

# Help To Zion's Travellers

## Holding Communion Together – A Different Perspective (Pastor Lamar Martin)

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**29 June 2014**

After reading the eighteen installments posted on ChantryNotes and hearing that this material would be published by Solid Ground Christian Books (SGCB), on January 27, 2014, I wrote an e-mail to the publisher, copying both of its authors, Tom Chantry and David Dykstra. Being greatly grieved by what I read in ChantryNotes, the purpose of my e-mail was to appeal for the abandonment of the plans to publish such a book. In less than an hour I received a reply from Mike Gaydosh which read: "Thank you for your passionate and reasoned appeal concerning the book that is still being written. I will be taking some time to go over your words before giving a fuller response." To date, no response has been forthcoming. My attempt to privately air my concerns with these men was clearly to no avail, and therefore gave me no choice but to speak publicly. By this point, any challenge to what they were determined to do seemed to be a waste of breath.

There is no doubt that the authors also received that e-mail because, without my permission, they cherry-picked the portions of it which they could twist to support their narrative and then published those portions in the book with their accusations that I was "insisting that associations are simply not a 'Baptist' idea," that I was more like a fundamentalist than a Reformed Baptist and that I was a "non-confessionalist." I did not say or even imply that "associations are simply not a 'Baptist' idea" and I am attaching my correspondence to the end of this document so the reader can see that for himself. The authors say that what they include in this book has documentation. Since no one but they have access to that documentation, how can we know whether or not it has been cherry-picked and twisted in this same manner?

**My Reasons for Writing this "Different Perspective"**

It is not my practice to jump into the midst of a fray without compelling reasons. I am the pastor of a Reformed Baptist Church in northern Atlanta, Georgia and have enough work to do in helping a few brethren on their way to Heaven to keep me occupied as long as our gracious God gives me breath. I have come down from my little section of the wall to write this response; but upon its completion I will go back to my work and I have no intention of getting into an ongoing debate over this matter. Having been told of ChantryNotes and having read them I was immediately conscience-bound to respond. One reason has to do with the biblical issues I noted in my original correspondence with SGCB. I will repeat and slightly enlarge upon those two issues in this document. That reason might have compelled any brother to get involved.

My second reason has to do with the fact that 15 years of my life were spent at Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) in Montville, NJ. From 1986 to 2001, I lived the events found in this book. I did not live them as a member of the church only but also as an elder and as an instructor in Trinity Ministerial Academy (TMA). There are things I know about most of these events which are known only to a handful of men. What is recorded in this book is, for the most part, one side of the story. The authors nor the publisher nor most of the main characters in this book really know what transpired in the events used to paint their slanderous picture of Al Martin (ANM) and the TBC elders. Oh, they may have the documents from RBA and RBMS to support TBC's unwillingness to join a formal association but the events which they use to paint the TBC elders as those who abused their pastoral authority are only the one side they gladly heard but did not seek to verify. It is for this reason that I am compelled to speak out about this attempt to again assassinate the character of men, who although not sinless, have labored for years to be faithful to Christ and to His Church. Now, before you reach the wrong conclusion, if you are looking for a response from Al Martin or the TBC elders, this is NOT it. They are of age and can speak for themselves. As I said earlier, I am writing this because I am conscience-bound to do so, not because I have been asked to do so. ANM has often described his unwillingness to strike back against this 25 yearlong attack as "taking the way of the Lamb." Peter says of our Lord ***"when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously"*** (1 Peter 2:23). We would do well to follow the example of our Lord.

### **The Question Of Formal Associations**

The first issue which concerns me is how the authors of this book condemn anyone who disagrees with their view of formal associations. Those questioning formal associations are labeled as embracing hyper-individual, fundamentalist ecclesiology. To question that 26.15 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession can only mean formal associations or to question that there is biblical support for 26.15 is to be labeled "non-confessional." The response of David Dykstra to my original correspondence was to say to my brother, Dr. Robert Martin (we are not related to ANM except in Adam and in Christ), "We are thankful that your brother has come out of the closet regarding his rejection of the Confession on 26.14-15. This is helpful." We all know what kind of heinous sin is referred to in the phrase "come out of the closet," yet the authors of this book are prepared to use such language simply because a brother does not see 26.15 as they do. Is there no limit to the accusations they are prepared to hurl at those who differ with them on this matter? My response to Dykstra's "come out of the closet" comment was this: "You have already twisted the truth. I said nothing about paragraph 14. 'Come out of the closet,' like not seeing 26.15 supported by Acts 15 is some great

wickedness of which I should be ashamed and therefore I have been hiding it? AND 'helpful' in what way? So that the next time, for the good of the Church, of course, you crank up your character assassination machine you can make sure to include your discovery of my long kept secret heresy? I am confident that you will remember that an all-knowing and all-seeing God is listening and because of your great fear of Him you will accurately label me as a man who is more concerned for what God says than for what men say, even when those men are the godly framers of OUR Confession." Clearly, my confidence was misplaced. This book contains no suggestion that such a man may simply be determined to go only where he understands the Word of God to be leading. For them, such an admission is not possible since that would not fit into their narrative. There is only room in their thinking for agreeing with them or being branded "non-confessional."

It is interesting that the ARBCA scholar and Baptist historian, Dr. James Renihan, the man who is often spoken of in this book in glowing terms, speaking of associations, says on p. 320, "I would not say that the way that we have done it is the only way, or even necessarily the best way, but it is an attempt to be faithful to these principles." He is suggesting that there may just be other ways to be faithful to the principles found in 26.15. Brethren, it is a long way down from that humble statement to the arrogant vitriol spewed out against ANM and TBC because they do not view 26.15 exactly the way the ARBCA men do. I kept asking as I read page after page of this book, "Who made these men the infallible judges of the brethren that they obviously think they are?"

One of the reasons I kept asking that question is because I read every word of this book and the book Denominations or Associations (which was advertised by SGCB as one of the foundation documents for this book) and found no unquestionable biblical support for formal associations. Oh, I can hear our self-appointed judges calling me everything but a Reformed Baptist but hear me out. The only passage listed with that portion of 26.15 which has to do with it being "The mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together ..." is Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 25. Now, the only two specifically mentioned churches in Acts 15 are Antioch and Jerusalem. Judiazers, who said they were sent by the Jerusalem church, went to Antioch and taught that **"except you be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"** (Acts 15:1). As you would expect, such heresy caused quite a stir. Since they claimed to have been sent by the Jerusalem church, Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church at Antioch **"to go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question"** (Acts 15:2). There is no explicit mention of messengers from any other churches being involved in this meeting.

In spite of there being no explicit mention of other churches being a part of this Jerusalem meeting, in an article titled, "A Biblical Basis For Associations Of Churches" (on p. 29 of Denominations Or Associations), Pastor Earl Blackburn says, "I am of the belief that many churches sent their elders and were involved." He then gives "four exegetical and two historical reasons" for his conclusion. None of the four exegetical reasons validate that conclusion. His reasons are: (1) That it was an enormous problem because Paul addressed it in Galatians. That proves nothing about who was at the meeting. (2) The author himself says "the usage of the plural form of 'elders,' coupled with the phrase 'certain others of them' (v. 2) possibly denotes that there were elders from many churches." Even the author sees that his proposal is only one possible understanding. (3) A circular letter containing the decisions of the meeting was sent to "Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." That does

not necessarily mean that “many churches sent their elders.” Paul had planted churches in Cilicia on his first journey and this statement leads us to believe that, in addition to Antioch, there was at least one other church in Syria, but sending a circular letter does not mean that other churches were represented at the meeting. Could it be that this circular letter was sent to all the churches in the area because it was known that the Judiazers were or would soon be troubling them all? In addition to that, why would a circular letter be needed if the churches were represented at the meeting? Why could not their own elders, if present, report the decisions back to their own churches? (4) “If the churches refused to receive the NT teachings regarding legalism and faith as contained in the ‘Council’s’ circular letter, they would cease being Christian churches.” I am feverishly searching Acts 15 for this stipulation, but if found, what does that have to do with how many churches were represented at the meeting? With all due respect to my esteemed brother, these are not “exegetical reasons.” **Exegesis** is the reading out of the text what the writer meant. None of these four reasons why “many churches sent their elders” to the meeting in Jerusalem are read out of this text. This is **eisegesis**, the reading into the text of what the reader wants it to say. This in no way proves what the author says he believes and just his believing it is not enough. This may be sufficient evidence for those who already believe that a formal association is found in Acts 15, but not for those of us who do not read Acts 15 with their same bias and predisposition. I am reminded of the old saying which goes something like this: “if you are determined to find a hair in your soup, you will find a hair in your soup, even if you have to put it there yourself.” This, brethren, is the only “biblical basis” the framers listed with 26.15 when they brought it word for word from the polity section of the Congregationalists’ Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order and promoted it from polity to the rank of doctrine in our 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. This is the “Scriptural Proof For Associations of Churches” upon which is built all the name-calling poured out in this book upon those who do not see Acts 15 supporting formal associations as do the men of ARBCA.

Now, to make sure I do not misrepresent this foundational study, Pastor Blackburn goes on to list several other passages not listed in our Confession with 26.15. In Gal. 1:2, 22 the author supports his view of formal associations by stating that Paul did not write separate letters to the different churches in Galatia but wrote one circular letter which was for all the churches. As with the circular letter sent from Jerusalem, this circular letter proves nothing about the Galatian churches having a formal association. He makes the same point about a circular letter found in Col. 4:13-18. Finally, there were the seven churches of Asia Minor to which John was to send what he sees and writes in a book. This too proves, according to the author, that these seven churches had a formal association. It proves no such thing.

Another passage noted on p. 256 of Holding Communion Together is 2 Cor. 8:18-19. In this passage Paul says, **“And we have sent together with him (Titus) the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches; and not only so, but who was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in the matter of this grace which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to show our readiness.”** Pastor Dykstra asks, “What did God the Holy Spirit desire us to infer from 2 Corinthians 8:19? Quite simply that churches can cooperate in a common endeavor.” I have no problem with that conclusion but that still does not prove formal associations.

At this point, the author is aware of the weakness of his “biblical basis” for the formal associations he is

seeking to prove and attempts to bolster his argument by quoting Louis Berkhof's Principles of Biblical Interpretation. He quotes Dr. Berkhof as saying, "In giving man His Word, He was not only perfectly aware of all that was said, but also of all that is implied. He knew the inferences that are deduced from His written Word. Says Bannerman: 'The consequences that are deduced from Scripture by unavoidable inference, and more largely still the consequences that are deduced from a comparison of the various Scripture statements among themselves, were foreseen by infinite wisdom in the very act of supernaturally inspiring the record from which they are inferred: and the Revealer not only knew that men would deduce such consequences, but designed that they should do so.' Therefore, not only the express statements of Scripture but its implications as well must be regarded as the Word of God." Dr. Berkhof is being quoted here for the purpose of assuring the reader that even though there may be no explicit biblical warrant for formal associations, since formal associations can be inferred from these passages, those inferences (Webster: "conclusions derived by reasoning") must be embraced as the Word of God. Therefore, by that principle, since we infer that in the background of these passages there must have been formal associations, formal associations are supported by the Scriptures. Now, there is no question that God knew what every man who read His Word would infer from its reading, but does that mean that what every man infers from every passage is as equally the Word of God as that which is explicitly stated? I think not. That is not what Berkhof or Bannerman were saying. What if several men read the same passage and they all inferred something different and contradictory. Which inference is the Word of God? Being contradictory, they cannot all be. Just because God knew what all men would infer from every portion of His Word does not mean that all inferences are the Word of God. If that was so, then our day would be like the day of the Judges when every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6). Many infer from John 3:16 that particular redemption is heresy. Because they have read John 3:16 and have come to that conclusion does that make it sound doctrine? In Acts 16:31, Luke records that Paul's response to the jailor's question "**What must I do to be saved?**" was "**Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.**" Many infer from Paul's response that the jailor had the innate ability to "**believe on the Lord Jesus.**" Does their inferring such a thing make it biblical truth? I have great respect for Louis Berkhof. We used his book in the Hermeneutics course at the Academy. But interpreting the Word of God by the principle that whatever we infer from a text of Scripture makes our inference doctrine on the level of God's explicit statements is just a hair's breadth from heresy.

BUT that is NOT what Berkhof or Bannerman were saying. At the bottom of that same page (p. 159) we find these words: "We feel warranted, therefore, in laying down the following rule: (Here are their conclusions – First Bannerman is quoted) 'The deductions of doctrine made from the Bible's statements on a comparison between them, if truly drawn, are as much a part of God's meaning and of His revelation – being virtually contained in it, – as these statements themselves.' (Then Dr. Berkhof says) 'it goes without saying that great care must be exercised in drawing such inferences from the written Word. The deductions must be good, i.e, truly contained in the inspired statements from which they are ostensibly derived; and also necessary, or such as force themselves upon the mind that honestly applies itself to the interpretation of Scripture.'" (underlining mine) Why did Pastor Dykstra, the author of Appendix IV and of this book Holding Communion Together, cherry-pick that portion of Principles of Biblical Interpretation which, standing alone, could be interpreted to give warrant for any inference derived from the Scriptures being equated with the Word of God, while failing to quote the author's conclusion at the bottom of that same page which made it clear that

this was not the unqualified principle being articulated there? At first glance, the first quote seems to shore up “The Biblical Basis for 26.15” which he was seeking to demonstrate while the second quote did not.

So, what is my point in going through all these passages which are said to be the “biblical basis” for formal associations? My first point is that these passages, individually or combined, do not prove formal associations. To find formal associations in these passages, formal associations must be read into the passages. Brethren, that is just not sound hermeneutics. We cannot start with something we want to believe and then run around through the Scriptures to find places where, if we use our imaginations, we can read what we want to believe between the lines. Is that not one of the major concerns we have with those who butcher the Scriptures with respect to other, more serious issues? Did the framers of our confession have formal associations? Some of the articles I have read say that they did and I have no reason to doubt that they did. Does the fact that they had formal associations mean that formal associations are found in the Word of God? NO! Taking heed to the warning of our Lord, we do not **“teach as our doctrines the traditions of men”** (Matt. 15:9), even good men. Did our forefathers have good reason to implement general biblical principles by means of formal associations? Apparently so. But does that mean that anyone who does not see formal associations in the Scriptures should be labeled a heretic? NO! And what grieves me is that we have let the devil divide us over an issue which has no real explicit biblical support and that we are so tied to the opinions of men that we have lost sight of what it is that is to really be our authority. On practically every page of Holding Communion Together we are reminded of what our confession says. What about what the Word of God says? There is division among us based upon what we disagree is written between the lines of Acts 15. May God be merciful and open our eyes before the evil one uses us to undo all that God has done through us.

One more issue and I will move on. On p. 278 of this book, Dr. Renihan is addressing the issue of “Strict or Full Subscription” to our confession. He was speaking of a question asked him and his answer to that question which went like this: “do we really believe that the Pope was the Antichrist, or if we used wine in our observance of the Lord’s Table ... I responded by telling him that these matters were non-issues among our churches ... Full subscription does not require absolute commitment to these words. It recognizes that a man may scruple over a statement here and there and still remain true to the doctrinal intent of the Confession.” My question is: Who decides which statements are non-issues. Clearly, questioning the biblical basis for formal associations does not fit into that category because the book labels me as “non-confessional” for even suggesting such a thing. How can that be when “biblical support” for formal associations is either non-existent or vaguely inferential at best. Who decides who is a REAL “Reformed Baptist?” An ARBCA committee? Think about the ramifications of that question. It may save you some grief down the road.

### **The Question of Speaking Against Our Brethren**

This book, Holding Communion Together, bills itself as a history of modern Reformed Baptists but it is the culmination of 25 years of animosity toward, and three books written for the purpose of making accusations about, Albert N. Martin and the elders of Trinity Baptist Church of Montville, New Jersey. In 1988,

Shepherding God's Flock was written and then later followed by Steve Martin's republishing of the same book under the title of Biblical Shepherding of God's Sheep. These books, without mentioning any names, were clearly intended to be accusations against the elders of Montville (p. 104). Apparently, including no names did not obtain the desired results, so now we have Holding Communion Together, clearly identifying the great enemy of souls for all to see. I cannot see the hearts of the men involved in these books and the 25 year whisper campaign which surrounded them and therefore I will not speculate upon their real motives for doing what they have been doing. I would be shocked if they did not respond by saying we have done all this for the good of the Church, to warn the brethren of the great wickedness of Montville and those churches who dare to associate with them. I am reminded of the words of our Lord on the night before His crucifixion: ***"These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be caused to stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour comes that whosoever kills you shall think that he offers service unto God"*** (John 16:1-2).

This book suggests that the beginning of this division was over the issue of formal associations. One man, Walter Chantry (WC), with a Presbyterian background wanted a formal association because he saw such in the 1689 London Baptist Confession and supported in the Word of God, while another man, Al Martin, with a "fundamentalist" background, would not support such a formal association because he saw no such association in the Confession nor in the Scriptures. It is interesting that ANM is labeled a fundamentalist throughout this book as if he really was one and never moved away from it, BUT WC was not labeled a Presbyterian, even when he clung tenaciously to his Presbyterian view of the eldership (p. 141). I am not seeking to stir up another issue here, but giving one of these men a pass while consistently berating the other man over the same issue seems like clear evidence that this is something other than an impartial history.

It is interesting that one of the authors of this book, David Dykstra, whose education was exclusively from Northeastern Bible College, a dispensational, fundamentalist school, would accuse someone of being a fundamentalist simply because he attended a fundamentalist school, but because that accusation supports the author's narrative of Al Martin being something other than a confessional Reformed Baptist, that is what we have here. **ANM's real history** begins with him being the son of an officer in the Salvation Army. When his father came to see that the Salvation Army was moving away from the spiritual and more toward the social, he resigned his commission. At that point, with ANM being just an infant, his dad moved the family to Stamford, Connecticut. The Martin family became a part of the Salvation Army Corps in Stamford and it became their "church home" until ANM was in his mid-teens. No one who understands the Salvation Army would ever classify it as a wing of main line "fundamentalism." Eventually, his parents realized that they were not being spiritually fed in the Salvation Army and moved to a Northern Baptist church there in Stamford. While their new church held to basic Christian orthodoxy and there was some effort to preach the Bible, there was little in the way of any doctrinal teaching or serious pursuit of godliness among its members. About a year after beginning to attend this church, God saved ANM. Soon after his conversion he left for Bob Jones University where he was a part of what was called "The Preacher Boys" class. Even though Dr. Bob Jones, Senior had great hopes for him, ANM began to be repulsed by the kind of fundamentalism that characterized BJU and because of that he left after only two years. Rather than, as Holding Communion

Together states, BJU molding him with its fundamentalism, he was repulsed by it. At this point, ANM had been regularly preaching in a small mission work in Augusta, Georgia and since he wished to continue that ministry he transferred to nearby Colombia Bible College. CBC was not a typical fundamentalist Bible school but held to a non-dispensational historic pre-millennial position and was strongly committed to the deeper-life movement. Even though he graduated from CBC and worked there on staff the following year, seeing some aspects of the deeper-life teaching as fundamentally unbiblical, he felt he could not stay at CBC with a good conscience. During the next five years ANM served our Lord in an itinerant ministry in which he traveled from church to church preaching the Word. During those years he spent his days reading and studying, seeking to understand the teaching of the Scriptures on a number of issues. Much of his time was spent reading the Jay Green reprints of the old Puritan works. Also during that time, the majority of the fundamentalist churches in which he preached manifested gross indifference to the whole counsel of God concerning everything from the nature and fruits of true conversion to the nature of a biblically ordered church. After that five years on the road, ANM became the pastor of a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in North Jersey. It was there that the seeds sown during those five years began to germinate and flower into clearer views concerning doctrine and practice in the life of a biblical church. What grew out of those Alliance days was Trinity Baptist Church. So, contrary to what is presented, in *Holding Communion Together*, as a fundamentalism which ANM embraced and from which he never really departed, his real history makes clear that he was never a fundamentalist at all. In his journeys, whenever fundamentalism reared its ugly head, ANM rejected it. I fear that the authors of this "history" never spoke to him about this issue but saw in his time at BJU an opportunity to justify their painting him as a fundamentalist because that best suited their narrative. This book begins with its authors erecting a fundamentalist straw man and then, being the great defenders of truth that they present themselves to be, they spend the remainder of the book tearing down this straw man which they created for that purpose. I suggest that this book reveals more about its authors than it does about ANM.

After Al Martin is colored in several shades of black very early in the book because of his refusal to allow outside intrusion into the affairs of Trinity Church, the real issue and, I submit, the real reason for this book, begins to surface. Ernie Reisinger, whom we all loved, but the mentor and special friend of Walter Chantry, was troubled, as we would all be, by a number of families leaving his church in Florida. His version of what happened and who was to blame was reported to and immediately embraced by his close friends in Carlisle. On p.92 such words as "suspicions" and "convinced" are used to describe what Ernie believed about Al Martin being involved in this church split. The words "evidence" or "proof" were never used, which I submit they would have been if there had been any evidence or proof. We are simply told that Ernie suspected that ANM had given counsel to Ernie's fellow elder which contributed to the split. It is interesting that five pages later Walt Chantry is quoted as defending himself by saying "I do have the right to give counsel to any person who seeks me out regarding a personal problem. Of this I need not repent" (p. 97). The issue to which WC was responding was TBC's charge that he was intruding into TBC church matters by giving his ear and his counsel to TBC members who were at odds with their elders. Now, why was it righteous for WC to give counsel about TBC matters while it was wicked for ANM to give counsel about matters having to do with Ernie's church in Florida? Even if it had been proven that ANM had done such a thing (such proof is nowhere noted) why was his listening and giving counsel such an unacceptable evil while WC doing the same thing



was simply his "right" to do? It is also difficult to understand how incensed these men were at ANM's possible intrusion into the split of the Florida church when, ten years later there was a mutiny from TBC into which some of these same men intruded themselves. Am I the only one to whom the word "hypocrisy" comes to mind? By this time, there was an animosity toward and a bias against Al Martin and Trinity Church which motivated Carlisle to accept Ernie's "suspicions," even though there was no proof. From this event onward, there was a willingness to listen to one side of reports about TBC and a willingness to embrace those one-sided complaints without caring to hear any contrary opinion. When the resignation of Paul Clarke from the Trinity eldership and the tension between TBC and Fred Heubner were added to the list, even though their one-sided complaints were also embraced without hearing the contrary side, the pattern was clear. Carlisle had come to the conclusion, by listening to only one side of these and other stories, that the men at Trinity were sheep abusers. The writing of *Shepherding God's Flock* was the result and here we are 26 years later, with a few historical facts thrown in for window dressing, writing the same slanderous book but this time with names.

Another fact that leads me to believe that the authors of this book were not really looking for the truth (as we would expect authors recording "history" to do) but were willing to embrace anything which fit their preconceived notions, is that, if true, all the evidence necessary to prove that TBC and TMA were promoting principles which lead to sheep abuse could be easily discovered from the tapes and the syllabi of the TMA courses, especially the Pastoral Theology course. Based upon one sided reports, this book claims that TMA was graduating sheep abusers but no real evidence of that was offered. Since the beginning of Trinity Ministerial Academy, Al Martin taught the course in Pastoral Theology. That course, which met every Friday afternoon, was taped and those tapes were heard by hundreds of men around the world. There was also a syllabus for each section of that course. Every word that ANM said on the subject of the work of the pastoral ministry was taped a number of times as he taught that course throughout all the years of TMA and those tapes were graciously made available to pastors and theological students upon request. The authors of *Holding Communion Together* did not need to speculate about sheep abuse based upon the one sided stories they heard. All they had to do was go through the Pastoral Theology syllabi or tapes and, if there, they would have found incriminating quotes from the lips of ANM himself. There are no such quotes noted in *Holding Communion Together*. Why not? Could it be that there are none? Could it be that the one sided complaints of a few were enough since these men were not really looking for truth but just for corroboration for what they already wanted to believe? The authors of this "history" cannot say they did not know about this possible gold mine of evidence against Al Martin because Jim Renihan, a TMA graduate, would have heard all of ANM's lectures on Pastoral Theology and David Dykstra was graciously permitted to sit through many of those classes himself.

Now, at this point, we come to the primary reason I have inserted myself into this fray. I know details which the authors of this book and their friends could not know and were therefore not factored into this very negative picture they have painted of ANM and TBC. It became known by the members of Trinity Baptist Church that there was friction between the two churches. From the New Testament Scriptures it was clear to the TBC elders that part of our responsibility was to promote holiness in the brethren under our care. In Hebrews 12:14, God says ***"Follow after peace with all men"*** (maybe that is the issue we should be discussing)

***and the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.***” It was our desire that all under our care ***“see the Lord”*** and therefore holiness was an issue. Even though, as this book says on p. 65, the Carlisle elders viewed pastoral oversight as “primarily a ministry of encouragement,” with serious sin being left to reveal itself in God’s time, the TBC elders saw the need to address sin as early as it became clear and before it developed into a crisis. In spite of how it is portrayed in this book, there was very little church discipline but we did seek, with an open Bible, to point out sin and privately call the brethren to repentance. In spite of all the gossip, being listen to and spread by our detractors, that we sought to discover sin by Gestapo tactics (p. 95), those slanderous accusations were totally untrue.

It is amazing how difficult it is to admonish or rebuke a brother for his obvious sin when it becomes known that just across the border is an ear that is willing to hear and a tongue that is always ready to sympathize with any complaint against the TBC elders. Any member who did not want to acknowledge his sin and deal with it biblically, as they had agreed to do upon coming into the membership of the church, could pick up the telephone or write a letter or drive a few miles west and have all biblical pressure to deal with their sins removed by being told what sheep-abusers their elders were and more than one took advantage of this service offered by Carlisle and her friends. When one is already upset because his sin has become known and because his elders have had the audacity to do what the Word of God and our agreed upon church constitution says they should do; when the elders would lovingly and patiently confront them with their sin, all that needed to happen to remove the pressure of even a minute amount of conviction is to be told that their sin is not the real issue but the real issue is their abusive shepherds. With blame-shifting being such a part of our remaining sin, being given counsel to shift the blame to the elders is difficult to resist. Every experienced pastor knows that when one gives an account of something they have done or have not done, to some degree that account is always slanted to favor the one giving it and to make that person look more righteous than they are. Nevertheless, the accounts told by disgruntled TBC members were accepted by our detractors at face value because they fit their preconceived notions about Al Martin and his fellow elders. Only God knows how many of our Lord’s dear sheep continued in their sin because of this intrusion. In those days I was often reminded of what God said about the prophets of Samaria: ***“they strengthen the hands of evil-doers so that none does return from his wickedness”*** (Jer. 23:14). I am aware of a number of one-sided complaints listened to by the pastors of other churches in which there was no effort on their part to find out the other side before giving counsel. Those complaints were embraced as truth simply because they fit into the conclusions which had been reached through their embrace of other one-sided stories. It became almost impossible to deal faithfully with the souls of the brethren because a way to escape faithful dealing had been provided by our detractors. These men were listening to one-sided gossip about TBC and then spreading that gossip to others. Did we have a different view of our responsibility to oversee the sheep God had placed under our care? Apparently so. Sad to say that anything to the right of Carlisle’s view has been openly branded as sheep abuse.

What is so amazing to me is how these men can so skillfully read between the lines and find formal associations but yet cannot read right on the line and find the sin of taking up a reproach against and speaking against a brother in Christ. Because of this book and because of sins in our own congregation, I have been so exercised about this issue that I am preaching a series in Grace Church on “The Sins of the

Tongue." I have been overwhelmed with the amount of biblical material condemning this sin. Much of my preparation time has been spent on my knees asking forgiveness for my own sin. James 3:2 makes it clear that this is the most difficult sin to mortify and I can say a hardy "AMEN!" Back in **Psalm 15:1**, David asks God a question: "**Lord, who shall sojourn in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Your holy hill?**" Lord, who are Your true people? Two verses later, part of God's answer is "**He that goes NOT about with his tongue, NOR does evil to his friend, NOR takes up a reproach against his neighbor.**" Now, some of us justify using our tongues by saying "what I am saying is not slander ... what I am saying is true." The Hebrew word translated "slander" or "backbite" in our English translations simply means "To go about .. to go up and down," leaving what the person is going about doing to be determined by the context in which the word is used. Nothing in this context suggests that what is being said is either true or false or is done behind its target's back. What this person being described is "**going about with his tongue**" doing is identified in the next two phrases ... "**doing evil to his friend**" and "**taking up a reproach against his neighbor.**" A "reproach" is that which results from a statement being made about a person, portraying him as being guilty of something, a statement made for the purpose of discrediting him, and causing harm to his good name." It can be easily demonstrated that "**taking up a reproach**" is being the originator or spreader of such hurtful words or even the taking up of such words into our ears. God says one who practices such a thing, one who takes up into his ears or onto his tongue a reproach against his neighbor will not dwell in the place of His special presence. Matthew Poole says in a sermon on this passage, "it is not easy to know which is the greater sinner, or which is the greater plague to a commonwealth ... he that spreads a reproach or he that willingly receives it."

Another passage which speaks directly to this issue is **James 4:11-12**. There were "**wars and fightings**" among the professing Jewish Christians to whom James was writing. Up in James 3:14, God characterizes this conflict as "**bitter jealousy and faction in your heart.**" In James 4:1 He identifies the source of this conflict as "**your pleasures that war in your members.**" Their fighting grew out of the selfish desires of the "brethren" involved. They wanted what they wanted and were ready to go to war with each other to get it. In James 4:4, God calls them spiritual "**adulteresses,**" those who were being unfaithful to God by embracing the thinking and the practices of this world. Beginning in v. 7, he gives these professing brethren eleven commands they must obey if true repentance was to be achieved. The last of those commands is found in James 4:11, "**Speak not one against another, brethren.**" God is telling them that if they want a restored relationship with Him in this matter they must stop what they have been doing against each other with their tongues. And notice that He also identifies "**speaking against a brother**" as "**judging a brother,**" that which our Lord had forbidden in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:1). God also identifies what they are doing as "**judging the Law.**" Their speaking against their brethren was such a prideful activity (James 4:10) that it was as if they had elevated themselves to the exalted position of being a judge over God's Law. God had clearly said "**Love your neighbor as yourself**" and they were judging that commandment as unworthy to be obeyed and had replaced it with their own law which gave them leave to do whatever they pleased to their brethren to get what they wanted. God reminds them that He is the only lawgiver and judge and then the very sobering and applicable words of James 4:12, "**but who are you that judges your neighbor?**" These are the words I kept repeating as I moved through Holding Communion Together ... who made you the judges of your brethren?

It does not have to be read between the lines as an inference of an inference of an inference but is

abundantly clear right on the surface of these and many more explicit statements from the Spirit of God: **“taking up a reproach against our neighbor”** and **“speaking against one another, brethren”** is sin against God. What has been going on for 25 years is not only doing harm to the Cause of Christ, is not only doing damage to our testimony to the watching world we say we want to see saved, it is sin against the God we profess to serve. The issue is not whether what is being listened to and repeated to others is true or false. The issue is not that we are being motivated by the desire to get that which we want whether that be a formal association or personal revenge ... God says it is sin. May He cause us to see this issue as He sees it. He has used many of us in a great revival of biblical truth in our day. But I fear that we have cooperated with **“the accuser of our brethren”** (Rev. 12:10) who most certainly hates the work God has done through us. Are we going to continue to take up into our ears and take up onto our tongues a reproach against our brethren because we think it is justified because of some personal wrong done to us or because we are foolishly thinking that we are somehow serving God in so doing **OR** are we going to fall upon our faces and plead for God’s forgiveness and fresh cleansing in the blood of Christ and turn from our sin and begin obeying our Lord’s command to **“love one another even as I have loved you”** (John 13:34). I fear that if we do not do the latter that God’s patience with us will run out and He will no longer bless our labors. It is time we spent our energies getting the beam out of our own eye instead of trying to look through that beam to get a speck out of our brother’s eye (Matt. 7:3-5). May God help us while we are still on this side of the river and before we are forced to stand before our Lord’s judgment seat with red faces. What are we going to say when asked, “What did you do with the talents I gave you?” Are we prepared to be truthful and say, “I used my ears and my tongue and my pen to assassinate the character of Your servant and Your church which you greatly used to open the eyes of many in the 20TH Century?” Somehow I do not think this will be an acceptable response.

Brethren, enough is enough. Bill your book as history if you want, but you know as well as I do that this is just another, not-so-cleverly-disguised, attempt to discredit a man and a church that you hate. The reader of Holding Communion Together should read it with Prov. 10:12 in mind: **“Hate stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.”** In this book, and even in Denominations or Associations, these men label Al Martin as a “Diotrephes,” a man John said **“loves to have the preeminence”** (3 John 9). How did John know that Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence? That statement speaks to what was in this man’s heart. How did John know what was in the heart of Diotrephes? He knew because what he wrote was inspired by the Spirit of God who knows what is in the hearts of us all. By labeling ANM a “Diotrephes” the authors are implying that they know what is in his heart. We know the source of John’s remark but which spirit led them to their conclusion? Maybe they are calling him “Diotrephes” because of what else John says in v. 9: **“I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes ... received us not.”** John is accusing Diotrephes of refusing to embrace his apostolic authority expressed in the written directions he had given to the church. Are these men suggesting that ANM has refused to embrace the apostolic authority expressed in what has been written in the New Testament Scriptures? Maybe they have in mind what John said in v. 10 where he accused Diotrephes of **“prating** (bringing foolish and unjust charges) **against”** the apostle **“with wicked words”** and refusing to obey what John had written. I say to the authors of this book, if you are accusing ANM of any of these things you need to bring forth your evidence. There is no such evidence and anyone who has read your book knows that if there was you would have no reluctance to display it for all the world to see. This might come as a shock to you but just your labeling him as a “Diotrephes” does not make it true. This is just

another example of your willingness to **“speak against”** a brother in Christ without any concern for doing damage to his good name.

Solomon says in Prov. 22:1, **“a good name is rather to be chosen than riches.”** But here you are stealing a man’s good name as if it was of no value. In His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord commands **“all things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets”** (Matt. 7:12). Are you prepared to say that the hatchet job you are openly perpetrating against our brother is what you would **“that men should do unto you?”** If not, you are disobeying this clear command of our Lord Jesus. Five chapters later, our Lord also said to a group of self-righteous Pharisees who He labeled as the **“offspring of vipers ... how can you being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”** And then He concludes **“And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned”** (Matt. 12:34-37). With this clear declaration of the Judge in mind, are you really determined to let these words against our brother stand? Are you willing for these words to be the evidence of your justification or of your condemnation on that day? Your arrogance is unbelievable.

Not only are you prepared, without any real biblical warrant, to proclaim your view of formal associations as the **ONLY** acceptable view for true confessional Reformed Baptists, but you are also prepared to use your ears and your tongues to destroy anyone who disagrees with you. It is not enough for you to conduct a 25 year long whisper campaign, but now you have published your vitriol for the whole world to see. Shame on you! The Lord we profess to follow commands us to love one another **EVEN AS** (in the same manner) as He loves us and then He says, **“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another”** (John 13:35). Do you think that those who have heard your gossip, and who will read the “history” you have written, know from such things that you are the disciples of Christ because of your love for ANM and TBC? If you think that, then we are not reading the same Bible because love of the brethren is nowhere evident in Holding Communion Together or the real story which it distorts. A number of us plead with you not to publish this book. Now you must live with and answer to God for its horrible fruit.

Pastor Lamar Martin

Grace Church of North Atlanta

### **02-27-14 Letter to the Publisher & Authors of HCT**

Dear Mike,

I am writing this letter to you because of your involvement in the publication and promotion of Holding Communion Together by Tom Chantry and David Dykstra. I have read the eighteen installments of Chantry’s Notes and am very troubled by the direction these men have taken, especially the accusations they have made against Trinity Baptist Church of Montville, NJ and Albert N. Martin, a former pastor of that church. As

you know, I am also a former pastor of Trinity Baptist Church. I was there from 1986 to 2001 and was on the eldership and taught in Trinity Ministerial Academy during many of the events referenced in the book. What that means is that I have first-hand knowledge of those events, something which you nor your friends who are writing this book have. If the authors of the book had done a thorough investigation, which included questioning all those on both sides of these issues, I would not be intruding myself into this matter at this late date. Since that did not happen I have input into this "history" which very few other men have and which needs to be heard. I am conscience bound to share that input in the hope that the cause of truth can be served and a great disservice to the Cause of Christ and His Church can be averted.

As is recorded in Chantry's Notes, Walter Chantry received his formal training from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, while Al Martin went to Bob Jones and Colombia Bible College. Since Westminster Seminary is a Presbyterian school, it is not surprising that their influence upon Walter Chantry would make him more open to some form of authority above the local church. Since the schools attended by Al Martin would be more inclined to their being no legitimate authority above the local church, it is not surprising that their influence upon Al Martin would make him more inclined to the view of local church autonomy. What is surprising to me is that Al Martin, a Baptist pastor, is being berated for holding to the Baptist tenant of the autonomy of the local church and refusing to join an organization which insists upon being involved in local church matters. And what is more surprising is that this condemnation of his view of local church autonomy is coming from Baptist pastors. This book presents Al Martin as a wicked man because he was unwilling to support their association. And do not respond by saying that their association is supported by the 1689 London **BAPTIST** Confession of Faith because we both know that the confession is NOT an infallible document and is not to be adhered to unless the point under discussion is supported by the clear teaching of the Word of God. It is interesting that in the book, much is said about Al Martin's opposition to associations but nothing is said about the biblical support for such associations. All that is said is that the confession promotes such associations, as if that settles the matter. Chapter 26.15 of our confession is not supported by the only reference noted, Acts 15! Acts 15 is an entirely different situation than that envisioned in 26:15. The church in Antioch was being troubled by Judiazers who claimed that they had been sent by the Jerusalem church and so the church at Antioch sent representatives to Jerusalem to get the issue sorted out. Acts 15 is one church dealing with a sister church. In addition to that, apostles with authority from Christ Himself were involved. For our confession to say that what is envisioned in 26.15 is "according to the mind of Christ" does not mean that it is "according to the mind of Christ" unless solid biblical support for that statement can be offered and clearly, no such biblical support is offered. Most Reformed Baptists do not believe the confession is accurate in its statement that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist. Are we prepared to cast stones at those who believe the confession is wrong about the Pope simply because it is stated in the confession? NO! We are not prepared to break fellowship with such brethren because that statement has no clear biblical support. Then how can we justify making such harsh statements about brethren who do not believe 26.15 has biblical support and therefore are unwilling to join an association?

My second concern has to do with the way this book portrays the elders of Trinity Baptist Church, and especially Al Martin, as the abusers of God's people. What is a pastor to do when one under his care falls into sin? Are we to ignore that sin or are we to address that sin in the hope that, by God's grace, the brother will

repent, seek forgiveness in Christ and do works worthy of repentance? You have been a pastor. What have you experienced when you confronted one under your care because of his sin? In many cases the brother becomes offended, refuses to acknowledge and deal with his sin and eventually resigns to join a "church" which does not take sin so seriously. What do such offended brethren normally do when describing you and the church you pastor? What is said by such brethren is normally not very flattering and in many cases it is the pastor and the church which are described as the sinners while the offended brother pictures himself as the innocent and abused party. Any pastor who has sought to be faithful to what the Head of the Church has called him to do and has confronted one under his care with his sin knows that this is what normally happens. Occasionally, a brother will acknowledge his sin and deal biblically with it but that is not normally the way it happens. That is one of the reasons many pastors ignore the Word of God and shy away from such confrontation, fearing men more than fearing God. Now, what about the individual into whose ear this "offended brother" is pouring his story of sheep abuse? If he has been a faithful pastor for very long, he will suspect that the story he is hearing is not the absolute truth but is (intentionally or not) being colored by the "offended brother" who is seeking to make himself look more righteous than he really is. Knowing that to be the pattern, why would such reports by "offended brethren" be used as the material with which to build a charge of sheep abuse? Why would the conclusion not be that the church from which this brother came must really be faithful to the Lord Jesus and must really be concerned for holiness in those under its care? Why would the automatic conclusion from hearing this brother be that the fault lies with the elders who confronted him for his sin rather than in this man who is speaking evil of them? And to say, as is suggested in this book, that such a great flood of complaints constituted the two or three witnesses required to establish it as fact is not valid because these are not two or three witnesses to the same event but only events similar in the mind of the accusers. But instead of the conclusion being that the similarity is faithful pastors dealing with erring sheep, the conclusion was that the similarity was abusive shepherds dealing with innocent sheep. There was and is a negative bias against Trinity Baptist Church and Al Martin by those who willingly opened their ears to these tales of woe and believed all they were told. As I said earlier, I was an elder at Trinity Baptist Church during many of the events recorded in this book and I assure you that, even though like every other pastor, the Trinity elders were **NOT** sinless men, the accounts which have been told by these "offended brethren" are slanted by their self-serving perspectives and are not the whole truth. With that testimony before you, to press on in the distribution of this book, is not only to call me a liar but it is to admit that you are more concern for whatever your cause is than you are for the truth.

And, with your help Mike, these false accusations will be given a much broader hearing than they have already enjoyed in their twenty yearlong whisper campaign, the work done in this resurgence of biblical truth will be negatively affected and the Cause of Christ in our generation will suffer great damage. On your website you suggested that you would like to hear any proof that what was written in this book is false. It is not those who are being accused who should have to prove their innocence but it is the burden of the accusers to prove their guilt. And the one-sided testimony of individuals who hate a church and a man because they were confronted with their sin is NOT proof.

I thought it was interesting that you advertised this book by speaking of how controversial it would be. Why did you make that statement? I hope it was not because you know that people, even God's people, are

attracted by controversy and that such a statement would help you sell more books. If your goal is to promote worthy books, reprint Walt's God's Righteous Kingdom. I know there are no more copies out there because I bought the last three a year ago. The reputation of a man and of a church who God greatly used to promote truth to a generation in great darkness and the truth they promoted are at stake here. I would hope that we can all see that these are of more value than a few book sales. Even though Albert N. Martin, like the rest of us, has feet of clay, he is God's servant and, also like with the rest of us, God is able to deal with him if and when He sees fit. I would hope that Tom and David and you would take the God-honoring approach of David of old, who, even though Saul hated him and was seeking to kill him, even though he had several opportunities, refused to touch a servant of God. In fact, David so understood that Saul was God's servant, and that God only had the prerogative to judge Saul, that he had killed the Amalekite who assisted Saul in his own suicide. For your own soul's good, I would exhort you to take the posture of David rather than the posture of Saul.

The accusations of this book are not based upon fact, they are not based upon a thorough investigation of all involved from both sides of the issue and being unproven accusations, they are slanderous at best. There is no question that you can find three or four men, who have no real firsthand knowledge of what is going on behind the scenes, to write positive reviews of this book, but that does not change the fact that it is the spewing out of venom from those who (for whatever reason) hate Albert N. Martin. I suggest to you that the God of the Bible will not bless such an insensitive and unloving attack upon a brother in Christ. Even though it is cleverly disguised as a history of ARBCA, it is an attack upon a brother and his work. A history of ARBCA could be written without all this vitriol. Is the "sweet taste of revenge" worth doing damage to the Cause of our Lord? We are to love the brethren and this book is not a reflection of obedience to that command from the One we profess to serve. Even though some of the things I have said may have an edge, I write you as a brother and a friend. I long to see our Lord's Kingdom and His Truth advanced in our generation and I fear that this book will do great harm to His Cause. May God deliver you from doing this great wickedness. If not, it may be that His judgment will fall upon unintended targets. That, I do not long for.

Yours for the Cause of Christ Jesus our Lord,

Lamar Martin

This entry was posted in Uncategorized on July 2, 2014 [<http://helptozionstravellers.com/?p=58>].

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