



From Where I Sit . . .

“A Great Tragedy”

By now I think everyone in the nation is aware of the tragic death of Matthew Winkler, **allegedly** at the hands of his wife, Mary. The Winkler family have been my friends for many years, and they have made an invaluable contribution to the strength of churches of Christ throughout the country. Wendell Winkler was called by most preachers I've ever been around “The preacher’s preacher.” Dan and Mike are both out of that same mold. The pain of losing Wendell just a few short months ago has now been magnified beyond our comprehension with the tragic death of yet another Winkler preacher of the Gospel, young Matthew. This family has conducted themselves with grace and dignity for which we all should be extremely appreciative. This is especially so when we realize the intense gaze of the public eye and the incessant battering by certain talk-show hosts within the news media. May God have mercy on this family in a time of severe distress.

On top of the innuendos from some media that the husband simply must have been the cause of this tragic shooting through some misdeeds, now we are subjected to the bantering by those who are linking it to their **misinformation** about the churches of Christ. We are being portrayed as a rigid people, legalistic, un-biblical, unethical, very ungracious, with cult-like characteristics. Plus it has been charged that we are a relatively new church being founded by Alexander Campbell only 150 years ago. The leap of inference is that some people simply have to “break away” (as with a cult) and that in some way this might explain what the accused was doing.

I am appalled that on the Nancy Grace show on CNN, Tuesday night, March 27, "Pastor" Tom Rukala, a Baptist minister, was presented, as if he was an authority on who we are within churches of Christ, and of what we genuinely do preach and practice. I assure you the viewers of this segment have been given a gross distortion of the kind of people we are. I take serious issue with nearly everything Mr. Rukala said about churches of Christ.

We are not believers in the use of “intimidation” and “pressure tactics” to gain followers as he alleged. We believe the drawing power is in the Gospel, and that it is to be presented with kindness and love. Furthermore, we are not judge, jury, and hangman of the religious world around us. God alone makes all judgments. We do uphold His Word as sacred and binding authority by which we'll all be judged, and we do call all mankind to read, study, and obey that Word. God alone will decide who has done that sufficiently to be saved eternally. Are we to be faulted for believing that God’s Word is binding upon all mankind, and that it was not written for the purpose of man’s private interpretations?

Contrary to Mr. Rukala’s assertion, Churches of Christ were not established by Alexander Campbell or any other mortal 150 years ago. In fact, the Bible teaches that Jesus established His church nearly 2000 years ago, and all who obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ are added by Him to that body of believers. Man has divided the religious world and started many religions. We believe a person can bypass all that division, and just be added by the Lord to His family. We are just Christians, and have no desire to be a part of the denominational debacle that has so rendered Christianity lame. I wrote these and many other sentiments to Ms. Grace and suggested that at some appropriate time, she might like to invite one of us to appear on her program to share with her and the world our love for and need for the grace of God, and our love for and celebration of all that He has done for us. As opposed to being legalistic, we are believers in the life transforming words of Jesus and fully believe they can fill our souls with love, joy and peace. I'm very thankful to share in a generous and benevolent fellowship of believers that have in recent years donated hundreds of millions of dollars toward disaster relief along with tens of thousands of hours of service by volunteers, and who at the very same time want to comply with every wish of our Master.

. . . . Terry Broome