

J.C. Settlemoir
March 31, 2006
Letter to the Editor Concerning "Misnomer"

Voice In The Wilderness
HC 70 Box 33
Perkins, WV 26636

Dear Bro Minney:

Thank you for continuing to send me Voice in the Wilderness. I appreciate your paper and you and your stand for the truth of the Word of God. I remember with fondness our times together and mention your name at the throne of grace regularly. I hope you and yours are in health. We are doing well.

This letter concerns Bro Medford Caudill's article in the *Voice* March 9, 2006 "Self-Constitution...A Misnomer", hereafter *Misnomer*, which I received today. I have carefully read this article. As he refers to my book *Landmarkism Under Fire*, (hereafter *LUF*, which is now on line at <http://users.aol.com/libcfl/>, in case you do not have the book.), I wish to respond to it. If you desire a printed copy, I will send you one free. Just let me know.

At the outset let me say that Bro Caudill is a good friend of mine and I believe we can discuss our differences on the constitution of churches with the utmost freedom and when we have concluded, still be as good friends as we were before we began. I am not writing against him nor you personally, but I am replying to *some of the ideas and propositions* contained in the article. If his conclusions are correct, I wish to embrace them, for, if I know my heart, I desire the truth. And on the other hand, I believe both of you desire to know the truth and seek to obey it. Thus everything I say in this response is to help attain that goal.

First, I address the issue of the term *self-constitution*. Bro Caudill says this is a *misnomer*, (*Misnomer*, p. 61).

We say that the self-constitution of churches is a misnomer, first of all, because it is an error in naming. These are not churches. They may be religious societies, they may be social clubs, they may be service organizations but they are not churches.

You may read Bro Caudill's article on his web site, <http://www.pbcofdecaturalabama.org/MCaudill/MCaudill.html>. The fact

that Baptist History is replete with the use of this exact term, *self constitution*, or *constituted themselves* expressly used in countless cases, in reference to the constitution of Baptist churches is well known and easily gleaned from Baptist History. I will attach separately eleven pages of quotes where Baptists used this term showing our forefathers and Baptist Histories did use this term rather extensively. Here I will only include a few such quotes so there can be no question as to this fact.

Soon the organization of a Baptist Church in Clinton arose. Mr. Leigh gave the lots for a Baptist Church edifice. The house begun in the summer of 1871 and in March, 1872, thirty-seven disciples constituted themselves a Baptist Church in the building from which they had been expelled. At this meeting, Mr. Leigh was chosen one of the deacons and also treasurer of the Church. Rev. H. Westcott, pastor at Bethlehem Church, was one of the constituents and called to be pastor at Clinton, entered at once upon his duties. Griffith, *Hist. NJ Baptists*, p 87.

In 1712, by advice of the pastor and two deacons of Cohansey, thirty-seven persons constituted themselves into a church, under the pastorate of Nathaniel Jenkins, one of their own number. *Bap. Encyl*, H-Q, p. 675.

In March, 1846, 21 members met and constituted themselves a Church of Christ, with Mr. Johnstone as Pastor. Yuille. *Baptists of Scotland*. P. 59.

You will note that I have selected examples which have *the exact term* called a *misnomer*. I think there is no need to point out that *self constitution* and *constituted themselves* are exactly the same thing, the one being *nominal* and the other *verbal*. I have highlighted each reference.

Now I do not argue that *self constitution* is the best term for the concept intended. If Bro Caudill wishes to write an article on a more correct term describing church constitution than *self constitution*, I would welcome it. But we must remember, as it is with so many terms, in reference to the Lord's work, they have evolved through years of use and misuse and it is extremely difficult to change them because they are embedded in the language of the people and historical usage re-enforces that usage. To say the least, we cannot nonchalantly reprobate such a term, found so frequently in history, no matter how incorrect we now think it to be. We especially must be careful that we do not eliminate our history in an effort to hue a line of our own making. If someone should develop a definition of *grace* that essentially denied almost all of the saints in bygone days were saved, I would instantly suspect his definition was false. So while it is easy to criticize a term we must be careful not to throw out the baby with the water, nor to reject a child because we do not

like his name, which is what I believe Bro Caudill has unintentionally done. I believe his proposition is not merely incorrect, but I believe it is flatly false as the above quotes, as a mere sampling, indicate.

But the proposition goes much further than the mere term *self constitution* and it embraces all of those terms which have basically the same idea—that saints in gospel order can gather together into a gospel church. Some of these terms which mean exactly the same thing and are used interchangeably with *self constitution* are *embodied, formed, set up, set off, in-churched, gathered, settled, formed, banded together, convened, knit together, gave themselves to one another* and the like. Thus, if Bro Caudill's proposition is correct, every church in history which used any one of these terms in reference to its constitution, is not a true church for all of these terms express the same idea! What his proposition does to the Baptist churches of history is astounding! Hundreds and thousands of churches which I had before held to be the most sound, the most orthodox, the most careful in following the Word of the Lord, are now un-churched by my brother! They are not only made unorthodox or accused of embracing an error but **they are made false churches**, mere societies, clubs or what have you; anything but a church of the Lord Jesus Christ! Could this be a misunderstanding on Bro Caudill's part? Is it just possible he has gone further than he intended? Any supposed rule, when applied, that produces an absurdity, must be rejected out of hand. It cannot be valid! Is this not the case here?

For example. Were Baptists of days gone by ignorant about terms? Did they know how to scripturally constitute a church? Was self constitution a forbidden fruit? Did they know you could not constitute a church following the idea in this term, as the author suggests? Did they think any church constituted using this term, or a synonym of it, and the procedure so described, was a non-church? If so, why did they use it? Were all the Baptist scholars of those days so naive as to use such *improper terms* in reference to church polity? Were there no Baptist scholars, writers, historians or preachers who recognized this fallacious way of constituting churches? Surely if Bro Caudill's position is correct, there are other men who have observed this anomaly and pointed it out. Undoubtedly, if this proposition is true, other men have warned us against this false method of starting churches! Or is this something only discovered in our times? This seems to stretch credulity a bit too far. Is it possible that the title of Bro Caudill's article (Self-constitution....A Misnomer) is an indicator of his misapprehension on this subject? Are we to repudiate the word of all the preachers, all the renowned men of God, all the mighty men, who have gone before us on his word alone? He cites not one author to prove the main thesis of his article. Is his *misnomer* a *misunderstanding*?

For example. Here is a noted Landmark Baptist defining *church perpetuity* which ought to awaken us to the possibility Bro Caudill does not represent Landmark Baptists in his *Misnomer*, to say the least:

“Every Baptist church being, in organization, a church complete in itself, and, **in no way organically connected with any other church**, such a thing as one church succeeding another, as the second link of a chain is added to and succeeds the first, or, as one Romish or Episcopal church succeeds another, is utterly foreign to and incompatible with Baptist church policy....” Jarrel, *Church Perpetuity*, p. 3, [emphasis added].

Our histories are literally full of what he says is *mis-named*. But he goes even further out on the plank and says *self constitution cannot produce a Scriptural church*. [*Misnomer*, p. 61] And if Essential Mother Daughter Authority [hereafter EMDA] is the Scriptural position, I admit the conclusion! If his position is correct, then all of these churches mentioned in the appended list (which is just a token of those available) were not true churches! And the amazing thing is that no one—not those who constituted these churches, not the preachers involved, not the associations to which most belonged, not the historians who wrote about them—no one, knew it until now!

If this is the case then the *Misnomer* is a remarkable Revelation! Bro Caudill has unveiled a truth which has been hidden for centuries! A truth so astounding, so shocking and so consequential for Baptists that I know nothing with which to compare it! Probably the closest thing to it is the Whitsit theory. Whitsit’s theory broke light first in the late 1800s. He contended Baptists did not practice immersion until 1641! Bro Caudill’s theory is of the same marvelous character but it does far more than the Whitsit theory did. It denudes all of these churches which were *self constituted*, (no matter what term used) of the garments of churchhood, if it is true! He wipes away Baptist churches of History with a single proclamation! Any theory which instantly evaporates churches far up our historical line by a mere re-definition of a term which has been used for centuries needs to bring with it some exceptionally strong proof. Is such presented in this article? Is such available? If it is, Bro Caudill would have done us no small favor had he made it available to us.

Until this article appeared in the *Voice* no Baptist ever suggested this before, so far as I have seen. Certainly none before the rise of EMDA, which was sometime after 1900.

No Historian ever questioned before that these churches, expressly self constituted, were true churches!

No church ever refused to recognize a church so constituted.

No association ever refused to admit a church so constituted!

No Baptist writer ever criticized churches constituted in this manner!

No Baptist preacher ever denounced such churches as false.

No Scripture condemns such churches!

No Scripture says a church must be constituted via EMDA!

Certainly these who wrote the accounts of these churches, the clerks, pastors, elders and historians did not believe those churches described were false churches or mere societal accretions because self constituted. Were all these men so ignorant of Scripture, so ignorant of Baptist church constitution and so ignorant of Baptist polity as to overlook such a monumental flaw? How could they be otherwise if Bro Caudill's proposition is true?

Does not the mere stating of these facts and the quotations of Baptist historians strongly indicate something is drastically wrong with Bro Caudill's proposition? I am wary of new fangled ideas, especially, when such ideas impeach the credibility of our forefathers and casts out literally thousands of the churches of the Lord Jesus to the point that it gives new meaning to Christ's question: When the Son of man comes will he find faith on earth?

But if this claim were true we would expect the Brother to bring forth strong evidence and lots of it to prove such a claim! Bro Caudill does not offer any at all. He does not suggest a single piece of evidence! He gives no Scripture. He gives us no Gill, Spurgeon, Graves or Pendleton. Nobody! He gives us no reference at all! Because he thinks Baptist churches in history were all started with EMDA, he thought they were safe from this anathema. This is, unfortunately for his position, not true.

Brother Caudill gave no evidence of his position but we will give proof of ours. The Hill Cliff church is a good example.

The result of these struggles was the departure of about thirty members of the church [at Hill Cliffe] who took with them the books belonging to the church. The remaining members obtained new books, and leaving out the names of the departed ones, *constituted themselves a church*, entering their names in the new roll. James Kenworthy. *History of the*

John Gill's church is another example. It was constituted by the minority of a church split. They never sought authority to constitute and they got none from any other church. Yet all the pastors of London got letters about this church split, and the new constitution. George Ella. *John Gill and The Cause of God and Truth*, pp.46-53. None of the renowned pastors who followed Gill were aware this church was not a true church and that it did not have the presence of the Lord!

Another example is: Samuel Jones' Treatise. This *Treatise of Church Discipline* (1797) was prepared for the Philadelphia Baptist Association at their request, Oct. 5th 1795. Jones says:

“5. A number of believers are united together into a particular church, by an act of mutual confederation. ‘Gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God,’ 2 Cor. 8:5.”

“7. When such a number is found in any place, they ought to propose among themselves, or others may propose it to them, to be constituted a church.”

“11. It is this mutual consent, confederation, and union of persons into one body, as a particular church, that makes that church distinct from any other church, and that makes the members of it, members of that church more than of any other, ‘Onesimus, who is one of you; Epaphras, who is one of you,’ Col. 4:9, 12. ‘So we, being many, are one body in Christ.’ Rom. 12:5.” Quoted in *Polity*, by Dever, p. 140-141.

I understand fully that EMDA concludes self constituted churches are not churches but most EMDA advocates willingly let churches in history alone, and deal only with those of our own day. But Bro Caudill has taken his shovel and gone back into history and has dug up the bones of these old churches refusing to leave them in sacred ground, for one reason only—they were self constituted!

But this whole idea of EMDA to which he appeals (this is the window that is running behind all the propositions in EMDA arguments) and on which he builds his thesis that such churches are not churches is a mere begging of the question and is comparable to the assertion that marbles are square or that grass is blue. Such propositions may be reached with false logic but the proof will be hard to come by! No mere logic will suffice. A man may logically say that if you count a dog's tail as a leg, a dog has five legs. Perfectly logical. But the conclusion is obviously false and any

school boy knows dogs have only four legs. So it is with Bro Caudill's conclusion. **Everyone knows these churches were not false churches and his conclusion is unreasonable, irrational and must be rejected!**

Bro Caudill then quotes J.R. Graves from *The Great Iron Wheel*, [p. 547] and says "We agree with J.R. Graves...". [*Misnomer*, p. 61] He goes on to develop by deduction from Graves' words a proposition which flatly contradicts what Graves taught on church constitution! The brother then says:

"the church at Jerusalem was not self constituted. The church at Jerusalem was organized by Christ himself. J.C. Settlemoir points out in his book *Landmarkism Under Fire*, in speaking of the views of J.R. Graves; 'Rather it teaches that the authority is directly from Christ and from Christ alone.'"

This quote is taken entirely out of context and I give the full quote to make it contextually coherent.

But what is the source of the authority for church constitution according to Graves? Does he teach this authority comes from a mother church? This is what EMDA advocates assert. This is what the theory demands. This is the absolute essential of church constitution in their thinking but Graves denies their assumption at the threshold and states his position as follows: "Christ said, where two or three are gathered in my name [authority], there am I in the midst of them." Graves. *New Great Iron Wheel*, p. 135. (Bracketed word is Graves' explanation—JC).

The authority for the constitution of a new church, Graves says, is not from a mother church or from an elder sent with this authority as EMDA teaches! Graves does not bow to the pressure that this constitutional authority is obtained from a "mother church." Nor does he give any place for the idea that this authority is granted by the mutual permission of a mother church in conjunction with Christ, as some might have it. Rather, he teaches that **the authority is directly from Christ—and from Christ alone!** And that he appeals to Mt.18:20 for his proof sets EMDA off from Landmarkism as the leper was set off from Israel. This is what the Old Landmarker taught! *LUF*, p. 18.

Let it be noted this authority to which Bro Caudill referred to, which is emphasized in my book and is directly from Christ, refers not only to the first church, but to every church formed until the end of time.

Every church which is constituted scripturally is constituted in exactly the same way—they gather together (constitute themselves) and Christ indwells them, and this is the constitution you can read about in the Bible. Cf. 1 Cor 6:8; 3:11; Mt 18:20; I Cor 3:11; Eph. 2:19-22; Phil. 1:5,6; Col. 1:27; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2: 14, to mention a few texts. There is only one way to constitute a church. Cf. *LUF*, p.116.

But this is not all. In the same context on the next page of *LUF*, I quoted Graves where he himself used the same idea of *self constitution* but Graves used the words *organizing themselves*, which is exactly equivalent to the phrase Bro Caudill rejects in reference to church constitution!

Graves in writing to the Methodists censures them because they do not believe in self constitution. They think they must have higher powers confer something on them to constitute a church. He censures Methodism and EMDA in the process:

You deny to your members any voice—

1. In organizing themselves into a Scriptural church—in determining the formation of their government and form of organization.
2. In covenanting together to observe the laws of Christ in all things, and to watch over each other for good.¹

EMDA teaches those who are in gospel order cannot constitute a church without authority from a mother church! They manifest their opposition to Scripture and old Landmarkism when they take this skewed position. Graves will not buy their soap! J.R. Graves. *New Great Iron Wheel*, p. 351. *LUF*, p. 19.

Does this sound like EMDA? I do not understand why Bro Caudill suggests there is an agreement between himself and Graves when Graves' specifically tells how to constitute a church and it is diametrically opposed to his position? Graves again contradicts Caudill in the very book he quoted! Graves says:

Each particular Church is independent of every other body, civil or ecclesiastical, and **receiving its authority directly from Christ**, it is accountable to him alone. J.R. Graves. *Great Iron Wheel*, p. 552. (My emphasis).

Graves is teaching here the fact that no church depends upon another church for its constitution authority but derives it directly from Christ! Of course Bro Caudill wants Graves' support, but he cannot take Graves'

position on this subject and maintain EMDA. If he stays with Graves, EMDA must go! But if he stays with EMDA, Graves must go! Let him not be ambivalent but strait-forward. Which will it be? I, for one, would like a direct answer. Why do brethren attempt to put Graves and EMDA together when they naturally repel each other as magnets when the poles are the same? Union is impossible!

Graves published his position on church constitution in *The Tennessee Baptist* for years and it absolutely excludes EMDA. He said:

4. Each visible Church of Christ is a company of scripturally immersed believers only, (not of believers and their *unconverted children* and *seekers* on probation), associated by voluntary covenant to obey and execute all the commandments of Christ, having the same organization, doctrines, officers and ordinances of the Church at Jerusalem, and independent of all others, acknowledging no lawgiver in Zion but Christ and submitting to no law he has not enacted. Read Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1-5; Acts 2:41,42; Matt. 18:20-23-28; 2 Cor.7:6-19; Philip. 26:27; 1 Cor. 5:12,13.²

Graves also is quoted by Jarrel:

Wherever there are three or more baptized members of a regular Baptist church or churches covenanted together to hold and teach, and are governed by the New Testament,' etc., 'there is a church of Christ, even though there was not a presbytery of ministers in a thousand miles of them to organize them into a church. There is not the slightest need of a council of presbyters to organize a Baptist church. Jarrel. *Perpetuity*, p. 1.

Are you brethren in agreement with Graves? Does this describe an EMDA organization? Or is this *self constitution*? Did saints organize themselves into churches according to Graves? Were the churches Graves and the other Landmarkers constituted, in his days, real churches or were they "religious societies...socials clubs...service organizations" ? [Misnomer, p. 61]. Answering these questions honestly and without hesitation will level the field for discussion.

Indeed , as Bro Caudill says [Misnomer, p. 61-62] Graves taught the Jerusalem church was the pattern for all churches—and this was the reason he contended that churches were constituted by the Lord Himself—

and that is the definition given of *self constitution*, according to Mt 18:20. The disciples gather together— and Christ invests them with His presence directly. In *LUF* I define both the term *self constitution* and *Divine constitution*.

Divine constitution. This term refers to the work of Christ in conferring upon a sufficient number of disciples church status. Christ personally confers the church state upon each new church directly by His exclusive power. This power comes from Christ directly and is bestowed whenever there is a sufficient number of disciples in gospel order, who gather together in Christ's name in covenantal union according to Mt. 18:20 for this purpose. Divine constitution and *self constitution* refer to the same event but viewed from different sides. [LUF, p. 191].

The correlation between the two terms *self constitution* and *Divine constitution* are not antagonistic as Bro Caudill seems to think and may be compared to regeneration and conversion, which are not opposed to each other. Both speak of the same thing but from different sides. From the Divine side, it is Christ who constitutes a church—*There am I in the midst of them*, Mt 18:20. From the other side, it is the disciples themselves who *gather together in His Name*. This is what I believe Bro Caudill overlooked.

Bro Caudill also says :

Secondly, it is misapplied (i.e., self-constitution) because they are not self-constituted bodies. They are the product not of themselves but of a preacher or group of preachers by whom they are constituted after their pattern of church formation. Better, and more appropriate, to call them preacher-constituted rather than self-constituted. [Misnomer, p. 61].

Again Bro Caudill gives us a statement, supposedly of what we believe and practice but cites no source. Is it wrong to impute to someone what they do not claim to believe? So far as I know, what Bro Caudill has stated above is not the position of any churches or pastors who agree with us. I do know for a fact that Bro Cockrell, and others, have said expressly that they constituted churches. Some have gone half around the world to “constitute a church” without another person present but those to be constituted. Is this not *preacher* constitution? Bro Cockrell said “ I acting by the authority of my church, constituted them into separate churches.” [SCO, p. 37]. Now here is a case where a pastor expressly says “he constituted” churches, even though claiming *church authority* for the power! But does Bro Caudill say that these churches were *preacher-constituted*? No! But when he refers to those who believe the

authority of Christ is given directly from Heaven, to constitute a church, he says such churches are *preacher constituted!* He does this even though he knows we contend it is not essential to have an ordained preacher present to constitute! I confess I am unable to follow his reasoning.

Listen to this example of a Boston church constitution in the 1600s:

After being long harassed in courts and churches, a few of our brethren, despairing of better times, and being prepared for the worst, took the bold step of embodying themselves into a church of the Baptist order. The constituents were nine in number; their names were....they resolved to set up a standard of their own, and united 'in a solemn covenant in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to walk in fellowship and communion together, in the practice of all the holy appointments of Christ, which he had, or should further make known to them.' [Bendict. Hist. vol I, p, 383-4].

Was this not self constitution? If not, what does *embodying themselves into a church* mean? Was Christ true to His promise in Mt 18:20 in this case? Can men today, 350 years after the fact, go back and denude this church of church status? This is what must be done, if you deny self constitution! That position is unenviable on one hand, impossible on the other!

Bro Caudill then quotes from a debate between D.B. Ray and a Tunker named Stein. Bro Ray criticized the organization of the Tunkers because they were self constituted:

....The Tunker churches are self-organized under the supervision of uninspired men. The original church of Christ was organized by Jesus Christ himself. But the original Tunker church was organized by uninspired men. Therefore the original Tunker church was not a church of Christ. Consequently the Tunker churches which sprang from this self-organized human society are not churches of Christ. [Misnomer, p. 62].

Why has Bro Caudill quoted this? First, I believe he does so because Ray was a Landmark Baptist and this is correct. [Cf. *LUF*, pp. 79,166]. Secondly, apparently he thinks Brother Ray is speaking of EMDA. He thinks Ray means that one church must authorize another church and because the Tunkers did not do this they were not true churches of Christ. He believes self constitution is in opposition to Landmarkism. Bro Caudill does not actually say these things but I believe this is what he is suggesting. If I have misunderstood his thought

here, he can correct me. At any rate, this is the standard way EMDA advocates usually read such accounts. They always *assume* this point—EMDA—the very point to be proved!

Of course this account might sound like it is referring to EMDA if you start out with that in mind. But is that what Ray meant here? Let me lay out my reasons for rejecting this assumption.

First, D. B. Ray wrote a book *Baptist Succession*. In 1912 it was revised but it had been before Baptists for forty years (*Baptist Succession*, p.4). Now if he believed and practiced EMDA it would seem most reasonable to find that idea expressed in a book on this subject. Especially when one looks at some of the chapters included: *Dignity and Mission of the Church; Origin and Perpetuity of the Church; The nature of Church Succession*. But one will read Ray (or any other Baptist) in vain specifying EMDA before 1900. I stated in my book that I do not believe there is a single specific reference to EMDA before that date and no one has brought forth a single case, although some have claimed they can do it, [*LUF*, p.67]. But Ray does give us some indicators as to how the succession of Baptists has been maintained and it is not via EMDA. He gives a quote in which he says:

But in following up the Baptist succession, we are again met by the stereotyped charge, *that the American Baptists all sprang from Roger Williams, and their baptisms from his informal baptism; and consequently their chain of succession is broken.*
Ray. *Baptist Succession*, p. 107.

We carefully note Ray writes all over this subject of succession in this book but he never does express any objection to *self constitution* nor does he ever require EMDA. But what he does say precludes EMDA. Several times over in repudiating the charge that Roger Williams was the founder of Baptists in America he speaks of *receiving baptism* from him, p. 118 twice; p. 119; *Olney's baptism*, p. 120. If he believed EMDA then all he had to do was mention the fact that Williams had no authority, and no one claims he had any, as he began their baptism and their church without any external connection.

Ray then goes on to give a list of twenty Baptist preachers and a brief historical sketch of each one of them as to origin. He says of John Clarke, “received his baptism and ordination in London.”

But no where in this list does he say any one of these men came out from England with authority to constitute a church in America nor that such was essential. While this is essential to EMDA it was apparently not so to Ray. He does mention these men were baptized and that some of

them were ordained in England. But where is EMDA? Ray seems to have believed the succession was in baptism, though he does not specifically say where he thought it was. He says: “It can not be proved that any Baptist now living in America, or elsewhere, has received baptism, by succession, from Roger Williams...” [Ray, p. 126], as if baptism were the principal thing.

Yet, this is not all. Ray gives a definition of church. He says:

A church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers joined together in the doctrine of fellowship of the gospel.

Of this definition, J.D. Murphy, D.D. says:

“You have believers, baptized, joined and hence ‘church.’ Here you have a ‘threefold cord’ that cannot be broken. Such a definition is exhaustive and final, and defies criticism.’ ”

Then he quotes the Philadelphia Confession:

“In the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, it is said: ‘The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order, or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner.’” *Baptist Succession*, Rev. Ed. 1912, p. 204-5. [26:4]

This confession goes on to say in article “5....Those thus called, he commandeth, to walk together in particular societies, or (Mt. 18:15-20) churches, for their mutual edification...” And in article 6. The members...do willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another...” **which if I mistake not is the same thing as constituting themselves into a church!**

In addition to this we know the Philadelphia Association believed in self constitution because they published a Church Manual and this Manual makes this quite clear. [Cf. LUF p. 88]. Thus this confession which Ray quoted speaks clearly of self constitution but excludes EMDA! But to go somewhat further,

Secondly, I will refer more specifically to the question of self constitution as expressed in the Debate referred to above. I believe it is evident here that Ray *is not writing about Baptists in gospel order* constituting themselves into a church. This same thing came up in the Great Carrollton Debate. Ditzler, a Methodist made the same argument made by Stein. Let me set this before you.

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. J.R. Graves gave the Landmark Baptist position.Listen to Graves' answer: [*LUF*, p. 22].

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. J.R. Graves. *Great Carrollton Debate*. p. 944.

Of course Graves is here setting forth self constitution and remember Ray's book was recommended by Graves, [Ray, pp. 395]. Not only this but Ray also quotes extensively in *Baptist Succession* from Graves-Adlam's *First Baptist Church in America*, [cf. pp. 108,110, 111,112,113, 114,115,116,117], and there is no EMDA in this book either. This is an indicator that Ray was saying the same thing Graves said—that no one could start a church from nothing, ages after the first church, and claim there was continuity between it and the first church established by the Lord.

I have given these quotes to show how careless it is to quote an author on the mere sound of words. Ray sounded like he was speaking for EMDA, but that is hardly the case, as these quotes indicate. And all we need to do to prove this beyond doubt is to request you or Bro Caudill to give us a specific quote from Ray where he requires EMDA.

In the next place Bro Caudill says:

One of the recent contenders for this self constitution theory sees two essentials of a true church. "Landmarkism teaches there are only two essentials of a true church. One, it must preach the true gospel and two; it must practice the ordinances properly. In this definition Landmark Baptists agree with all other denominations. Because Landmarkers believe immersion alone is scriptural baptism and that scriptural baptism is essential to church membership, they believe those who are not scripturally baptized are not members of a Scriptural church. Churches composed of those who are not scripturally baptized are not in gospel order and therefore cannot give scriptural baptism regardless of the mode. Nor can they execute properly any gospel act any more than a society not in legal order can organize a posse, pass legislation, or appoint an ambassador." (J.C. Settlemoir in *Landmarkism Under Fire* page 10)

The only thing which I need to say here is that this is not only my opinion but that of J.M. Pendleton and the Baptist Encyclopedia, which are referenced. These are good Landmark sources! But what I must reply to is what he says in comment to the above quote. He writes:

Let us think on this for a moment however. If Landmarkism is so it must rise or fall on a link-chain succession. If we accept the theory of a succession of ordinations, we ask where the authority for ordaining either a preacher or a deacon rests? In the local church. If we accept a chain of baptisms, then who administers baptism? The local church. If we accept baptized believers carrying out the commission, who baptized them and where did they get the commission? The local church. Therefore unless we accept a spiritual succession that eliminates Landmarkism completely we must contend for a link chain succession of New Testament churches. [Misnomer, p. 63].

Here we see how our EMDA brethren are able to get from any place to EMDA and in pretty short order. First of all let me point out again, that several of the well known Landmark Baptists of the past reject *link chain succession*, in spite of Bro Caudill's conclusions. So it might be that there are some factors not here considered. At least, some men have so argued, (Jarrel. *Perpetuity*, p. 2) and they suggest *perpetuity* is the better term and more correctly conveys the idea of how churches have continuity. At any rate, I think Bro Caudill's reasoning is flawed and I want to make it clear that I cannot accept his thesis.

First, he asks us to think about this: "Let us think on this for a moment however. If Landmarkism is so it must rise or fall on a link-chain succession," (Misnomer, p. 63). Now *thinking about this* leads me to an entirely different conclusion. Here is why. There are many renowned Landmark Baptists who denied link chain succession. Were they not thinkers? Very few Baptists have ever used this term in reference to succession of churches. Bro Caudill opines self constitution is a misnomer, yet, as we have seen this is a standard Baptist term used very frequently in our history. But where will he find *link chain succession* until recent times? At least we know the Landmarkers of the 1800s—Graves, Pendleton, Dayton, and so on, did not use this term. Nor is there any indication they believed EMDA or anything like it. Perpetuity they believed but I have never seen a line from them indicating they held to a link chain succession.

Let me quote him again:

If we accept a chain of baptisms, then who administers baptism?
The local church. If we accept baptized believers carrying out the

commission, who baptized them and where did they get the commission? The local church. Therefore unless we accept a spiritual succession that eliminates Landmarkism completely we must contend for a link chain succession of New Testament churches. [Misnomer, p. 63].

Now I will quote J.R. Graves on this specific subject. I regret having to do this because I believe it indicates the premise stated in my book that most EMDA brethren do not know what Landmarkism is and they constantly muddy the water in this discussion because they will not define their terms. [LUF. P. 1]. Graves says:

Landmark Baptists very generally believe that for the Word of the Living God to stand, and for the veracity of Jesus Christ to vindicate itself, the kingdom which He set up "in the days of John the Baptist," has had an unbroken continuity until now. I say kingdom, instead of succession of churches, for the sake of perspicacity. [O. Landmarkism, p. 121].

Graves then takes up this very subject which Brother Caudill insists mandates a link chain succession of churches. Mark his words carefully:

Those who oppose "church succession confuse the unthinking, by representing our position to be, that the identical organization which Christ established—the First Church of Judea—has had a continued existence until today; or, that the identical churches planted by the apostles, or, at least, *some one* of them, has continued until now, and that Baptist ministers are successors of the apostles; in a word, that our position is the old Romish and Episcopal doctrine of apostolic succession.

This which Graves here refutes is what Brother Caudill is contending for! But Graves opposes this position at all points! He says:

I have, for full a quarter of a century, by pen and voice, vehemently protested against *these* misrepresentations,for those who oppose us seem determined to misrepresent, and will not be corrected.

But Graves not only repudiates the idea of a link chain succession, but he gives the true Landmark idea of succession.

Nor have I, or any Landmarker known to me, ever advocated the succession of any particular church or churches; [emphasis added—JC] but my position is that Christ, in the very 'days of John the Baptist," did establish a visible kingdom on earth, and that this *kingdom* has never yet been "broken in pieces," nor given to another class of subjects—has never for a day "been moved," nor ceased from the earth, and never will until Christ returns personally to reign over it; that the organization He first set up, which John called "the Bride," and which Christ called His church, constituted that visible kingdom, and today all His *true* churches on earth constitute it; and, therefore, if His *kingdom* has stood unchanged, and will to the end, He must always have had true and uncorrupted churches, since His kingdom cannot exist without true churches.

The sense in which any existing Baptist Church is the successor of

the First Church of Judea—the model and pattern of all—is the same as that existing between any regular organization and the first such organization that was ever instituted. Ten thousand local organizations of like nature may have existed and passed away, but this fact in no wise affects the continuity of the organization. From the day that organization was started, it has stood; and, though it may have decayed in some places, it has flourished in others, and never has had but *one beginning*. Thus it has been with that institution called the Kingdom of Christ; it has had a continuous existence, or the words of Christ have failed; and, therefore, there has been no need of originating it, *de novo*, and no unbaptized man ever had any authority to originate baptism, or a church, *de novo*. Nor can our opposers prove that a Baptist church exists today started in this way. I understand that Christ's declaration (Matthew 16:18), and Paul's statement (Heb. 12:28), are emphatic commentaries upon the prophecy of Daniel (2:44).

Graves. *Old Landmarkism*, pp. 121-124.

Bro Caudill and Graves are not saying the same thing! They are not only not on the same page, they are not even in the same book!

And this ought to be admitted by all EMDA contenders. The idea of EMDA is not in Graves and I cannot understand why these facts are not admitted and made known by you brethren! How can you continue to represent to the readers of the *Voice* what you know is not true? As these quotes by Graves indicate he opposed EMDA, why do you not say so? If either of you were on the witness stand in a court of law, and were asked if you agreed with J.R. Graves on the constitution of churches? What would your answer be?

You could not answer "Yes," nor will you answer "No!"

Why not say "We differ with Graves on this subject"? Why not make your readers aware of this? Are you not sailing under false colors if you don't make this known?

Of course Graves was not alone in his view, as a few quotes will demonstrate. These quotes are from an article by Bro Williamson entitled "Got Perpetuity" in GPP. While the references are not given, I can supply every one of them, if they are questioned.

S.H. Ford said, "Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day."

D.B. Ray in "Baptist Succession" says, "They believe that the Baptist succession exists; that there has been no period of time since the death of Christ when Baptists have not existed. But Baptists do not claim 'apostolic succession,' because they admit that the apostolic office expired with the death of John the beloved. . . . Neither do we claim Popish succession, for this is only the succession of Antichrist."

I.K. Cross, in "The Battle for Baptist History," says, "No reputable historian claims that a church has to trace its history all the way back to the first church to prove it is a New Testament church. In fact, sufficient history does not exist to make this possible."

Jarrel Huffman says, "Chain-link succession on paper cannot be proved, but this fact does not discount scriptural succession."

"I shall not attempt to trace a continuous line of churches, as we can for a few centuries past in Europe and America. This is a kind of succession to which we have never laid claim; and, of course, we make no effort to prove it. We place no kind of reliance on this sort of testimony to establish the soundness of our faith or the validity of our administrations." Benedict. Hist.

John T. Christian, in his "History of the Baptists," says, "No attempt is made in these pages to trace a succession of bishops, as the Roman Catholics attempt to do, back to the apostles. Such an attempt is 'laboring in the fire for mere vanity,' and proceeds upon a mistaken view of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and of the sovereignty of God, in His operations on the earth. . . . No emphasis is put on a succession of baptism, or the historical order of churches."

J.W. Porter said, "it would be impossible to establish the uninterrupted succession of any given church through the years, even should such a church have a continuous succession."

W.A. Jarrel in "Baptist Church Perpetuity" said, "Such a thing as one church succeeding another, as the second link of a chain is added to, and succeeds the first . . . is utterly foreign to and incompatible with Baptist church polity. Therefore, the talk about every link 'jingling in the succession chain from the banks of the Jordan to the present' is ignorance or dust-throwing."

Wayne Camp, pastor of Pilgrim's Hope Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, says, "The Bible assures perpetuity of the Lord's churches and history proves the perpetuity of the Lord's churches but the Bible does not promise a linked-chain succession of churches and history does not prove it."

J. Davis, in "History of the Welsh Baptists," says, "A Baptist has not the least trouble about what is called a lineal or apostolical succession. His line of succession is in faithful men, and it is a matter of indifference with them, when or where they lived, by what name they were called, or by whom they were baptized or ordained."

It is believed these quotes support my contention that EMDA advocates have misunderstood Landmarkism and succession.

Again I quote Brother Caudill:

If we accept a chain of baptisms, then who administers baptism?
The local church. If we accept baptized believers carrying out the commission, who baptized them and where did they get the commission? The local church. Therefore unless we accept a spiritual succession that eliminates Landmarkism completely we must contend for a link chain succession of New Testament churches.

But, if granted, this idea proves too much. For in the first part of this article the author argues self constituted churches are not churches at all! However, if what he tells us now, in the paragraph above, is true, he must say self constituted churches not only are churches, real churches, true churches, but they actually have a *link chain succession!*

How can this be?

Well, we are told it is because those who compose churches were baptized by the authority of a church and this must come from a mother, hence, whether we like it or not, EMDA is alive and well!

Now if this idea is true, the next question is, why have you brethren raised all this dust about church constitution in the first place? For if this quote by Brother Caudill is correct, then any group of baptized disciples can constitute! This is what the old Landmarkers taught! This is the very point for which we contend! And when such a church is constituted that church is to be recognized by you brethren as a true church! Why have you not done this?

Of course this makes me ask some other questions with *Misnomer* before us:

Why have you insisted you must have formal permission from a mother church to form a new church when all that is needed is baptism?

Why do you teach you must have an ordained man to constitute a church when all that is needed is baptism?

Why do you teach all those who compose a new church must be members of the mother church when all that is needed is baptism?

Why do you teach the Holy Spirit never comes to a church formed without EMDA when all that is needed is baptism?

Why do you contend that *self constituted churches* are not churches when they do have baptism and that is all that is needed according to *Misnomer*?

Why do you argue “It is essential to recognize only churches organized by another New Testament church,” [Misnomer, p. 63] when all that is needed is baptism?

Why do you reconstitute churches simply because they did not have EMDA? I mean churches which were composed of baptized disciples?

Why do you *reconstitute* churches which are formed of baptized people when Brother Caudill says that if they are baptized that establishes not merely *succession* but *link chain succession*? What more do you want? What more can be desired, from your position? What more can be gained from a re-constitution if these churches already have link chain succession? If they don't, then Brother Caudill's argument falls to the ground. Tell us, if you will, which way it is.

I know such churches have been reconstituted in multitudes of cases, some because they only failed to have five point [the five points of

Calvinism or TULIP] baptism! Why? Some of these churches have had multiple re-constitutions! In several cases churches were reconstituted but those involved were not rebaptized and the ordained men not re-ordained. How can these things be if the brother's proposition is correct?

I close with these propositions:³

Produce a quote from any Landmark Baptist who taught EMDA

Produce a Baptist church covenant which teaches EMDA

Produce a Baptist confession which teaches EMDA

Produce a Baptist manual which teaches EMDA

Produce any Baptist history which specifies EMDA

Produce any Baptist Association which included EMDA as a requirement for membership

Produce the record of any Baptist Association which refused to admit a church because it was not formed via EMDA

Produce one church ever *re-constituted* because it did not obtain EMDA

Produce a "thus saith the Lord" for EMDA

Produce a reasonable explanation of why so many Baptist leaders explicitly stated the authority for church constitution came directly from Christ according to Mt 18:20.

Produce the lineage of any Baptist church which has an EMDA to EMDA succession up to 1600. [LUF. P. 166].

Answers to these questions will be welcomed and carefully considered.

By grace only,

J.C. Settlemoir

Encl/ 11 pages of quotes of churches pertaining to self constitution.

³ Of course, I mean before the year 1900.