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**February 13, 2007**

Elder Mark Minney  
Voice in The Wilderness  
HC 70 Box 33  
Perkins, WV 26636

Dear Bro Mark:

Again I wanted to write you concerning some articles which you have printed in The Voice in the Wilderness. One of these is Bro Stang's article in the Dec issue and also your editorial in the January issue.

Bro Mark, I am somewhat surprised that you would suggest to your readers that self constitution is something new—especially since I sent you eleven pages from Baptist History where this precise term was used in reference to church constitution. How new is new? Have you forgotten those quotes? Did you read them? How then can you make such a statement to your readers and give no evidence of what you claim? Especially in light of the quotes I sent you?

Also you seem to believe that I and others who hold to self constitution of churches are hindering the gospel, offending others, and that we are contending for heresy, while you are contending for the truth and bringing the brethren together. Of course this all depends on whether or not you are correct about the constitution of churches. If not, then who is it that is contending for heresy? Who is it that is offending the brethren? Who is it that is hindering the gospel?

Now the way to settle this is to prove the Bible and Baptist History spell out EMDA. But this you have not done. If you have no proof but your word why should anyone accept your position?

As for what I believe, I did not ask anyone to take my word but gave proof from the Word of God in my book. (Cf. chapter 14). I gave proof from history. I gave proof from the old Landmarkers. I gave proof from confessions, covenants and other sources. So much proof in fact, that not one person has dealt with these references (and this includes Bre Caudill, Stang, Newell). In fact not one person has dealt with the fact that the old Landmarkers taught self constitution explicitly! You know why!

You say "Some have appointed themselves guardians of their darling doctrines, and are

quick to denounce any that would stand or write against them.” When a ship is about to hit a sand bar, the lowest apprentice on deck has more authority than even the captain of the ship! He had better sing out! When I see what is wrong according to the Word of God, I dare not be silent, Ezk 33:1-6. I guess, according to you, we should stand by and not defend what we believe to be the truth? I can tell you that what you call our “darling doctrines” if I know what you mean, I believe to the revealed doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ! Mt 18:20 is pretty clear! And if it is, you ought to be contending for the same thing I am! I do not believe you can give a valid reason why you should not be with me on this subject which would not as readily compel you to contend for Peter as the head of the church! That is, tradition! Tradition separates us and nothing but.

Take the following quote:

The proof is, therefore, complete, that the power which each and every church exercises is conferred directly by Christ, is continued on condition of obedience to his laws, and is withdrawn when that obedience ceases. It is also plain, that when a company of baptized believers assume these obligations in obedience to the plain will of their Master, and faithfully fulfill them, they become a church, authorized to perform all acts proper to a Gospel church. No bishop, no council of ministers, nor delegation from other churches, nor sanction of the church universal, can impart to them the least degree of church power. The reasons why it is a duty, in most cases, to call in the assistance of neighboring churches and ministers when the formation of new church is contemplated, is for mutual counsel and prayer; but they can impart no power to the new body, for they have none to spare; and what they possess is in its nature incommunicable by human agency. It must come from Christ alone. William Crowell. *The Church Member's Manual*. 1847. p. 69-70.

Crowell was a well known Baptist and J.R. Graves quotes from him in some of his books. I hope you will read this statement carefully and considerately. Note how he says the power for a church is conferred. Note that he says other churches cannot give this power or authority. Nor can a bishop, council, delegation nor even the universal church give it! note the date of this book. Was this what Baptists believed then? If not, give a book which teaches what you believe. I have repeatedly asked for a reference before 1900 which specifically mentions EMDA. No one has attempted to supply one! Not one! Is this too much to ask?

Hiscox says the same thing as Crowell. Graves teaches it and on and on I might go. But to what use? You brethren refuse to consider these quotes.

Thus, I am responding to Bro Stang's article with a series of letters which I will send in due time the Lord willing.

Brother Mark, I am not against you. I count you a brother in Christ. I pray for you but that does not mean that I am not to earnestly contend for what I believe the Word of God teaches. This is what I am trying to do.

By grace only,  
JC