

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by
Donald E. Martin, Sr.

Traditions of Men, Not Taught of Christ

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colo. 2:8). (Manmade religious traditions).

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (I Tim. 5:17-18).

After meandering about the Old Baptist community for over 25 years and having come to meet some of the older patriarchs of the Old School assemblies, it has often been a rewarding experience to say the least. After being in the homes of men such as Elder W.J. Berry, Elder Robert Miles, and meeting brethren such as Elder Johnny Townsen, Elder J.Y. McCormick, Elder Fred Niekirk, and numerous others along the way, who held strongly to the historical Predestinarian doctrine of God’s absolute sovereign grace.

I had been blessed of God to begin a gospel work in west central Florida, called Lealman Church, Old Order of Baptists. It was established in 1980 before I had ever known of any Primitive or Old School Baptists. I came through the ranks of the Southern Baptists, and Independent Baptists, when God revealed unto me his “sovereignty” through the study and illumination of his Word. As I searched around for others who believed these same revelations that I had been shown, I was told of the Primitive Baptists. There was none near me geographically, so I began to correspond with Elder Berry of the “Old Faith Contender” in the mid 1980s.

I have been received by many that endorsed me as a brother and would invite in sweet fellowship, even extending an invitation into their preaching stand knowing that I was not a member or in “official” fellowship with their faction. Yet, they were persuaded that I was sound in the DOCTRINE. I have made an attempt to set forth the glorious

Gospel of Christ in many of their assembly houses with NOT ONE objection as to the doctrine that was spoken in their midst.

Upon one occasion, I was introduced as an elder who is sound in the truth of the gospel, but was not an “official” Primitive Baptist nor part of their association. The elder/pastor asked if anyone had any opposition to my speaking on this given morning (I was invited to the meeting by the pastor). None objected at that time. The elder called on me to speak in his stand. During the meeting an elder of the association commented that I should not be speaking in the general meeting, as it was not according to their practice and order.

After I had sat down, the Pastor stood and stated that Elder so and so “objected” to me preaching in the meeting. The Pastor expressed for the sake of harmony and peace among the churches, that he would apologize for inviting me to speak that morning. He did not want to cause any division among the sister churches of the association. I could have cared less what the opposing elder thought, I was there by invitation to OBEY GOD. God had me speak, and the elder/pastor gives lip service to the Old School Predestinarian doctrine and, yet, is pastoring three churches that are primarily of the “conditional” persuasion. I love this brother to this very day although he has severed correspondence with me because of fear of discord and being challenged on his scriptural position of the “absolute” predestination of God Almighty. This dear brother has been MUZZLED by being the servant of men rather than the minister of God.

My next sweet experience (forgive the sarcastic attitude) was visiting among an Old Baptist church in my State that welcomed me with opened arms. A small assembly in a college city in north central Florida. After visiting with the same former elder in the previous paragraph, we were both ask to speak in the Sunday morning, as it was an annual meeting time. We both were blessed of God to set forth some thoughts on the scriptures that were well-received. During the noon meal we discussed the condition of the Old Baptists and I had confessed that I had not been baptized in an Old Baptist assembly. The dear elder who pastored this church had indicated that he was really tired of the TRADITION of demanding re-baptism of one that made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that had been immersed with a clear conscience of their reason and purpose of being baptized. Double baptism doesn't make anyone more spiritual!

This dear Elder said, “You come in among us, Brother, by profession of faith, and we will receive you, God has blessed you with a gift and we desire you to be among us here.” The very next meeting Sunday, the assembly voted on receiving me upon my profession of faith and that I was satisfied with my baptism by immersion; it was unanimously voted and agreed upon. The Elder said to me, my dear brother you are officially a member of (name deleted) Primitive Baptist Church.

That same elder went for a weekend annual meeting to a South association (in which he has no official part, but was at one time) and returned to his home church, was

apologetic that he had accepted me, that he got so much flack from the preaching elders of the association meeting upon receiving me without re-baptism, that he was resending my acceptance as a member of the church. Now brethren, that is what I call close to being a member as you can get without being one. I met with this dear brother the next meeting time and confronted him before the meeting. I asked, "Am I a member of this Church or not? He said, "I am sorry, but I love all them brethren down yonder and I was told that if you stayed here without re-baptism they were not going to fellowship me."

I sadly, tearfully looked the brother straight in the eyes and said, "I regret that you have not obeyed your heart rather than men." He, two weeks before, was convinced that re-baptism has been a TRADITION of men that CANNOT be scripturally supported in any way. Elder Gilbert Beebe, writing for The Signs of the Times" in 1860 was the "FATHER" of the term "ALIEN BAPTISM" and called those of the new Baptist Missionary movement "PAGANS."

I may not agree with many that call themselves Christian, yet I would be very careful to call them "PAGANS."

I have pondered this issue of re-baptism for 25 years, and cannot find any scriptural support to defend its practice.

I have heard ALL the arguments and supposed reasoning, yet none can show Biblical example.

Think upon the following:

- A. What Church was the apostle Paul baptized into?*
- B. What Church was the Ethiopian Eunuch baptized into?*
- C. Was Peter required to be re-baptized when preaching the law & grace when Paul confronted him?*
- D. The Old Baptist have made baptism the door into the Church? Where is that scriptural example?*
- E. Of the 3000 baptized in Acts 2:41, how many understood grace?*

How can a God-called gospel minister, in all good conscience turn away a believing brother or sister that comes with a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and has been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ's command, identifying with Christ's death, burial and resurrection be turned away?

Beloved brethren, we need to wake up out the slumber of traditions set by the standards of men in bygone days and determine to make the scriptures the rule and guide of our practice and order. I will challenge ANY Old School Baptist to give me Biblical support for re-baptism of a professing believer in Jesus Christ who has followed Christ in immersion in obedience to Christ's command, EVEN IF IT WAS DONE BY A MISSIONARY MINISTER!

It IS NOT a DOCTRINE we are being baptized unto, it is the witness of the death, burial and resurrection and our identification with that death, burial and resurrection. It is pure heresy to exclude folks for not being baptized by a Primitive Baptist preacher and then also they MUST be in acceptable fellowship with an association of churches.

I'll further add a challenge for any Old Baptist that can give me an ASSOCIATION example from scripture? That as well, is a MANMADE society of religion among assemblies.

You brethren, read the Black Rock Address, and see if you can find in there anything about re-baptism or so called "Alien Baptism."

I am a CONTENDER FOR THE TRUTH, not TRADITION. I refuse to be a MUZZLED OX FOR THE DENOMINATIONAL PLEASING OF MEN! Can you say the same? Or are you comfortable in your following a man's tradition? Are you God's called minister or the servant and pleaser of men? Only YOU know these answers...the popularity among the religionist is what most men desire if the truth were to be known.

You say, why don't you beat your own drum and leave the Old Baptist as they are? Because I am convinced that the Old Baptist in this Nation were not as they are today during the foundation of this Nation, they have fallen to the devices of men and traditions without scriptural merit. And furthermore, I LOVE the Old Baptist for the simplicity and basic doctrine that they have stood for through time, proclaiming an ALMIGHTY GOD and SOVEREIGN GOD, is the ONLY GOD that can and shall save sinners.

*Humbly submitted for Zion's sake,
August 17, 2005*

NOTE: I was accepted into the full fellowship of Empire Primitive Baptist Church of Lanier County Georgia in 2007 upon my profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and the testimony of a "SATISFIED" baptism, expressing a good conscience toward God in obedience to his command through water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in 1971. I was unanimously accepted as a LICENSEE of Empire Church a few months later to exercise in the ministry of the gospel wherever God may give an open door.