989, leaving five men within the eldership of BT.

These situations lead to a men's congregational meeting held November 21, 1989. Charges were once again made (they had been previously made in elder's meetings) against the liberal elders (whom Maxie Boren said were "moderates"), however nothing was resolved in this meeting (it is interesting the DM *sided* with the liberal elders and placed the blame for the troubles within the eldership on Eddie Whitten). This resulted in numerous brethren leaving the BT congregation and eventually starting another congregation in the area.

After these brethren left the BT congregation, it was decided to both appoint new elders and also have a reevaluation/reconfirmation of the five present elders. Thus on April 8, 1990, DM (under the authority of the elders of the BT congregation) preached his infamous sermon advocating this practice (DM was the director of the television program, *The Truth In Love*, which was under the oversight of the BT church while Johnny Ramsey was the pulpit evangelist). (One can read the transcription of the sermon in *Contending For The Faith*, August 2005, pages 10-14.)

Miller's Sermon

One point that stands out when one hears/reads the sermon is the lack of Biblical evidence or proof DM gives for the practice of elder r/r. He correctly observes at the beginning of his lesson that “we are people of the book, and we believe that whatever we do in religion and life must be authorized and guided by the Word of God.” However, as DM continues his lesson, he makes almost no attempt to provide Biblical authorization for the practice BT, led by DM's sermon, is going to be undergoing (what little attempt is made fails miserably to provide such).

He first gives Biblical authorization for the office/work of elders and the fact there is to be a plurality of men taking that oversight within the local congregation. He provides the specific passages of 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, Acts 20, and 1 Peter 5 and then mentions “other passages” as evidence of these points. We are in total agreement with DM in the Biblical authorization along these lines. He then asks: “But how are these men to be appointed?” He informs us that the Bible is “largely silent on this matter,” but then surprisingly and contradictorily states, “the Bible has a great deal more to say about that matter than most perhaps members of the church realize.” He tells us that the specifics or details are not spelled out but the principles are provided for us. He correctly denies the doctrine of evangelistic oversight, and then gives what seems to him is “an inspired selection process given by the inspired apostles.” That process is the selection of the

seven men in Acts 6. He states from this passage there are two fundamental New Testament principles regarding the selection of men to serve in the capacity of elders or deacons within the church: (1) they are to look out from among themselves, and (2) based upon certain qualifications. Notice what he then states: “if that be the case brethren, the implications are enormous. If indeed this is intended to be the prototype—if this is intended to be the New Testament authority which we have for making selection of officials within the church when it would be wrong for the preacher to make those selections and it also follows that it would be inappropriate for officials to make those selections.” Please notice that he sets this “prototype” forth based upon supposition: “if that be the case.... If indeed this is intended...if this is intended.” Brethren, Biblical authority is not based on assumption, but Biblical evidence and proof. DM is woefully lacking in this area.

DM then tries to offset what he sees coming when he says: “Someone says then that you are saying then that elders and leaders are to be selected are to be selected by majority vote. Well, that is not exactly what I am saying.” Sadly DM says that it is “not exactly” to be a “majority vote.” He then mentions that one must meet the qualifications then returns to this idea of majority vote and says: “It seems to me that does not make it majority vote so to speak. It is not a popularity contest.” However, he certainly leaves the door open for such a practice (“majority vote...popularity contest”)—which will become vital to his elder r/r doctrine.

Having established what he assumes to be the process by which elders and deacons are to be selected, he then turns to elder r/r. He first attempts to discount what some would (and we would rightfully say) say is a practice liberal congregations do. He states he is not concerned whether or not liberals are doing this but whether it is Biblical. He then goes about endeavoring to establish elder r/r as a Biblical practice.

His first *proof* is that over years the complexion of a congregation might change. He argues that “if the members select elders to begin with,” then if the “complexion of the congregation in terms of its membership can change over a period of time, over a period of years,” then the present membership might not select the same men. He then states this shows that “once an elder, always an elder” is false (something to which everyone agrees). What DM seems to forget is that when a person becomes a member of said congregation, they are placing themselves under the oversight of those very men who are elders. They are, in effect, saying that they are selecting those men as overseers (of that congregation and of themselves). Thus, this idea is a fallacious *proof* to establish his case.

DM then states: “conceivably a man could meet the qualifications, brethren, and yet not be perceived by that flock as a shepherd. Not be a man to whom they will submit themselves.” Yet, they (when they became members) made the decision to submit themselves to those shepherds and thus “perceived” them to be their shepherds. Additionally, to enter an elder r/r practice based upon this is the wrong approach (even if it was Biblical, which it is not). Those who might no longer “perceive” them to be men “to whom they will submit themselves” should be taught the Biblical principle to submit themselves to the elders of the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 The. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17 et al.) instead of trying to remove an admittedly qualified man. He additionally states: “Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. So a man could be technically qualified to be an elder, and yet if the membership where he attends does not perceive him a leader in whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively.” Again, the membership needs to be taught to follow! Also, one is either qualified to be an elder, or he is not. There is no such thing as one being “technically qualified” as if to say while they are qualified they are not really qualified.

He then gives the example that if 20 or 30 percent of the congregation thought he was “a dumpy preacher” that he would leave. What is interesting is that numerous people did leave the congregation (prior to this first implementation and when they tried to implement it again in 2002). However, this has no real bearing on whether or not a congregation should practice elder r/r. But hold on, DM then gives us an additional qualification (nowhere found in God’s Word) for one being an elder. Listen to his words: “What follows then that one of the qualifications of a shepherd is that the membership perceives him to be such, and is willing to submit and to follow to respect and to trust.” Brethren, this is simply adding to God’s perfect revelation of His will to make another *gospel* and brings the anathema of God upon anyone holding such.

DM then comes to the one passage dealing with those who are presently elders, 1 Timothy 5 with the context beginning in verse 17 but the specific verses being 19-20. “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” DM correctly states concerning these verses: “The principle here is that even though a man is in a position of being an elder in the church, he can disqualify himself, or make mistakes that he shouldn’t make. It therefore follows, that a man can be removed from the office of an elder.” He correctly observes: “we have the process of doing so, there has to be also two or three witnesses...if charges could be sustained against an elder being disqualified, he could be removed.” We would observe just here that DM correctly states that all that is needed for an elder to be removed is two or three witnesses of sin within an elder’s life (we would add sin of which he will not repent), not 26% of the congregation’s vote.

DM then claims “That’s all we’re talking about,” however the evidence shows otherwise. Again he claims, “the principle is that if the membership finds fault with an elder, the membership who put the elder in the first place, can remove them,” but the process BT set out

does more than this. It eventually sets forth a process by which they vote on the elders, and those elders who get a 75% approval rating remain elders, This is not the process set forth in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. DM then states, “I would still maintain that a man could theoretically be qualified and yet have lost his standing with enough of the members that he ought to voluntarily remove himself. Now how do you determine that unless you ask the members, how they perceive that man, as an elder of the church.” Again, DM has it backwards, they should be teaching the members to submit to the leaders, not asking the leaders to step down. (Notice also DM says the elder should voluntarily remove himself, but when BT did this the elders who did not receive the 75% approval did not have a choice—they were removed.) For example, should Moses (because he might “have lost his standing with enough of the” Israelites) have asked the Israelites whether they *perceived* him to be a leader they were willing to follow and stepped down based upon their perception? If he had followed this recommendation, he would not have been following God’s will and desire. But DM says, “if I, or anyone else in a leadership sort of capacity, no longer sustains the respect from a sizeable portion of the flock, for whatever reason, the proper attitude would be to remove oneself from that position.” Then when so many left Jesus in John 6, the proper thing for Jesus to do would have been to step down from being our Shepherd—according to DM’s standard! No doubt Jesus was “technically” qualified to be our Shepherd, but He “no longer sustain[ed] the respect from a sizeable portion” of his followers (they left Him, so many that He even asked His apostles if they were also going to leave).

DM then set out the procedure BT would use. He mentions the forms that would be used in this process. He states, “There will be two types of forms. One of these forms will give you an opportunity to simply state whether or not you think any of the five men who are now serving in the eldership should or should not continue to serve. You won’t be asked to sign that form.” This

last comment was changed possibly because they realized the possibility of *stuffing the ballot box*. In trying to impress the congregation with the seriousness of the process, he cannot escape the voting aspect of the process they are implementing when he says, “May you not take this lightly. This isn’t like running down and voting for **Clayton Williams**. This is serious!”

Forms

BT handed out four forms to the congregation. For this review we will only concern ourselves with two of the forms: “Biblical Rational for Evaluation of Elders” and the “Elder Evaluation Form.”

The Biblical rational form states: “(1) The members select elders to begin with (Acts 6:3). Since the complexion of congregational membership changes over the years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals whom the present membership would select. (2) Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively. (3) The Bible makes provision for the evaluation of an elder's spiritual standing (1 Tim. 5:19). Should a current elder be found to be disqualified, he no longer meets the qualifications to be an elder. An evaluation process is simply one expedient means of ascertaining the elder's conformity to God’s will. ‘Once an elder, always an elder’ is as false as ‘once saved, always saved.’ (4) Elders have the authority to ascertain the amount of confidence that members have in their leadership capabilities. Any shepherd who genuinely wishes to serve the flock will naturally desire the continued approval and respect of that flock. Should an elder no longer sustain that respect from a sizeable portion of the flock for whatever reason, the only proper attitude would be to remove oneself from a position that depends upon credibility. A Christian does not have to be an elder to go to heaven.”

In looking at these four points, we have already examined the first in that it is simply based upon an assumption of DM from Acts 6. He never **proved** this to be the method of selection (additionally the method of selection is not inseparably tied to the r/r process as if proving this is the method of selection proves this should be the method of r/r). Additionally, when individuals become a part of the congregation (thus the “complexion” of the congregation changes) they have already decided those men who are elders are men to whom they will submit, thus this is fallacious reasoning. Regarding point two, the members are to be taught to follow those men whom the Holy Spirit has made them overseers, not devise a plan to remove them. Regarding point three, the Bible does demand elders to meet certain qualifications (1 Tim. 3, Tit. 1). These men must continue to meet those qualifications. When one sins, then at the mouth of two or three witnesses, charges are to be brought and the elder who sins is to be rebuked before all. While one may call this an evaluation, the process at BT was not intended to determine sin at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Point four is the real crux of the issue regarding the practice (and thus the sermon delivered by DM) at BT. It was to determine if the members wanted the 5 present elders to continue to be elders of the congregation. There is **no** Bible authority for such an evaluation (and reaffirmation) process.

This is evidenced by the elder evaluation form that states: “An elder must have the respect, trust, confidence, and support of the congregation. Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. The present Brown Trail eldership is composed of Howard Barnum, Bob Lauderdale, Dale Peterman, John Tyson, and Bobby Watts. Will you please respond to the following evaluation information frankly and honestly. Please circle the answer that represents your view. Please fill out five forms on the present eldership—one form per man. Your assessment will be held in strictest confidence by the screening committee.

My evaluation of _____

I have reservations about this man being an elder at Brown Trail.

YES NO

Please express your reason(s) for your decision:

Signature”

Notice an important omission: there is nothing about the Scriptural qualifications of the men. The process was based solely upon “the respect, trust, confidence, and support of the congregation.” It ended up being a vote on whether or not the individual wanted this person to be an elder or not—a popularity vote.

Results of the vote:

When BT instituted this process, the congregation had five elders. Johnny Ramsey announced the “mandate” of the congregation. On May 6, 1990 after the invitation song, brother Ramsey made the announcement that two of the five present elders had been reconfirmed (Howard Barnum and Bobby Watts). After brother Ramsey’s announcement and a prayer, Bob Lauderdale (one of the three elders who did not receive 75% approval rating) got up and *resigned* from the eldership based upon “compliance with the ground rules.” (It is interesting to note the other two men who did not receive 75% of the vote did not resign but they were no longer elders.) In the monthly bulletin, brother Ramsey wrote: “We bid Godspeed to brethren PETERMAN, LAUDERDALE, and TYSON for their tremendous work as overseers in days past and their present contribution to our efforts in this area and around the world. In a recent get-together [*sic*], these three and their wives were honored for their labors and presented with beautiful plaques and exceptional Bibles as tribute to their years of service in God’s cause” (1).

INITIAL REACTION

The initial reaction by sound brethren was the condemnation of this procedure. Brother Goebel Music sent several of DM's statements from his sermon along with the forms BT used to several preaching brethren (among them Dub McClish, Garland Elkins, Robert Taylor, Bill Jackson, Terry Varner, Mac Deaver). I do not know of even one person who approved the process. Faithful preachers, when they learned about it, condemned what DM taught and BT practiced. (Some of the statements can be found in Dub McClish's chapter for the 1997 Bellview Lectureship book.)

PROBLEMS OF ELDER R/R

The first and foremost problem with elder r/r is that God does not authorize it. At the beginning of DM's sermon he gave lip service to the authorization principle ("we are people of the book, and we believe that whatever we do in religion and life must be authorized and guided by the Word of God"), but the practice is found to be without any Bible authority (DM tried in vain to come up with some Bible for elder r/r, but failed miserably). Those actions that are not authorized by God only have man's authorization (Mat. 21:23-27) and are thus sinful (15:3, 8-9).

Dub McClish aptly states DM and BT's justification for this practice when he wrote: "The basic argument of the reevaluation advocates may thus be stated as follows: 1. The Scriptures authorize local congregations to select and appoint their own elders, but the details of doing so are in the realm of expediency. 2. Reevaluation and reaffirmation are merely alternate names for and means of the selection and appointment of elders. 3. Therefore, the Scriptures authorize reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders as expedients for selection and appointment of elders" (91). The second point is false as the r/r is not the same as the "means of selection and appointment." This is seen in the fact that BT used different forms for the selection as opposed to

the r/r process. Additionally, BT required that present elders receive 75% approval, something that was not required of ones being installed.

Another unscriptural aspect of elder r/r is that it adds an additional qualification to the ones given by God as revealed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. In addition to the God-given qualifications, DM and elder r/r adds the qualification of being “perceived by that flock as a shepherd.” DM even states that “conceivably a man could meet the qualifications” and yet not be qualified because he is not “perceived” to be a shepherd. No one, including DM, has the right to add qualifications to those God has given.

Elder r/r destroys the God-ordained organization of the church by making the elders subject to the whims of the members—actually only a certain percentage of the members (at BT it was 26%). The elders are to be those leading the congregation and making those decisions (those optional decisions that are most expedient) with the congregation humbly submitting to their oversight. However, when a congregation practices elder r/r, it places the elders in the submissive role with the congregation in the decision making position (actually just a certain percentage of the congregation).

The 75% approval rating leads to another problem (which showed itself when BT used this process again in 2002). How do you determine the 75%? Is it going to be 75% of the congregation or just the ones who return the forms (which might be a much smaller number than the congregation)? Should a husband and wife be considered together or separately? Do children have the opportunity to *vote*: children who have been baptized, all children, or children above a certain age? These questions certainly become a problem in the elder r/r process, along with the percentage that the congregation will use (while BT used 75%, others have used different percentages).

Another unscriptural problem with elder r/r is the placing of a committee over the elders. This committee makes the elders quasi-elders. While they are still elders in name, they are given their authority to this screening committee (at BT it was made up of the preachers of the congregation). The committee receives the *ballots*, the committee discusses the *votes* with the elders or those who have been proposed to be elders. Thus, the elders become subject to the committee during the evaluation process along with their subjection to the congregation. It also presents the opportunity for fraud, deceit, and favoritism by the committee members in the tabulation of the *votes*.

While many have tried to defend the practice of elder r/r upon the basis that it was simply a way to remove unqualified men from the eldership, the process itself does not accomplish this. The elder r/r only finds out which elders can achieve a set percentage of approval from the membership (or those who turn in their *votes*). While there is the urging that the *votes* should be based upon the biblical qualifications, there is no guarantee that those who submit their forms base their decision upon those qualifications. Actually, according to the forms handed out at BT, it was based upon whether or not one has “reservations about this man being an elder at Brown Trail.” The forms did not question whether or not the man met the qualifications of being an elder as set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

What if a man who does not meet the Bible qualifications of being an elder but has been appointed by man to be one, and he gets over 75% approval rating, then he will remain an elder. This process will not remove him and if Bible objections are then raised based upon the two or three witnesses of 1 Timothy 5:19-20, then the congregation is going to have great difficulties because the man has received the designated approval rating.

On the other hand, what if a man is qualified according to the Bible, but this man does not receive the 75% approval rating? Then DM's added qualification of being *perceived* to be a shepherd disqualifies him and he is removed from the eldership. This process is just as likely to remove a man who is qualified and leave a man who is not qualified in the eldership as it is to remove a man who is not qualified.

This process encourages elders to begin politicking and promise making for approval by the congregation so he can receive the designated approval rating. Elder r/r becomes nothing more than a political office.

CONCLUSION

When DM and BT preached/practiced elder r/r, it has far reaching effects. Initially it along with the other events taking place at the time caused a split in the BT congregation. However, it was basically kept under *wraps* so most did not know about it. When BT practiced it again in 2002 (with DM's support and approval), it again brought about a division within the BT congregation. A major publication among brethren (*The Gospel Journal*) reported it allowing brethren to know the sinfulness of the practice and BT's use of it. However, DM was in the process of moving to work at Apologetics Press (hereafter AP). After a *blowup* at AP, they called numerous brethren for support of the organization and 60 brethren allowed their name to be used as being in support of AP. At the same time DM was made executive director. Some of those 60 men had in the past been opposed to elder r/r. Yet, they could not support AP and oppose what DM had preached and practiced, so they ended up compromising what they formerly opposed (many, if not most, will still claim to oppose elder r/r, yet contradictorily continue to support AP and DM). Instead of refusing to fellowship an unrepentant false teacher, many decided that it was more important to maintain AP, so they extended full fellowship and support to DM. This brought about a great breach in fellowship among once fellow workers.

BT had a great opportunity to do right when charges were brought against some liberal elders. Instead, they got rid of the sound elders and implemented the ungodly scheme of elder r/r. After the second time they practiced it, the then elders repented and said they would not do it again. However, DM (and others) has never repented and instead continued to defend the indefensible. We will never know the great harm this practiced caused among once faithful brethren.

ENDNOTES:

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Translation unless otherwise indicated.

Hicks, Tommy. "To Maxie Boren." 7 June 1988, 8.

McClish, Dub. "Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders?" *Leadership*. Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1997. 83-103.

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Ramsey, Johnny. *Waymarks*. Brown Trail Church of Christ, Bedford, TX: 13.14 (June 1990).