



THE CHURCH  
*that*  
JESUS  
BUILT

ROY MASON

# THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT

By  
Roy Mason, Th. D.

Dr. Mason was pastor of Buffalo Avenue Church for 29 years. During this time he edited the church paper which is called "Faith and Life," and for many years he preached over the largest chain of radios daily of any pastor in the country. Dr. Mason still conducts radio programs over five radio stations sponsored by Buffalo Avenue Baptist Church, some of these stations carry the program daily.

*"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*  
--Jesus

## Introduction

In writing the introduction to the seventh edition of 'THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT' Dr. J. W. Jent, at that time, President of, Southwest Baptist college” Bolivar, Missouri had this to say:

*“Writing an introduction to the seventh edition of this book is a peculiar pleasure. When the first edition appeared in 1923, I welcomed it, not only because it met a real need as a text book in my department in Oklahoma Baptist University, but because I have never read anything which sets out quite so thoroughly and clearly my own conception of Christ's 'ECCLESIA.' The second edition, which I used as a text in the Theological Seminary of Mercer University was more comprehensive and better organized than the first edition. It is a valuable and timely contribution to the literature of Christian Polemics. The issue of this seventh edition reflects the persistence of a gratifying interest in Christian fundamentals-a tangible disproof of the claim that denominationalism is dead.”*

*“I had my introduction to New Testament Ecclesiology at the feet of my father, years ago, in the country churches of Southwest Missouri. He still serves as a rural pastor in that section and is widely known as perhaps the strongest doctrinal preacher in the Ozarks Mountains. Again and again, during the plastic years of my boyhood, I heard him through his series of sermons on THE CHURCH - Its Nature, Institution, CHARACTERISTICS, PERPETUITY, and Modern IDENTITY. When I followed him into the ministry and the country pastorate, we labored together laying the Biblical foundation upon which it was easy for me to build, later, a doctrinal superstructure, under the sympathetic guidance of Dr. B. H. Carroll.”*

*“Years of study and practical experience have convinced me that the interpretation of my father and my great teacher is correct; that the CHURCH - Christ's: 'ECCLESIA' - is 'A CONGREGATION OF BAPTIZED BELIEVERS associated together in THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE*

*GOSPEL'; that it is a SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY-visible and LOCAL or PARTICULAR; that it is A NEW TESTAMENT INSTITUTION, designed by Our Lord, historically instituted by Him; persisting from century to century; conserving the characteristics of the New Testament model; easily identified by the marks of its doctrinal integrity; functioning true to the genius of its Holy Mission; justifying its existence by its challenging achievements and its benevolent blessing to sin-cursed humanity. This is the THESIS Dr. Mason so ably defends in the following pages. He is frank, candid, consistent, convincing. His arguments are impelling and unanswerable. He states the representative Baptist belief, with, its essential implications. He gives our 'reason for the faith that is in us'-the -ineradicable, consciousness of a mission and a destiny-the utter intolerableness of comity and compromise, the unique point of view in which we have the paradox of inflexible exclusiveness synthesized with superlative toleration and good will."*

*"Since the doctrine of the church is clearly determinative in the distinctive field, this book not only meets a serious denominational need, but admirably clarifies the atmosphere for the general public. Its challenging restatement of the BAPTIST THESIS not only meets, with unflinching candor, the 'invisible church' propaganda of Pedobaptists, but the superficial sentiment of non-denominational and anti-denominational Modernists. The author sounds the clarion call to a new crusade of constructive doctrinal preaching. He points the way to a program which would revitalize not only our churches but our denominational machinery. The one dynamic which has always heartened and impelled is an intelligent CONVICTION; a DENOMINATIONAL CONSCIENCE and the consciousness of a DENOMINATIONAL MISSION. We have a MESSAGE the world needs and really wants to hear. One is blind who does not realize that the high noon of Democracy in the dawn of the twentieth century is a Baptist day. The dare of denominational loyalty is the wisdom and constructive genius to make the most of it."*

“Dr. Mason's ringing appeal to reason and Divine Revelation in this book must win the open mind that gives him a hearing. Pastors who are wise will put 'THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT' in their teaching program. It deserves a place in the training courses of all our auxiliary departments. The author has put all our Baptists under obligation to thank him for a service so timely, fundamental, and farreaching. May God bless this seventh edition and make it an abiding blessing to an ever-increasing company of readers and open-minded students through all the years.”

J. W. Jent  
President, Southwest Baptist College, Bolivar, Mo

It gives us great pleasure to have the opportunity of republishing “THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT” by Dr. Roy Mason. We believe that the need is even greater for a Biblically sound book of this nature than it was even one year ago. The pastor and members of Buffalo Avenue Baptist Church believe that God provided the means for us to publish this, the TENTH EDITION, and we endorse its use among our Baptist people as heartily as did Dr. Jent.

Claude King, Sr.  
Pastor  
Buffalo Avenue Baptist Church

*“The Baptist faith is radically and fundamentally different from that of all others. On this ground alone can their continued separate existence be justified.”*

--M. P. Hunt, in *“The Baptist Faith.”*

# I

## Introductory Chapter

There are few things about which as many false notions and heretical opinions are held, as the church. Many are wedded to a church theory that is totally at variance with the plain teachings of the Scriptures. Some hold these false theories honestly, having never carefully studied the church question for themselves. Others, it is to be feared, hold them because they fit into their ecclesiastical scheme, and because to surrender them for the truth would mean a revolution in their life involving a change in the matter of their church affiliation.

Because of the neglect of church truth, loose thinking and erroneous views as to what properly constitutes a New Testament church, many hold the church in light esteem. It is not to them the high and holy thing it ought to be. It is not to them the divine institution that towers high above all of the organizations and institutions. of men. It is by no means uncommon for one to encounter persons who esteem a lodge, club, society, or other organization of the kind, on a par with the church. And among the multitudes of sects and denominations calling themselves churches, people commonly make little distinction. The popular idea is that” one church is as good as another,” without reference to whether or not it has Jesus Christ for Founder and Head.

Among those who hold loose and unscriptural views of the church, the writer of these pages was once numbered. In common with others, I inherited many of my notions, and gathered others from current thought. I recall that it was a shock to me when first I learned that Baptists claim identity with the church that Jesus established. This claim seemed to me to be the expression of unwarranted arrogance and bigotry. Later, as I began to study the church question, my idea of what constitutes a true church narrowed and became more distinct. In the light of the teachings of the

Scriptures the idea of church perpetuity, at first so repellent, became more and more reasonable. Finally it became clear to me that if the Scriptures are true and the promise of Jesus to be relied upon, the church which Jesus founded must have had a continuity of existence throughout the ages, and must be somewhere in the world today. Careful study of the Scriptures and history, together with a study of the origin and teachings of the different denominations, has served to form within me a conviction almost, as strong as life itself. That conviction is, that the first church that was ever organized was what we would today call a Baptist church, and that churches of the same form, characterized by the same doctrines and practices, have existed from the day that the first one was established to the present moment, and will continue to exist until the Lord comes again.

It is my purpose to set forth in the following pages some of the grounds, biblical and historical, upon which I base my convictions, and to show the reasonableness and creditability of the Baptist claim to what is generally termed "church perpetuity".

In thinking along this line, one of the first questions that commonly arises is with reference to the practical importance of this doctrine. For I think we may term church perpetuity a doctrine. Assuredly it appears important when you consider that the veracity of our Lord's word and the validity of His promise is at stake. If the church that Jesus established has not been perpetuated, then His promise has failed. If His promise concerning the church has failed, then is it not possible that His promises concerning our salvation and destiny will in like manner fail?

Again, it is important to know what church can truly claim to exist in fulfillment of Christ's promise of perpetuity, because to find that church means to find the only true one. In a world filled with all kinds of so-called churches, each holding forth their peculiar doctrine and claims, many are hopelessly confused and know not which church to turn to. A knowledge of the truth will dispel the confusion and make the duty of the Christian plain.

A proper understanding of Christ's promise concerning the church and the recognition of its fulfillment in those holding Baptist principles, would perhaps have prevented the schismatic condition of Christendom today.' Christ promised that His church would not fail or cease to be. All organization of so called churches rests upon the assumption that His promise was broken and that His church failed.

The doctrine of Baptist church perpetuity has ever been an offensive doctrine to those of other faiths, and quite naturally so. For if it can be shown that Baptist churches are the true churches of Christ, then the churches of other faiths immediately come to occupy the position of rivals to those having divine origin, However, it is not only those of other faiths who find this doctrine offensive. In these modern days of compromise and lack of conviction, it is not infrequently that one discovers a Baptist of the "Uniontarian" or "Indifferentist" type who takes exception to this biblical doctrine. I recall that one such Baptist of Pedo-baptist proclivities once took me to task for my views concerning church. perpetuity, stating that it could not be historically proven that Baptist churches have continued from the days of Jesus until the present. With the historical data that had come to my notice, fresh in mind, I replied that I fully believed sufficient historical proof had already been produced to settle that. Then I went on to say that the question was more than an historical one; that it was more biblical than historical. "If," said I, "I had only my Master's promise to perpetuate His church that would be enough to make me believe in its present existence." God made a staggering promise to Abraham once, one whose fulfillment seemed impossible. Of Abraham's faith Paul says (Rom. 4:20-22): "He staggered not at the promise of God ... being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform, and therefore it was counted to him for righteousness." Should not we have the faith of Abraham? Christ promised to perpetuate His church. Should not we have the faith to believe that "He who promised is able to perform it"?



In dealing with the question of church perpetuity, I am aware that I will in all probability encounter some who are antagonistic to the term “perpetuity.” This antagonism has been induced by, the frequent misuse and abuse of the term. In fact, there are three words that have been frequently misused in this connection, namely, “succession,” “continuity,” and “perpetuity.” As one writer puts it, “There are three words used almost indiscriminately in the discussion of church history, viz.: succession, 'continuity,' and 'Perpetuity.' Not one of these words expresses the whole idea, but each one is nearly right and sufficient for honest inquiry.” In considering which word I should use, I finally decided to use the word perpetuity as perhaps the most suitable of the three for my purpose. However, because of the misleading way in which perpetuity is often used, it is advisable to define, at the outset, something of what is meant and what is not meant, by the term as employed in the pages to follow.

1. When Baptists affirm belief in the perpetuity of their churches, they do not mean: that they can trace an unbroken SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS from the days of the apostles to the present. The Roman Catholic Church bases her claim to perpetuity upon alleged succession of bishops or popes as they term them. Thus we find Cardinal Gibbons saying (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 93), “The Catholic Church teaches also that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the popes, or bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently to be true followers of Christ all the Christians, both among the clergy and the laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, where Peter rules in the person of his successor.” It may well be noted in this connection that the Catholic claim to perpetuity fails for many reasons. We pause to make bare mention of four of these. First, their lack of any good ground upon which to base their claim for the supremacy of Rome; Second, the absolute lack of proof, either biblical or historical, that

Peter was the first pope. Third, the plain teachings of the New Testament, which precludes the idea that Peter occupied the place of primacy, in the sense of being the vicegerent of Christ and head of the church. Fourth, the lack of a shred of historical evidence to prove that Peter was ever so much as in Rome, much less the first pope.

2. Baptists do not claim perpetuity upon the basis of a successive and unbroken CHAIN OF BAPTISMS. The opponents of Baptist perpetuity often seek to invalidate Baptist claims by saying that it would be necessary for them to establish beyond doubt that there has been at no time a break in the chain of baptisms, before assuming the right of perpetuity. This arises out of a misconception of the Baptist position, and what properly constitutes perpetuity.

3. Baptists do not claim perpetuity upon the basis of a chain of CHURCHES succeeding each other in the sense that kings and popes succeed each other. Dr. J. B. Moody puts this truth very aptly when he says, "In the sense of popes and kings succeeding each other, the word (perpetuity) is not to be used of church history, because one church does not take the place of another. Sometimes one church dies as an organization, and some of the members may constitute in the same or in another place, and thus one may succeed the other. But this is hardly involved in this discussion, except where churches may have been driven from place to place, or from one country to another. The church at Jerusalem was multiplied into the churches of Judea, Samaria, etc., but they did not succeed the church at Jerusalem, because that church had not died, as when kings and popes succeed each other by death. That particular idea of supplanting, or taking the place of another, must be eliminated."

4. Baptists do not claim perpetuity on the basis of the NAME BAPTIST. They do not make the claim that churches called by the name Baptist have existed through all the ages. True, Baptists have

existed all along, but they have often been called by other names. The churches of the New Testament as they have existed down through the ages have usually received their names from their enemies and persecutors. These names were received as terms of odium and reproach. It will be shown later that New Testament believers grouped together in New Testament churches here and there, bore different names at different times, such as Paulicians, Bogomils, Waldenses, Anabaptists, Catabaptists, etc., each name giving place to another until today they are known the world over as Baptists. History shows that the peoples of these New Testament churches just mentioned, although scattered by persecution, hunted and driven into the dens and caves of the earth, conformed in essential points to the teachings of the New Testament, and were the progenitors of modern Baptists.

*What, then, is meant by perpetuity as used by Baptists?* It will not be amiss for me to quote two or three well-known Baptists who have given this subject more than ordinary attention. In the writings of S. H. Ford, LL.D., of honored memory, we find these words:

*“Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day... The true and defensible doctrine is that baptized believers have existed in every age since John baptized in Jordan, and have met as a baptized congregation in covenant and fellowship where an opportunity permitted.”*

Again from W. A. Jarrell, D.D., author of a most convincing book on church perpetuity, I quote the following:

*“All that Baptists mean by 'church succession' or church perpetuity is: there has never been a day since the organization of the first New Testament church in which there was no genuine church of the New Testament existing on earth.”*

As is indicated in the foregoing quotations, Baptists claim that the first New Testament church organized by Jesus was in doctrine and practice essentially the same as Baptist churches of today. They claim that there has never been a day since Jesus started the first one when such churches have not existed to bear true witness to Him. They claim that there is sufficient historical proof to demonstrate that Baptist churches of today have direct historical connection with the churches of apostolic times. They believe that as time goes on and further investigations are made in the field of church history the proof of their continuity will become so irresistible that no reputable church historian can reasonably deny it. They not only hold on the authority of the Word of God and reliable history that the churches of the New Testament were what would be called Baptist churches today; that Baptists are the historical descendants of these same New Testament churches, but they also believe and hold that Baptist churches will continue to exist until the Master comes again to this earth.

*Protestantism has a confused idea of the origin of the church. Some say that it began with Abraham, and others tell us that it began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord. There is absolutely not one scintilla of evidence in the Bible or out of it that the church was founded or began on Pentecost. If those who claim Pentecost as the birthday of the church will search the records they will find that any church born on that day or afterwards is too late to receive any commission from our Lord... It follows, scripturally and logically, that any church born on Pentecost or any day thereafter has no commission from our Lord to do anything and must be a human institution and not a divine one. “*

-J. T. Moore, in “*Why I Am A Baptist.*”

## II

### **Did Jesus Found the Church? If So, When?**

The Baptist belief in the perpetuity of their churches involves several questions. The correct answer to these questions will go far toward paving the way for a proper examination of their claims. Among the more important of these questions are the following:

1. Did Jesus found the church?
2. If so, when?
3. What kind of a church was it?
4. Did He promise its perpetuity?

So well established is the fact that Jesus founded the church that it seems almost superfluous for us to spend time considering the first question propounded above. However, it will perhaps not be amiss for us to spend a few moments on this question, as there are to be found here and there those who either openly or by implication deny that Jesus founded a church. It is a common thing for destructive critics of our day to try to array Jesus and Paul against each other, and to try to show that Jesus never had in mind the founding of a church at all. Such critics would have us believe that the disciples, and particularly Paul' foisted the church upon the world without divine warrant. In substance it is the claim that they substituted a church of their own devising for the Kingdom of Jesus' thinking and purpose.

There are some denominations that embrace a theory that practically denies to Jesus the founding of a church. They advance the claim that the church existed back in Old Testament times, and that the church of the New Testament times and of the present is merely a continuation of the church that has existed all the way from the days of Israel's beginning. Those who hold such a theory do not see any essential difference between the economy

of the Old Testament and the New, but hold that baptism is meant to occupy the same place in the church of the present that circumcision held in the “church” of Israel. This theory plainly denies by implication that Jesus founded a church. For it is evident that He could not have founded the church if it already existed at the time of His coming.

For the one who believes the New Testament to be the inspired Word of God, the question, “Did Jesus found a church?” is once for all answered in the affirmative by Matthew 16:18, in which Jesus Himself makes the statement, “I will build MY church.” That the gospels record Him as mentioning the church but twice, is a matter of no moment in view of the fact that after His ascension and glorification, as recorded in the Revelation, we find Him speaking of the church a number of times. And indeed, if the Lord had only mentioned the church one time, that ought to be enough so far as the validity of His promise is concerned. A statement made only once may be just as true as one reiterated a thousand times. The point is, Jesus said He would build His church. A little later He tells the disciples of a matter that should be taken before the church for its discipline. In His words He clearly indicates that the church is then already in existence. So we have His promise of the church; the clear implication in His own words of the fulfillment of that promise; the New Testament account of the church from its beginning on for many years, and the testimony of history to the effect that the church of Christ is an institution that has existed only from the time of Christ.

If Christ's words in Matthew 16:18 mean anything at all, they must mean that the institution which He promised was one separate and distinct from any institution that had previously existed in the world, or existed at that time. It will presently be shown that the disciples were already thoroughly familiar with the word “ecclesia” or “church,” and its meaning. But Jesus indicated very clearly that the institution which He proposed would be one, distinct and to be distinguished from all other “ecclesias” by

the fact that it was to be HIS church, built upon an entirely different foundation than any ecclesia in existence at that time.

Having determined from the New Testament that Jesus began a church, let us now turn to a brief consideration of the further question,

### ***WHEN DID JESUS BEGIN HIS CHURCH?***

This becomes an important question in view of the heretical teachings so widespread, in our day. Several very dangerous heresies spring out of the theory that the church began on the day of Pentecost. One of these is the “Invisible Church theory,” which leans very heavily upon the Pentecostal assumption. Then there is the theory so widely promulgated by Dr. C. I. Scofield, Dr. James M. Gray of the Moody Bible Institute, and others, that the church was formed on the day of Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that every believer becomes a member of the universal Church similarly, by being baptized into it by the Holy Spirit. This is really a most absurd theory. It rests principally upon a perversion of I Cor. 12:13, and an examination of the context of this Scripture is fatal, to the theory. Dr. Scofield (Synthesis of Bible Truth, p. 42) plainly says of the church, “This body could not begin to exist before the exaltation of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit.” He also goes so far as to say that a church before the death of Christ would have been an unredeemed church. This is as much as to say that none of the disciples were saved previous to Pentecost!

Those who are unwilling to admit Baptist perpetuity struggle desperately to show that the church was not in existence before Pentecost. Nothing else fits their theory of an “Invisible” Church.

What, then, are the facts? When was the church begun? I shall not take the space to go into details, but will put the answer in one sentence: Out of material prepared by John the Baptist, Jesus organized and founded His church during the days of His personal ministry here on the earth.

In this belief I am not alone. Dr. L. R. Scarborough, president of one of the largest theological seminaries in the world, in a recent article in the Baptist Standard is quoted as saying: "It is certainly true that Christ in His own personal ministry established His church."

A lengthy chapter could be written to prove my statement, but I must confine myself to a few reasons. First, let me ask, did not they have all of the essential things that go to make up a church before Pentecost? Let us see:

1. They had the Gospel (Mark 1: 1).
2. They were baptized believers. The apostles had been disciples of John, having been baptized by him (Acts 1:22). Of John's baptism, we are told that it was from heaven (John 1:33).
3. They had an organization. They even had a treasurer, though he turned out to be a dishonest one.
4. They had the same Head that the church of today has, Christ.
5. They had the ordinance of baptism.
6. They had the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.
7. They had the Great Commission.
8. They met together as a church for prayer preceding Pentecost.
9. Moreover, they even had a business meeting and selected one to take Judas' place. In an attempt to discredit this action of the church, Dr. Scofield (Scofield Bible notes) makes the claim that the disciples erred in doing this. He claims that God ignored their choice by later calling Paul for this place, and affirms that we find no further mention of Matthias in the New Testament. In this he casts an unwarranted aspersion upon that New Testament church. Moreover, his statement about Matthias is not true to the Scriptures, for in a later chapter (Acts 6:2-61 the Holy Spirit recognizes Matthias as an apostle by mentioning him as one of the twelve. Dr. Scofield seeks to fit the incident of Matthias' selection with his theory that the church began on the day of Pentecost, and his effort merely betrays how far men will go in order to seek to sustain a theory.



Again, that the church existed before Pentecost is shown in that we are distinctly told that Christ sang praises in the midst of the church. Heb. 2:12 says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church I will sing praises unto thee." This passage is quoted by the inspired writer of Hebrews from the twenty-second Psalm. To what incident in the life of Christ does it refer? what occasion did He sing praises in the midst of the church? Turn to Mark 14:26, and you will find the occasion mentioned. It was following the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper that Jesus in the midst of His little church joined with them in singing a hymn. That Christ sang praises in the midst of the church before Pentecost, carries without saying that the church existed before that time.

Exegetical and eisegetical ingenuity has been exerted to give the passage just quoted some other meaning, but the fact remains that the interpretation that I have indicated is the simplest and most natural one.

In the third place, that the church existed before Pentecost is clearly shown by Acts 2:41, where we read that on the day of Pentecost There were added unto them about three thousand souls." Since they were believers added by baptism, it is very evident that what they were added to was the church. If I should tell a friend that I had recently added a hundred dollars to my account, he would understand me to imply that I had in existence a bank account previous to the time of my depositing the hundred dollars. A church was necessarily already in existence on the day of Pentecost, else it could not have been "added to." It is useless to argue that the three thousand were merely added to the ranks of believers and not to the church, for the same language is used in the 47th verse, where we are told that the "Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." (American Revision) None will deny that "them" in the 47th verse refers to the church. Indeed, the Authorized Version translates "church" instead of "them." Does the 47th verse indicate the existence of a church any more strongly than the 41st? Indeed it does not. Only those in desperate straits to maintain a theory would deny that the three thousand baptized on Pentecost were added to a church

that already existed, for that is what the language irresistibly leads one to conclude.

Again, let us read the Master's words as recorded in Matthew 18:17, "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican." The context shows that these words were addressed to His disciples. His words would lead one to believe that they constituted His church in its incipient stage. Indeed, the belief that the apostles themselves were the first members of the church is in exact accord with I Cor. 12:28, where we read, "And God hath set some in the church, FIRST apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers," etc.

One may speculate and theorize upon Matthew 18:17 all they please, but still it remains unreasonable to believe that Jesus referred to something that the disciples did not understand, or that He indicated a rule of discipline relating to a church that did not exist. To the one that accepts this passage at its face value it appears conclusive that the church was in existence at the time that Jesus spoke these words.

In the fifth place, let us note that if the church did not exist before Pentecost, then the Great Commission was given only to the disciples as individuals, consequently is not binding upon the church. Unwilling to concede a church before Pentecost, Dr. C. I. Scofield takes this very position. In his "Synthesis of Bible Truth" (p. 431), he says: "The visible church as such is charged with no mission. The commission to evangelize the world is personal and not corporate." If this theory be true, then the Great Commission was binding only upon the apostles, and when they died the obligation no longer rested upon anyone. This view is as absurd as it is unscriptural.

No, Jesus gave the Commission to His disciples in corporate capacity. He delivered it to them as a church. His church He charged with the task of

evangelization. His church He charged with the duty of baptizing and teaching. And knowing all things, He knew that His church would have that continuity essential for the carrying out of His orders.

Similarly let us note that, unless the church existed previous to Pentecost, the Lord's Supper is not a church ordinance, If He gave it only to individuals as such, when they died the ordinance died with them. We cannot believe this in the light of Paul's account of the institution of the Supper as given in I Cor.11. Here, according to the account given, Jesus clearly implied that this memorial ordinance will be observed "till He come again." The individuals who were present at the Supper have been dead for centuries, and still He has not come. Evidently it was not to individuals as such that He gave the ordinance, but to individuals as constituting the church. Only this church, the church to which continuous existence has been promised, could observe the Memorial Meal continuously from the time of its institution until He comes again.

And obviously, if Jesus gave the Memorial Supper to His church, that church must have been in existence at the time He gave it. That time preceded Pentecost!

I close the chapter by quoting Dr. Scarborough from the article before mentioned. He admirably sums up the facts concerning Christ's founding of the church in these words: "When He ascended He left the church some of its officers, the apostles, not to be permanent, to be sure; its foundation of faith; its laws of life; its ordinances; its commission; its great world task; the terms and conditions of admittance; the new birth based on repentance and faith in Christ; He left it its great central dynamic theme and power---Jesus crucified, buried, raised, coming again-; He gave it the promise of the Holy Spirit. After He ascended, this unit and growing corporate organization called out and appointed officers, to take Judas' place-Acts 1: 15-26. This was the act of the church. Then in the first chapter of Acts we find this church well organized, already established under the personal ministry of

Christ and by Him set to the task of evangelism; and through the Holy Spirit it held its first great meeting. Then in Acts the sixth chapter we find the organization completed by the addition of deacons; and so it had two sets of officers---pastors and deacons; two ordinances---baptism and the Supper; a democratic form of organization, as was shown in the election of Matthias to take Judas' place and the election of the deacons. The church itself was the authority in these appointments. Thus we can see that through the process of years Jesus Himself organized His church and, under the direction of the Divine Spirit, deacons were added to the organization after Pentecost. It can in all the highest senses claim Christ as its organizer and central authority and power.

*“Jesse B. Thomas, in his great book, 'The Church and the Kingdom,' has forever settled the matter that the church emphasized in the New Testament is not the universal invisible church, but a local, visible body. It will be many a day before, an intelligent man will even attempt to reply to this book, and no one will ever really reply to it. “*

-T. T. Martin, in *“The, New Testament Church.”*

*“I have not been able to get from fifty years study of the Bible a conception of the church as a great nation-wide or world-wide ecclesiasticism, embracing all Christendom in all ages and countries. To my mind there can be no such thing. The universal invisible church is to me nonsense. Nothing, as I understand it, is a church except a local, self-governing body of professedly regenerated people, organized according to the New Testament and acting under the authority of Jesus Christ, as taught and practiced by His inspired apostles and writers. “*

-J Calla Midyett, in *“Western Recorder.”*

### III

## The Kind of Church that Jesus Built

We have seen that Jesus established a church, and have determined from the New Testament record that He did this during the period of His personal ministry on earth. It is now in order for us to consider the third question: “What kind of church was it that Jesus founded?” just what did He mean when He said, “*I will build my church*”? If all persons were willing to accept the New Testament without bias, prejudice, or preconceived notions and theories, there need be no difference of opinion at all on this point. Unfortunately all are not willing that the New Testament should be permitted to mean what it says. The clear meaning of “ecclesia,” which Christ used to designate His new institution, does not fit into the church theory of some, so they have coined a new meaning for the word. In this way, by using ecclesia in an unwarranted sense, they have invented another “Church” than the one that Jesus established.

Rome, in order to justify her theory, overlooks the distinction that the Scriptures make between the church and the Kingdom, and seeks to identify the church that Jesus founded with the hierarchical organization that we today know as the Roman Catholic Church. In Catholic thought, the “Church” is the visible Kingdom of God on earth, and with them there are no churches, separate, local, independent bodies, but one great, all-embracing, world-organization under papal dominion and control. Accordingly we find Cardinal Gibbons saying (Faith of Our Fathers, p. 6), “*The Church is called a Kingdom.*” And following this he goes on to show that the members of the Catholic Church, although many are, to use his own words, “*all united to one supreme visible head, whom they are bound to obey.*”

I need not here take the time to discuss the difference between the church and the Kingdom. That difference is very clearly marked in the New Testament, as I will show in the next chapter.

The theories held by the various Protestant denominations (let it be kept in mind that **Baptists are not Protestants**) are somewhat different from that of the Catholics. Some of these denominations with the Catholics, repeat the Apostles Creed and affirm a belief in the “Holy Catholic Church,” but at the same time attach to the words a different meaning. Protestants have conceded out of necessity that Jesus founded and established a church. And they have recognized the fact that if this church was a local, visible body they cannot be members of the true church, the one founded by Jesus, since the organizations that they belong to have, without exception, originated hundreds of years since Christ established His church.

In this situation only two things remain to do, either frankly admit their organization to be extra-scriptural and rivals of Christ's church or else devise some theory that will justify their separate denominational existence and still permit them a place in the ecclesia of Christ. The latter alternative is the one that has generally been taken, for there have been theories a-plenty. One of these is what is sometimes called “the church branch” theory. It is the theory that all of the various Protestant churches are but “branches” of the true church. It embraces the idea that all are headed for the same place---all are part and parcel of the same thing--- the Church of Christ. However, this church “branch” theory immediately raises the embarrassing question as to the identity of the trunk of the church tree to which the “branch” denominations belong. I use the word “embarrassing,” and it is embarrassing in the light of the historical fact that all of the great Protestant denominations (remember again that Baptists are not Protestants) have either directly or indirectly “branched off” from the Catholic Church.

Of the theory mentioned above, Dr. R. L. Baker aptly says: *“The branch church theory has a great place in the popular thinking. It is untenable, unscriptural, and even unthinkable. Plant a watermelon, let its branches run out in several directions, on one branch there grows a pumpkin, on another a melon, on another a citron, and so on until we have the various branches all covered in the Protestant melon patch. Who would not say this is a freak of nature, a real monstrosity? Yet this is the average reasoning of today amongst the branch theory people. “Tell it to the church” would hardly work in such a wonderful monstrosity.”*

But the theory that is most commonly relied upon, by those who belong to apocryphal institutions and do not wish to admit the truth of Baptist claims, is the “Universal, Invisible Church” theory. This theory, which plays exegetical tricks, employs specious arguments and minimizes the importance of the true churches of Christ, is a theory that has been and is a curse to the cause of Christ. It is one of the most widespread and hurtful heresies of our day, and yet, strange to say, without foundation and contrary to common sense once it is subjected to close scrutiny. The theory has variations, but in the main the holders of it maintain that, the church mentioned in Matthew 16:18, the one that Jesus said He would build, was not the local assembly, but consisted of all believers of every church (or no church, as the case may be) everywhere. According to this view, one becomes a member of this church automatically when he becomes a Christian. To believe this one must believe that side by side today exists two churches, one local and visible, consisting of men and women organized for the carrying out of Christ's commands, the other unseen and invisible and entrusted with no work or mission. Moreover, this involves that these churches have a different membership, since some presumably belong to the universal, invisible Church who have never joined the local and visible body. Not only that, it further makes Christ the author of two churches, unless we utterly deny that He is the Founder and Head of the local, visible church.

It ought to be clear to everyone that much is involved in the meaning of Matthew 16:18, and in the correct answer to the question, “What kind of a church did Jesus build?”, if the church which Jesus promised was “universal and invisible,“ then it follows that the Baptist claim to perpetuity is absurd, and the product of an unwarranted arrogance. This being true, the Baptist claim to church perpetuity stands or falls according to the meaning of *ecclesia* in Matthew 16:18, and other passages of the New Testament.

After careful study of all the passages in which the word *ecclesia* occurs in the New Testament, and the Septuagint, and after examining to ascertain the use of the word in classical Greek, I submit the proposition that the church that Jesus founded was the *local assembly*, and that to use the word *ecclesia*. to designate a “universal,” or “invisible’ Church is to pervert its meaning, and to fall into serious error.

I realize full well that for me merely to make the bare statement recorded above is not enough. Proofs, of course, required. But I believe that ample proof can be produced to satisfy any mind that is open to the truth.

Since the validity of the Baptist belief in the perpetuity of their churches hinges upon the *kind* of church that Jesus established, it seems advisable to deal with the question somewhat at length. I trust that the reader will pardon me if I seem to spend an undue amount of time on this point. It is because the question of the kind of church that Jesus founded is absolutely fundamental to the discussion of church perpetuity. If the church that Jesus established was the local assembly, the Baptist claim that their churches are the true New Testament churches which have had a continuity of existence since the days of Jesus, is simply unassailable. I have a number of reasons to offer as to why I believe that the church founded by Jesus was the local, visible assembly.

My first reason is that the meaning of the word “ecclesia” used in Matthew 16:18 irresistibly leads one to believe that the local assembly was



meant. Indeed, locality inheres in the very word, so that it is really improper for anyone to speak of the “local” or “visible” assembly, since the only kind of an assembly that can exist is both local and visible. In this book I only use the terms “local” and “visible” because of the failure on the part of so many to recognize the truth that there can be no ecclesia or assembly anywhere without a place to meet. By using these terms so commonly used I hope to be better understood, although I realize that to do so is to use mere tautology.

The very strongest argument against the “Universal, invisible theory” is a correct understanding of the meaning of the word ecclesia or church. Indeed, to make a study of the word in the light of its usage in the time of Christ and preceding, is to see how impossible and absurd is the belief in a “universal, invisible Church.” To make the word as used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18, refer to other than the local assembly is to attach a meaning to the word utterly foreign to its nature, and completely out of harmony with its ordinary use.

Let us briefly consider the word as regards its meaning in classical and New Testament usage:

The word *ecclesia*, rendered “church” in English versions, was not a new word coined by Jesus, but a word already in current use at that time and moreover a word the meaning of which had become definitely fixed and established. This being the case, it would seem highly improbable that Jesus, speaking to the disciples, would use the word in some sense altogether foreign to its current use, and that without a single word of explanation. As one writer puts it: *“It is not ingenious for a teacher without a word of explanation to use words to his pupils with a meaning entirely different from what they understand the words to have.”* Dr. Jesse B. Thomas says in his book, “The Church and the Kingdom”: *“No such difficulties attend the construction of the language---it simply supposes our Lord consistent with Himself, and with the ordinary usages of speech, assuming that He whom,*

*'the common people heard gladly' would not wantonly use words in a strange sense that, would inevitably perplex and mislead the common man."*

What, then, let us ask, did the word mean as understood by the people of that day? Says Dr. Geo. W. McDaniel (The Churches of the New Testament), *"Both with the Greeks and the Jews, the word denoted an assembly of the people. . . Among the Greeks ecclesia was the assembly of the citizens of a free city---state gathered by a herald blowing a horn through the streets of a town."* Dr. Thomas says in another place, *"It was the organized assembly of the authorized voters of the local community met to transact business of common concern. It corresponded to the town meeting of New England of later days."* Liddell and Scott (Greek Lexicon) define the word ecclesia as follows: *"An assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly."* Again, Dr. B. H. Carroll says: *"Its primary meaning is: An organized assembly, whose members have been properly called out from private homes for business to attend to public affairs. This definition necessarily implies prescribed conditions of membership. This meaning applies substantially alike to the ecclesia of a self-governing Greek state (Acts 19:39), the Old Testament ecclesia or convocation of National Israel (Acts 7:38) and to the New Testament ecclesia. When our Lord says: 'On this rock I will build my ecclesia,' while the 'My' distinguished His ecclesia from the Greek state ecclesia, and the Old Testament ecclesia, the word itself naturally retains its ordinary meaning."* (Ecclesia, the Church).

Therefore, since *ecclesia* in its accepted meaning carried with it the idea of locality and organization, to make it refer to a so-called "universal, invisible" Church, possessing neither locality nor organization, is to do violence to the word and to use it in a purely arbitrary sense.

"But," someone objects, "does not the actual use of ecclesia in certain New Testament passages indicate a broader usage than to designate a local organized assembly?" In reply to this it may be said that in the Christian

usage of the word there were three ideas, viz., *an institution, a particular congregation, and the redeemed of all time* considered in the light of a church in *prospect* In each case where the word is used there is nothing that argues against the general usage. To particularize: The word is used fourteen times to denote an institution. When it is used in this way it is, according to Dr. Carroll, used in either an *abstract* or *generic* sense. “*This follows,*” he says, “*from the laws of language governing the use of words. For example, if an English statesman, referring to the right of each individual citizen to be tried by his peers, should say: 'On this rock England will build her jury, and all the power of tyranny shall not prevail against her,' he uses the term jury in an abstract sense, i.e., in the sense of an institution. But when this institution finds concrete expression or becomes operative, it is always a particular jury of twelve men and never an aggregation of all juries into one big jury.*”

Then he cites Matthew 16:18 as an example of the abstract use of ecclesia. Matthew 18:17, he cites as an example of the generic use of the word. Then he adds these words: “*Whenever the abstract or generic finds concrete expression or takes operative shape it is always a particular assembly.*”

It is permissible for us to use the word “church” abstractly as did Jesus in denoting the institution He founded. But, as Dr. Carroll points out, when we begin to particularize we must, according to the very laws of language, settle upon a particular assembly of baptized believers in Christ. So we can see that the abstract or generic use of the word is, after all, at bottom, no different in meaning from the use of it to denote a particular assembly. And it is to denote a particular local body of believers that the word is mostly used---indeed by actual count, ninety-three times out of a little over a hundred times that the word occurs in Christian usage.

And now for the third idea contained in the Christian usage of ecclesia, viz., the use of it to denote the redeemed of all time, considered in the light

of a church in prospect. At least two passages seem to use ecclesia in this sense, and these two in no wise militate against the general use, since this is an assembly that exists only in prospect. Dr. Carroll states the whole case very clearly in his booklet, as follows: *“This ecclesia is prospective, not actual. That is to say, there is not now but will be a general assembly of Christ's people. That general assembly will be composed of all the redeemed of all time. Here are three indisputable and very significant facts concerning Christ's general assembly: First, many of its members properly called out, and now in Heaven. Second, many others of them, also called out, are here, on earth. Third, indefinite millions of them, probably the great majority, yet to be called, are neither on earth nor in heaven, because they are yet unborn, and therefore non-existent. It follows that if one part of the membership is now in Heaven, another part yet unborn, there is as yet no assembly, except in prospect. We may, however, properly speak of the general assembly now, because, though part of it is yet non-existent, and though there has not yet been a gathering together of the other two parts, yet the mind, may conceive of that gathering as an accomplished fact. In God's purposes and plans, the general assembly exists now and also in our conceptions or anticipations, but certainly not as a fact.”*

I have quoted Dr. Carroll somewhat at length because his booklet is one of the sanest, most careful and scholarly examinations of the New Testament church that has ever been written. Many, scholarly men fully accord with his position as here outlined. For instance, Dr. J. G. Bow, in his “What Baptists Believe,” writes as follows: *“The general assembly and church of the first-born.”* --- this last will evidently be local when they shall have assembled.

A second reason as to why Matthew 16:18 refers to the local assembly and not to the Church universal, is that Christ's own use of the word prohibits us from believing that He meant anything else. Suppose that one should hear a speaker use a certain term, the meaning of which seems doubtful. Later on in his address the speaker uses the same word at least a score of times, and

in such a way as to be perfectly clear as to his meaning. Would it be wise for one to judge that he meant something totally different in his first use of the word than in the twenty times in which he subsequently used it? Or would it be the part of common sense to interpret the meaning connected with the first use of the term, in the light of his subsequent use? This illustration sets forth the exact situation as regards the interpretation of Matthew 16:18.

Let us, for the sake of argument, say that we are in doubt as to what Christ meant by “church” in this passage just mentioned, which is the first in which the term occurs. Let us look at the other places in which He uses the word, and see what He meant there. We find, upon making a careful search that He subsequently used the word ecclesia or church twenty-one times. Following the first place in which church is mentioned, we find that the next, and the last place in which church is mentioned in the Gospels, is Matthew 18:17, where Jesus says: “Tell it to the church, but if he neglect to hear the church. . . .” To affirm that Jesus was here speaking of a universal, invisible Church would be to descend to absurdity, since it would be impossible for a church member to bring a matter before a universal, invisible, unorganized “Church” not possessing locality. Jesus plainly meant local assembly; nothing else would fit the case at all.

The other instances in which Christ used the word ecclesia are found in the Revelation. Examples are as follows: “To the angel of the church at Ephesus;” “Hear what the Spirit, sayeth to the churches;” “The seven churches,” etc. With reference to the last example, Sir William Ramsey, world-renowned scholar, affirms that the seven churches mentioned were actual, local churches that existed at that time. In each of the twenty-one times that Jesus used ecclesia, subsequent to his utterance recorded in Matthew 16:18, He plainly and unmistakably referred to the local assembly. As Dr. T. T. Eaton remarks, in commenting on this question: “*The probability therefore is twenty-one to nothing that He meant local assembly in Matthew 16:18. A probability of twenty-one to nothing is a certainty.*”

*Hence it is certain that Christ meant the local assembly when He said: 'On this rock I will build my church.'*“

Again, a third reason for believing that Matthew 16:18 refers to the local assembly is that Christ only promised to build one kind of church. He never intimated in any way that He would found the local assembly and also a universal, invisible Church, composed of the redeemed of all the so-called churches. Consequently when we turn to the book of Acts and the Epistles, and find local assemblies of believers springing up here and there, we immediately identify these with the church that Jesus spoke of. To do otherwise would be to assume that something else came into existence other than the institution which Jesus promised.

Therefore, since Jesus only spoke of one kind of church, and since the kind of church which we find in apostolic times is the local assembly, for one to seek to introduce a universal or invisible Church is to seek to create a second ecclesia--- another than Christ began. This is to breed confusion.

A fourth reason for believing that the church referred to by Jesus was the local assembly is that the universal, invisible theory is not only unscriptural but according to history is post-apostolic in its origin. Harnack, the church historian, in his “History of Dogma,” makes this clear. He says: *“The expression, invisible Church, is found for the first time in Hegessipus. Eusebius, Tertulian, Clement of Alexandria, Hiero, Cornelius, and Cyprian, all used the term holy churches and never the Catholic or Universal Church.”* Again in Vol. 2, p. 83, he says: *“No one thought of the desperate idea of an 'invisible Church;' this notion would probably have brought about a lapse far more rapidly than the idea of the Holy Catholic Church.”*

A fifth reason for believing that Jesus founded the local assembly is that the local assembly is not only the only kind of an assembly that can exist; it is the only kind to which Jesus could have entrusted the Commission and the ordinances. Christ's chief purpose in forming His church was in

order that it might reach the lost with the gospel, and then might build up those saved by teaching and training them in all things He commanded. The functions of a church as outlined by Jesus can only be performed by a local assembly. A universal invisible Church composed of an unorganized throng of members of all the churches, is, from the functional point of view, simply inconceivable.

Again, when Christ promised the church, He promised that the “Gates of hades shall not prevail against it.” Slight difference of opinions as to the exact meaning of the “gates of hades” does not obscure the fact that Jesus meant that His church would have foes and would encounter opposition. The history of Baptists as they were imprisoned, martyred, driven into the dens and caves of the earth, shows that His church has had to contend with the organized forces of evil. Baptist churches can be and have been persecuted, but a universal, invisible Church cannot be. Men cannot persecute an invisible something. Christ's promise is meaningless if applied to such.

A sixth reason that suggests itself is this: The conception of a universal, invisible Church usurps the place reserved in the New Testament for the Kingdom of God. Those who hold this theory practically identify church and kingdom. This is wholly out of accord with the Scriptures, for they make a very clear distinction between the two, as will be shown in the next chapter.

When I think along the line that I have tried to carry the thought of the reader, and am led to see the lack of any sort of foundation for the theory of an invisible, universal Church, I can heartily join with Dr. J. Lewis Smith in saying: *“Here, then, is the inevitable and irreversible conclusion. This Catholic or Universal Church as well as the Invisible Church idea are things of man's devising & and when we say, I believe in the holy Catholic Church, we are placing a figment of the imagination a chimera- a misnomer above the real local church idea which Christ Himself used, and one of which*

*churches He built and to which He gave His great Commission and His ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.”*

*“The popular teaching that all of the saved compose the church of Christ is a man-made theory without Bible proof” “We recognize every saved person as a brother or sister but not every saved one as a member of a gospel church”*

-J. T. Moore, in “Why I Am A Baptist”



## IV

### **The Family, Kingdom and Church of God Differentiated**

When one sets forth the Baptist claim to perpetuity and attempts to demonstrate that Baptist churches alone can claim Jesus for Founder and Head, there are always those who immediately jump to the conclusion that Baptists claim that none are saved but Baptists. They get the idea that Baptists deny them a place in the kingdom and family of God. Such is by no means true. Far be it from any true Baptist to claim that one must be a Baptist in order to be saved. Indeed, they believe just the reverse, for according to their view one must be saved before he can be a Baptist. And as for the kingdom and family of God, true Baptists are members of both before they ever become members of a Baptist church. If not, they are not fit to belong to the church, for they are yet unsaved. The things that I have said in former chapters concerning the church have nothing to do with anyone's membership in God's family or kingdom, for the church, family, and kingdom are three separate and distinct things. Because of the confusion that reigns in so many minds on this point, I have thought it worth while to devote an entire chapter to a discussion of the differences between these three.

While considering how best to present my ideas for this chapter, in reading what others had written along this line, I came across an old tract published some years ago by H. B. Taylor, editor of *News and Truths*. The tract is such a clear, concise statement concerning the differences between the kingdom of God, the family of God, and the church of God, that I can do no better than to quote it. I make only a few changes such as to adapt it to the present use. I invite the reader to ponder very carefully the distinctions made and to verify them from the Scriptures.

**1. THE FAMILY OF GOD.** “The Family of God includes all of the children of God in heaven and on earth. In Ephesians 3:15, Paul speaks of the 'whole family in heaven and on earth.' This family includes all believers. 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' Gal. 3:26. All believers are God's children. Since Old Testament saints were saved by faith in Christ (Acts 10:43, Rom. 4:16, etc.), they are all members of God's family.”

“God's family is bigger than the kingdom of God or the church of God, for it now contains all of the saved from Abel to the last man who believed, whether in heaven or on earth. God has only one family. All believers are children and heirs of God.”

**2. THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** “The Kingdom of God includes all of the saved on earth at any given time. In Matthew 13 the kingdom is used to include all professors. But, the kingdom as used in John 3:3-5, Matthew 16:19;11:11, Luke 16:16, Romans 14:17, Coloss. 1:13, John 18:36, etc., is composed of all the born again on earth. This is not the kingdom of Daniel 2:44, Luke 19:11-27, Acts 1:6, etc. Those passages refer to the millennium. That kingdom is yet future. What is sometimes called the spiritual kingdom is composed only of those who have been born again, who have been 'translated out of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.' In John 3:3-5 the Master said, 'Except a man be born anew he can neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God.' In Matt. 18:16 and Mark 10:13-15 the Master shows very clearly that the kingdom is composed of only such as have received Him, whether children or adults.” “The family of God includes all of the saved of all the ages, whether in heaven or on earth; the kingdom of God includes that part of the family of God who are on earth now.”

**3. THE CHURCH OF GOD.** “The church of God is never used of any institution, except of an assembly or congregation of baptized believers in some given locality. E. g., the church of God at Corinth. “-1 Cor. 1:2.

The local individual church is the only kind of church God has on this earth today. There is only one family of God, composed of all the redeemed of all the ages in heaven, and on earth. There is only one kingdom of God, composed of all the born again on the earth now. There are thousands of churches of God on earth. Every individual Baptist church is a church of God. No others are. When a man is born again he is born into God's family. He is in the family of God forever. The relationship does not change. Whether in heaven or on earth he is in God's family. When he is born again he also enters God's kingdom. This relationship is for life. When he dies he passes out of the kingdom of God on earth and enters 'His heavenly kingdom' (II Tim. 4: 18). After he has been born again he is not yet in a church of God but is now a scriptural subject for admission into a church of God. 'The Lord added to the church daily the saved' (Acts 2:47). Church membership was not something a man got with salvation, but a subsequent blessing he got after salvation by being added to the church. Baptism is not essential to admission into either the family of God or the kingdom of God; but baptism is essential to admission into a church of God. Men are born anew into the family of God and into the kingdom of God; but they are baptized into a church of God (I Cor. 12:13). The 'one body' referred to by Paul in I Cor. 12:13 was the church of God at Corinth. Note in I Cor. 12:27 he says, "We are a body of Christ and member's in particular." That local church at Corinth was the body of Christ at Corinth. The members of the church at Corinth belonged to only 'one body' of Christ. That body of Christ probably did not contain all the saved at Corinth (I Cor. 1:2) and none of the saved anywhere else except at Corinth. Since they belonged to only 'one body' and that was the local church at Corinth, Christ has no other kind of a church or body except a local church. If they had belonged to a local church at Corinth, which Paul said was a body of Christ, and then to the kind of church that some believe in, composed of all the saved every where, they would have belonged to two churches or bodies of Christ---one local and visible, the other universal and invisible. The New Testament shows nothing of any such confusion as that. God is not the author of any such confusion. Jesus Christ has only one kind of church or body on this earth, and that is

the local assembly--the organized body of baptized believers in any given community. The church which Paul called 'the house of God' was a local church. The church which Paul said was the 'pillar and ground of the truth' was a local church. The church to which the Lord Jesus promised perpetuity (Matt.16:8) was a local church, for He never spoke of any other kind. The meaning of the word ecclesia permits of no other kind. On that we will let others more competent, than the writer speak.

Prof. Royal, of Wake Forest College, North Carolina, who taught Prof. A. T. Robertson, of the Louisville Seminary, and Prof. C. B. Williams, Greek, when asked if he knew of an instance in classic, Greek where ecclesia was ever used of a class of "unassembled or unassembling persons" said: "*I do not know of any such passage in classic Greek.*" With this statement agree Professors Burton, of Chicago University, Stifter of Crozer, Strong of Rochester and many other scholars. Joseph Cross (Episcopalian), in a book of sermons entitled "Coals from the Altar," says: "*We hear much of the invisible church as contradistinguished from the church visible. Of an invisible church in this world, I know nothing, the Word of God says nothing; nor can anything of the kind exist, except in the brain of a heretic. The church is a body; but what sort of a body is that which can neither be seen nor identified? A body is an organism occupying space and having a definite locality. A mere aggregation is not a body; there must be organization as well. A heap of heads, hands, feet and other members would not make a body; they must be united in a system, each in its proper place and all pervaded by a common life. So a collection of stones, brick and timbers would not be a house; the material must be built together, in an artistic order, adapted to utility. So a mass of roots, trunks and branches would not be a vine or a tree: the several parts must be developed according to the laws of nature from the same seed and nourished from the same vital sap.*"

Exactly so.

The limbs of a body scattered on a battlefield are not a body. The material of a house in the woods or quarries is not a house. These members and this material must be put in place before you have either a body or house. So the saved are not a church unless brought together and organized or builded into a body or house of God. There is not and cannot be such an institution as a universal, invisible church on this earth, composed of all the saved, because the material has never been brought together and builded into a house or body.

When the Lord Jesus and Paul spoke of the baptized believers of a larger territory than a local church they always said churches. There was no confusion in their speaking, though there is much confusion in modern thinking upon this question.

Once more we try to make the distinction clear. The family of God is composed of all the saved in heaven and on earth. Old Testament saints and babies who died in infancy are in God's family. They are not now nor were they ever in the Kingdom or in any church of God.

All believers on the earth at any time since the days of John the Baptist (Luke 16:16) compose the kingdom of God. There are no infants in it. All true believers, whether Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, or non-church members on earth are in the kingdom; for if true believers they have been born anew. Only baptized believers or Baptists are members of the churches of Christ.

*“Not only did Christ promise to be with His ecclesta to the end of the world, when He gave the Commission, but when He established the memorial supper and delivered it to His church He said, “This do in remembrance of Me till I come.” Now if the doing of a thing is to be perpetuated the doers of the thing must be perpetuated. This is a self-evident proposition.”*

-W. D. Nowlin in -"Western Recorder."

## V

### The Master's Promise

In the preceding chapters I have shown that Jesus, during the period of His personal ministry, organized and began His church. I have further shown that the church which He began was not an ethereal, invisible, universal, unorganized something without either function or mission, but that it was the local assembly, entrusted with the greatest task that was ever given to any institution on this earth.

So, having in existence the church, and having in mind a clear idea as to what kind it is, we are ready for the further question proposed at the beginning, namely, Did Jesus Promise Its Perpetuity?

Unquestionably He did.

In the same passage where we have our Lord's first mention of the church we find the promise that "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it."

None will deny that these words constitute a promise of the church's perpetuity. Dr. J. W. Porter says (*World's Debt to Baptists*): "*If these words teach anything, they teach that the churches instituted by Christ and the apostles would never die, but would reproduce and multiply and perpetuate themselves to the end of all time.*" Of the passage, "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it," Dr. Nowlin says (*Fundamentals of the Faith*), "*Referring no doubt to its indestructibility.*"

But lest we should be led to depend too much upon the passage just referred to, let us ask, Is there anything else in the Scriptures that would warrant us in believing that Christ meant to perpetuate His church? The

answer is, we find abundant evidence of this. Let us look at some of the proof:

“First, the Kingdom of God, as all will agree, is to be perpetuated”... “until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. (Rev. 11:15). In Luke we have this statement: “Of His kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:33). How, let us ask, is the kingdom of God to be extended and advanced in the world? The answer is, by the church which Jesus founded. Men get into the kingdom of God by being born into it. This spiritual birth comes about through personal faith in the Son of God as Saviour. It is the church that preaches the Good News of the Son of God. Through the church's message men hear, believe, and are born into God's kingdom. Thus the church stands in the position of a recruiting agency for the kingdom of God, since no one gets into the kingdom except as they hear and believe the gospel, which has been preserved and is proclaimed by the church.

So in summing up we state it this way: the Bible teaches that the kingdom of God is to be perpetuated. It shows that the church is Christ's divinely purposed instrumentality for the advancement and perpetuation of the kingdom. This being true, the Bible's teaching as to the perpetuity of the kingdom involves as a matter of course the perpetuity of the agency through which the kingdom is to be perpetuated—namely—the church.

Again, when Christ gave the Great Commission to His disciples, as has been shown, He addressed them not simply as individuals, but as individuals constituting His church. To the Commission He added the promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end, of the age.” Manifestly, if the church at any time ceased to exist, Christ's promise would become of none effect. To be with the church always, or more properly, “all the days” necessarily means that there must always, every day, until the end of the age, be in existence, the church, to which the promise was given!

Then again, all of the great denominations, so far as I can ascertain, agree that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. Now when Jesus instituted and gave this ordinance to His church to be observed, He said: "This do in Remembrance of me ... as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death TILL HE COME." Most certainly if the doing of a thing is to be perpetuated, the doers of that thing must be perpetuated also. If the observance of the Lord's Supper is to be perpetuated until Christ comes again, then obviously the church to which He gave the ordinance must, in the very nature of the case, be perpetuated too. There is no escape from this conclusion!

*"Any church whose origin was in Mediaeval or modern times is not the church that Christ set up, for the simple reason that it was not in existence when Christ set up His church and did not come into existence for a long time after. "*

--W. M. Nevins, in *"Why a Baptist and Not a Roman Catholic."*

*"In many instances fate seems to have fixed the name of their human founders upon the churches they instituted. "*

--W. Porter, in *"Random Remarks."*

*"It is a fact that none but Baptists make the claim that our Lord during His personal ministry founded their church' or denomination. The one that come nearest making such a claim is the Catholic Church. However, when the Catholic claim is investigated it is found that they claim that Peter was the first Pope. But we know their claim is false, that the Catholic Church is not of Christ but is a combination of heathenism and bearing the name Christian to cover up its anti-Christian doctrines and practices. "*

--J. L. Smith, in *"Why I Am a Baptist"*



## VI

### The Search for the True Church

We have seen that Jesus founded or established the church, that He founded it during the days of His personal ministry on earth, that the church which He established was the local assembly, and that He promised to perpetuate it “till He come. “ Having ascertained these truths, we are driven to the conclusion that somewhere in the world today is to be found the true church of Christ---the church that has been perpetuated from the days of Christ and the apostles, and that holds fast the doctrines that prevailed in the New Testament church. As has been said, “We must either suppose that there has been a Christian people, existing in every age from the apostolic to the present, characterized by the same doctrines and practices, or that there were periods in the intervening history when apostolic faith and practice had absolutely no representative on the face of the earth. Are we prepared to take the latter alternative? . . . What then becomes of the Saviour's promise?”

Forced, therefore, to the conclusion that in accordance with Christ's promise, His church has been perpetuated, and that is to be found in the world today, let us ask the question, “How shall we go about finding it? How shall we, from among the multitudes of so-called churches and denominations, find the true, New Testament church?”

I propose to conduct our search for the true church along three corroborative lines, as follows:

- 1. THE LINE OF HISTORICAL ELIMINATION.**
- 2. THE LINE OF COMPARISON OF DOCTRINES.**
- 3. THE LINE OF HISTORICAL STATEMENTS BY RELIABLE HISTORIANS.**

Let us then begin our search along the first line proposed--namely, that of historical elimination. Possibly an illustration will serve to make clear what I mean just here. Let us, suppose that you come into possession of a valuable document. You lay the paper upon your library table and soon you are called away for something and, forgetting the paper, you go off and leave it lying there among the papers and books that litter the table. Presently you return and upon looking for your paper you find that your table has been put in order during your absence and the document removed. You call the housekeeper and make inquiry. She tells you that she placed the document between the pages of one of the books on the table. She is very sure about it, but she does not recall just which book she placed it in. You begin a search, looking through book after book without result. Finally you have examined every book save one, and you are certain that the books examined do not contain the document. What conclusion do you reach? There is only one conclusion possible, and that is, if you were told the truth, the paper you seek must be in the one book remaining.

So in our search we must eliminate every so-called church whose origin may be dated after the time of Christ. If in this process we eliminate every church save one, we shall be forced to the conclusion that that one is the true church.

Going back to the much-discussed Matthew 16:18, we find two historical tests defined by Jesus---tests that should help and guide us in our investigation.

The first is that the only true church was founded by JESUS HIMSELF -" I will build my church."

The second is that the institution which Jesus called "My church" shall never cease to exist through the ages---"The gates of hades shall not prevail against it."

If in applying these two scriptural, historical tests we find that none of the organizations calling themselves churches, save one, can meet these tests, I must reiterate, we must conclude that one is the true church of Christ. Let us then inquire into the origin of the various denominations that exist today. In this inquiry we shall concern ourselves only with the origin of the main denominations: those that are well known and typical of all others. The denominations that we shall consider are those from which the many small sects have sprung in more recent years. Being the offspring of the older denominations and having their rise in very recent times, they of course fall so far short of meeting Christ's historical test that it would be entirely superfluous to deal with them.

In this investigation, of course the Church of Rome, which we today call the Roman Catholic Church, takes priority. Let us then begin by asking,

### **WHEN DID THE CHURCH OF ROME ORIGINATE?**

We have this question from Dr. J. B. Moody (My Church p. 95): *“It did not originate in a day or year, but gradually subverted the apostles teaching, and in centuries inaugurated full-grown popery. But, there is not a trace of a pope or a universal father... in the first three centuries of the Christian era.”*

The Catholic Church is the result of gradual perversion and corruption. From the days of Constantine, when soldiers without regeneration were baptized into the church by the thousands, and compromise was made with paganism, conditions waxed worse and worse, finally bringing about a state that made the Catholic Church possible. The actual establishment of the Roman Papacy was, according to Dr. S. E. Tull. (Denominationalism Put to Test), accomplished by Gregory the Great in the year A. D. 590. Dr. Tull corroborates his statement by the following quotation from Ridpath (Vol. 4, p. 41):

*“This epoch in history should not be passed over without reference to the rapid growth of the papal church, in the close of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh. Most of all by Gregory the Great whose pontificate extended from 590 to 604, was the supremacy of the apostolic See attested and maintained. Under the triple title of Bishop of Rome, Prelate of Italy, and Apostle the West, he gradually by gentle insinuations or bold assertions as best suited the circumstances, elevated the Episcopacy of Rome into a genuine papacy of the church. He succeeded in bringing the Arians of Italy and Spain into the Catholic fold, and thus secured the solidarity of the Western Ecclesia.”*

Schaff (History of the Christian Church, Vol., 1, p. 15) tells us that Gregory the Great (A. D. 590-604) was the first of the “*proper popes*”, and that with him begins “*the development of the absolute papacy.*” Says Dr. J T. Christian in commenting on this point: “*The growth of the papacy was a process of history. Long before this the bishop of Rome made arrogant claims over other churches.*” Then he adds: “*The line of absolute Mediaeval popes began with Gregory.*”

We have seen that the Catholic claim to apostolic origin breaks down at several points (See Introductory Chapter): First, in failing to establish the primacy of Peter. Second, in failing to establish that Peter was a pope, or indeed that any pope existed for several centuries after Christ. Third, in failing to prove that Peter was ever in Rome. Fourth, in the fact that Catholic faith and practice is utterly at variance with that of the apostolic church. In connection with the points mentioned above it may be well at the risk of multiplying quotations, to give the words of Dr. J. W. Porter (World's Debt to Baptists, pp165, 166):

*“As is well known, the Roman Catholic predicates its claim to Scriptural origin on the supposition that Peter was the first Pope of Rome. Unless they can prove that Peter was at Rome, and that he was also a Pope, their claim to apostolic origin is utterly false. However, there is no*

*controversy on this point, as all the claims of the Roman hierarchy are conditioned upon the primacy of Peter. The two are inseparable and must rise or fall together. Hence for the purpose of this discussion, it will only be necessary to prove that Peter was never a pope at Rome or anywhere else. . . The overwhelming supposition is that Peter was never at any time in Rome ... There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that Peter ever thought that he was a pope, or that anyone else ever thought so... But even were it granted that Peter was at Rome and that he was a pope, the Roman Catholic hierarchy has by faith and practice forfeited its right to be called a Scriptural church.”*

If, as Dr. Tull asserts, with Ridpath, world-renowned historian, and others to corroborate him, the Roman papacy was actually accomplished by Gregory the Great whose pontificate extended from A. D. 590 to 604, then Gregory the Great may be termed the founder of the Catholic Church. True, it is admitted that the Roman apostasy began long before this, but we may rightfully attribute the real formation of the papacy---the real crystallization into a fixed hierarchy to Gregory the Great under whose pontificate the “Supremacy of the Apostolic See was asserted and maintained.”

To illustrate: It is a well-known fact that David during his reign over Israel, collected vast quantities of materials for the building of a temple. It was his work that in a sense made the temple possible. Yet we do not attribute the temple to David, but to Solomon, his successor, under whose reign the structure was actually erected. Similarly the heresies, traditions, heathenish practices, and indeed all of the elements necessary, had accrued one by one and were in existence at the time of Gregory the Great. It only remained for him to elevate, as Ridpath puts it; *“The episcopacy of Rome into a genuine papacy.”*

Let us now apply the historical test laid down by Jesus in Matthew 16:18. It is very evident that the Catholic Church, built by Gregory the Great from the existing paganized, apostate material, five hundred and ninety

years after Christ, cannot meet the historical test of Christ as to origin and perpetuity, and therefore is not the true church -the church which HE founded and promised should never cease to exist.

## **ORIGIN OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

The history of the world does not refer to the existence of a Lutheran, or Lutheran Church before the days of Luther. That he was the founder of the Lutheran Church none can successfully deny. Luther, revolting against the degeneracy of the Catholic Church, organized a movement for reform. There is no historical evidence that he even thought of breaking with the Catholic Church and forming a new one. But his activities brought down upon him the anathema of excommunication, and Luther and his followers were almost forced into forming a new organization. The year 1520 is the very earliest date that can be assigned to the formation of the Lutheran Church. It was in this year, according to McGlothlin (Guide to Study of Church History), that Luther burned the bull of papal excommunication and openly defied the pope. It was not however, until the year 1530 that the system of doctrine and morality which he and his followers had adopted was presented to the Diet of Augsburg.

It cannot be but evident that the Lutheran Church founded by Martin Luther, 1,523 years or thereabouts after Christ, fails to meet the historical test of Christ as to origin and perpetuity, hence cannot be the church which He founded.

## **THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, OR EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

The origin of this church is very clearly and succinctly summed up by Dr. S. E. Tull, in his booklet before mentioned, in the following words: *“In 1509 Henry the Eighth was crowned King of England. Henry was only twelve years of age at the time. He was married the same year to Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and widow of his brother, Arthur. Twenty*

*years later than this, when Henry came to exercise his own prerogative in personal matters, he decided to divorce Catherine and to marry Ann Boleyn, an English girl who had been reared at the court of Charles the Fifth of France. This question of Henry's divorce raised a great discussion, which was finally carried to the Pope of Rome for settlement. The Pope decided against Henry. Realizing the political impotence of the Pope to interfere in England's political matters, Henry thereupon took matters in his own hands, and proceeded to put away Catherine and to marry Ann, notwithstanding the Pope's pronounced interdiction. This defiance of the Pope caused Henry's excommunication from the Church by Pope Clement the Seventh, 1534. Accepting the situation as an opportunity to rid himself completely of all political alliances with the Pope, Henry immediately convened his Parliament, and on November, 23rd of the same year, 1534, caused his Parliament to pass an act known as, "The Act of Supremacy," which declared Henry the Eighth to be "The Protector and Supreme Head of the Church and Clergy of England." Thus it was that on the 23rd of November, 1534, the "Church of England" was set up, with the profligate, adulterous, murderous Henry as its founder and head. Brought into existence in a day by the power of a political fiat, the Episcopal Church started on its career as a "Christian" denomination.*

Of the church mentioned above, Macauley writes as follows (History of England, Vol. 1, p. 32): "*Henry the Eighth attempted to constitute an Anglican Church differing from the Roman Catholic Church on the point of supremacy and on that point alone. His success in this attempt was extraordinary.*" Can anything be clearer than that the Church of England, or Episcopal Church, founded not by Christ, but by Henry the Eighth, 1,534 years after Christ, fails to meet the test as to origin and perpetuity, hence cannot be the true church?

## **ORIGIN OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The success of Luther's Protestantism on the Continent gave liberty for other like movements. John Calvin, who was born in the year 1509, the same year that Henry the Eighth was crowned King of England, who was educated a Catholic monk, joined hands with Luther and aided the Reformation. In some respects Calvin's ideas of both doctrine and polity were different from those of Luther. For this reason, Calvin's reform fell into distinct channels and crystallized into an independent organization, and because of their form of government, Calvinists became known as Presbyterians.

We may date the beginning of the Presbyterian Church as a separate denomination in the year 1536, as it was in this year that "Calvin's Institutes" was given to the world. It follows quite naturally that the Presbyterian Church, founded by John Calvin, 1,536 years after Christ, cannot meet the historical test of Christ and cannot be the true church---the one that Jesus founded and promised to perpetuate.

## **THE CONGREGATIONALISTS**

The Lutherans, Episcopalians and Presbyterians constitute the three great Catholic-Protestant denominations. There are in existence two great denominations, who protested from the Episcopalians, and consequently are the offspring of the Episcopal Church. Let us briefly consider the facts relating to their origin. I quote from Tull's excellent tract: "There lived in England in 1580 an Episcopal preacher by the name of Robert Brown. He started a movement in opposition to the State Church, in which he advocated a congregational form of church government, and greatly opposed sacerdotalism. He got a following who called themselves "Independents." Robert Brown organized the first Independent church in 1580. Afterwards Brown repented, made confession of his mistake, went back to the Church of England and died in that faith. His followers, however, continued the movement, and became known as "Congregationalists."



Having been founded by Robert Brown 1,580 years after Christ, the Congregationalist Church fails to meet the historical test imposed by Christ and cannot successfully claim to be the true church of Christ.

## **ORIGIN OF METHODISM**

Let us next consider the other Protestant movement that arose in the Episcopal Church---the one that has in the course of time come to be known as the “The Methodist Episcopal Church.” This movement was led by John Wesley and his brother Charles. While in Oxford University they by their regular habits of religious study and work, earned for themselves the designation of “methodists,” which later attached itself to the movement originated by them. Wesley never intended to organize a church, and indeed did not even dignify his organization by the name church, but called it a “Society.” Neither of the Wesleys ever affirmed the right to start a church, and as a matter of fact both of them died members of the Episcopal Church.

With reference to the origin of Methodism, we find the following statement in the “Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (1912 edition): “In 1729 two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw that they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it and incited others to do so . . . God then thrust them out to raise a holy people. This was the RISE of Methodism, as given in the words of its FOUNDERS, John and Charles Wesley. . . Throughout England and in Scotland and Ireland, arose united SOCIETIES of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness. These subsequently became the Wesleyan churches of Great Britain. Again, referring to Methodism in the early days of its history in the United States, we find these words on page 16 of the same Discipline: “The parish clergy had mostly returned to England and the Methodist SOCIETIES were without ordained pastors for hundreds of miles together.”

It may be seen from these quotations that Methodism at first did not assume to express itself in the form of a church, but was a society within the

Episcopal Church. It did not start on a separate denominational existence until the year 1739, according to Dr. McGlothlin in his "Guide." It was in this year that the first class meeting was held. However, the first conference was not held until five years later.

The question here arises, If the Methodist Society had a right to evolve into a Church, why may not any church society of the present day do the same? They assuredly have as much right. Again, this question comes: If Luther, Calvin, the Wesleys and others had the right to found a church, have not you and I an equal right to do the same? Again, this question: How old must a movement or society become before it can properly evolve into a "Church?"

But to return to the origin of Methodism, it ought not be difficult to see that the Methodist Church, or "Society" as it was formerly called, founded by John Wesley about 1,740 years after Christ, in no wise meets Christ's test as to origin and perpetuity and cannot be the true church of Christ.

## **ORIGIN OF THE CAMPBELLITE DENOMINATION**

It scarcely seems necessary to take the space to detail the origin of this sect, since it is of such recent origin that, it would be absurd for anyone to claim for them apostolic origin. Indeed, I am personally acquainted with individuals who knew Alexander Campbell, and remember many incidents connected with the early days of his church, which is more commonly known today by the name "The Christian Church." The date of the beginning of the Campbellites or "Christians" as a separate denomination cannot well be fixed earlier than 1827, although, ignoring the facts of history, they date their origin a few years earlier than the date I have just given. However, a few years makes no difference so far as we are concerned in this discussion. I remember quite well that just a few years ago this denomination with great enthusiasm, all over the land, celebrated their one

hundredth anniversary! To accept their own date, they are only slightly over a hundred years old. Yet I remember to have seen carved on the cornerstone of one of their large church buildings, a statement to the effect that they trace their origin to the time of Jesus and the apostles. Strange statement indeed in the light of their own admission!

Since they had a human founder and are of modern origin, it is quite evident that they do not meet Christ's test and are not the true church.

I could go on and make mention of the Mormons, Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists, Russellites, Nazarenes, "Holy Rollers" and others, and detail their origin, but it would be entirely superfluous. It is sufficient to say that each of these just mentioned, together with all the numerous other smaller sects, have had human founders and were never heard of for more than a thousand years after Christ.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE BAPTISTS?**

We have shown that every sect, denomination, and so-called church, Baptist alone excepted, can be traced to a human founder, and originated long after Christ started His church. Plainly all of these being of post-apostolic origin, are eliminated. Just as when in the illustration you looked in every book save one and failing to find the document, knew that it must be in the one remaining\_ so when every church save one fails to qualify historically as the true church of Christ, it is but right and logical to conclude that the remaining church is the institution that Christ founded. Baptist churches are unique and clearly distinguished from all others in that no one can truly point to anyone as the human founder. Neither can the date be fixed for their beginning this side of Christ. Some have tried it, and their disagreements and contradictions constitute prima facie evidence of their historical inaccuracy. Those who would deny that Baptists date back to Christ, and who would assign them a modern origin, ought to hold council

together and agree on some certain date! Otherwise their contradictory statements are liable to prejudice people in favor of the very thing they deny!

In succeeding chapters I shall offer historical proof to substantiate my statement that Baptists alone have had existence from the time of Christ. As Dr. Tull puts it: “The first Baptist church was organized by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, during His personal ministry on the earth. The Baptist church has Jesus for its Founder, the Holy Spirit for the Administrator of its activities, the New Testament for its articles of faith and laws of being. Throughout the Christian ages, pure Baptist teaching has survived. The “gates of Hades have not and shall not prevail against it.”

*“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.*

*-Titus 2:1*

*“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrine”.*

*-Heb. 13:9*

*“... In doctrine showing uncorruptness.”*

*-Titus 2:7*

## VII

### The Doctrinal Test

In the preceding chapter I sought to show by a process of elimination that only Baptist churches meet Christ's historical test as to origin and perpetuity. Laying aside for a time our findings, let us now pursue our search for the true ecclesia or church along the second line proposed, namely, that of DOCTRINE. This doctrinal test is fully as important as the historical test. If it can be demonstrated that Baptist churches are apostolic in regard to the doctrines they hold, and that they are the only churches that do hold the doctrines that obtained in the New Testament churches in a pure form, it ought to be doubly apparent that Baptist churches are the true churches of Christ.

It is by no means a difficult task to ascertain the fundamental doctrines and practices of the churches that existed in the days of the apostles, because the church which Jesus founded has certain well defined doctrinal characteristics laid down in the New Testament by which it may be forever recognized and distinguished from all apocryphal institutions which may through the ages arise to call themselves Christian churches.

In seeking to identify the church which Jesus built by means of doctrinal comparison, it might be well to indicate the method which we shall pursue. Let us first go to the New Testament and note the characteristics of the churches of apostolic times. Next we shall examine Baptist characteristics to see if they coincide with those of the New Testament period. Then, finally, we shall take a brief glimpse at the teachings and practices of other great denominations to see how they stand in relation to the doctrines and practices of the churches of the New Testament. In following this procedure we shall necessarily have to be brief.

One of the things that very forcibly strikes us when we read about the New Testament churches is that they were composed of THOSE WHO HAD BEEN REGENERATED AND BORN AGAIN. The doctrine of regenerated church membership is on the pages of the New Testament so clearly that none can mistake it. Indeed the very word ecclesia, as used in the Christian sense, should signify to us an assembly of people “Called out” of the world, so as to form a separate company—a company of regenerated people. As Dr. Bow puts it: *“The word translated church originally meant ‘Called one’, so in the highest sense and holiest sense all the redeemed are called out, and it is fitly applied to them.”* In Acts 2:47 we find the following word: “Moreover the Lord was adding to the church day by day those being saved.” (Sco. Bible, Margin). Throughout the New Testament we find no slightest hint that any save those claiming regeneration were admitted to the churches. In fact, without regeneration church membership loses all significance. The duties and obligations which the New Testament teaches as belonging to church members presupposes a radical internal change on the part of every person uniting with a church such as to fit him for his task. The Scriptures most certainly do not bear out the idea that a church is to exist as a sort of reformatory into which unregenerates are to be taken, worked over and made into children of God. On the contrary each church, according to the New Testament idea, is to be an assembly of God's people, regenerated, called out, and separated from the world---”a peculiar people, zealous and of good works.”

And inseparable from the doctrine of a regenerate church membership we may mention incidentally that the New Testament churches practiced only BELIEVER'S BAPTISM. A profession of faith in Christ was necessary before baptism was administered. In Acts 2:41 we read, “Then they that gladly received His word were baptized.” Note that “receiving His word” preceded baptism. “His word” refers to the gospel preached by Peter. None are eligible for baptism, according to the Scriptures, until they have heard the gospel, believed and received it. As one writer has put it: *“The only difference between a person who has not ‘received the Word,’ before and*

*after immersion is that before their immersion they had on dry clothing, while afterwards their clothing is wet.*” Many cases might be cited to prove that only believers were baptized and added to the church in New Testament times, if space permitted. I readily call to mind the case of Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Cornelius, and Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. In no verse of the New Testament is to be found anything to indicate that persons were ever baptized before reaching an age that permitted a personal faith in Christ. Indeed, scriptural baptism as taught in the New Testament presupposes saving faith in Christ. The order given in the Great Commission is, first make disciples, second, baptize them.

Now let us ask, do Baptist churches today coincide with apostolic churches in the two respects just mentioned? Plainly they do. No one is baptized or becomes a member of a Baptist church until they have made a profession of faith in Christ, and claimed to have been saved. It is true that unsaved persons sometimes get into Baptist churches, but they get in by falsehoods and spurious claims.

Can Baptists claim any more than other churches in regard to the doctrines just mentioned? How do other denominations stand in regard to these matters? Note well this very true statement by Dr. T. T. Martin (The N. T. Church): *”BAPTIST CHURCHES ARE THE ONLY CHURCHES ON EARTH THAT REQUIRE A PERSON TO PROFESS TO BE SAVED BEFORE THE PERSON UNITES WITH THE CHURCH OR IS BAPTIZED.”* This statement proved startling to me when I first read it several years ago. But investigation has confirmed me in the belief that it is true. Other great denominations either mix infant baptism with believer's baptism, or else hold the theory of baptismal regeneration. For instance, the Methodist and Presbyterians holds evangelistic meetings and following such meetings often baptize (?) those who profess faith in Christ during the meeting. At the same service perhaps they baptize (?) infants who are not of an age to believe anything. Of course if infant baptism were universally practiced, believer's baptism would perish from the earth. On the other hand,

Campbellites baptize only those of an age to believe, but hold the theory of baptismal regeneration, and baptize to help save. Only Baptists require a profession of saving faith in Christ before baptizing or accepting into church membership.

Another thing that stands out in the New Testament as regards the churches of that time is the WAY OF SALVATION as taught by them. The apostolic churches held that salvation was by grace, through faith in Christ alone. As proof of this I submit Paul's well-known words found in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast." The vicarious death of Jesus was set forth as the only means of redemption for any human being, and the teaching was that it was only by faith in Him as Divine Redeemer and Saviour that one could be saved and become a child of God. Gal. 3:26 is to the point: "For ye are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ." Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Are Baptists in accord with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ? Indeed they are. "This is a doctrine that is fundamental in Baptist thought. It runs through the whole system of Baptist ideas, and helps to determine everything else in Baptist thinking. "No other way of salvation is held or taught in true Baptist churches.

Are other denominations as one with the New Testament and Baptists in this matter? On this point I give another quotation from Dr. S. E. Tull: "*The Catholics believe that salvation is not purely of grace, that the death of Jesus Christ is not the only means of salvation, but that the ordinance of baptism is efficacious, contains sacramental grace, and is essential to salvation.*" The Council of Trent declared that in "*baptism not only remission of original sin was given, but also all which properly has the nature of sin is cut off.*" It makes one "*a Christian, a child of God, and an heir of heaven*"



On the doctrine of salvation purely by grace through faith, the Baptists stand alone, and all others hold the position of the Catholics. Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists hold squarely to the Catholic position that infant baptism contains sacramental grace, while the Campbellites hold that baptism by immersion is essential to salvation.

For fear that some may find fault with me for classing them with the Catholics on this doctrine of baptismal regeneration, I will quote from the law of some of the other churches on the subject. Unless church legislators have changed the law very recently, the following obtains among the churches named, and is a fair sample of the position of all covenantal churches on this doctrine.

The Episcopal Catechism says:

*“Baptism is that wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of heaven.”*

If the above does not teach baptismal regeneration, pray tell what words could be used to teach it?

The Presbyterian Confession reads:

*“Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life.”*

The Methodist ritual reads as follows: *“Sanctify this water for his holy sacrament and grant that this child, now to be baptized, may receive the*

*fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children.”*

Look well at what you have just read, “Grant that this child ... may... ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children.” This ritual puts the infant into the kingdom and family of God, and that without personal faith. It may grow to maturity with the idea that it is a baptized child of God, and thereby never be regenerated, or perhaps even see the need of it. This certainly does not accord with the words of Jesus, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

The Methodist articles were based on those of the English Church, and reference to the writings of the founder of Methodism shows that he believed in baptismal regeneration as regards infants. Concerning the articles of the English Church, to which he belonged, we find John Wesley writing as follows (Sermons, London, 1872, Vol. 2, sermon 45, p. 74): *“It is certain our church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are, at the same time- born again; and it is allowed that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds on this supposition.”*

I have known Methodists to vehemently deny that the founder of Methodism held to baptismal regeneration of infants, but in the quotation above, from his own printed sermons, we have it in black and white.

Again, let us examine the Lutheran view. This is expressed by the founder in the Augsburg Confession as follows:

*“Concerning baptism, they teach that it is necessary to salvation ...And condemn the Anabaptists, who hold... that infants can be saved without it.”* (Neander, History of Christian Dogmas, Vol. 2, p. 693.)

In a city where the writer was laboring in the gospel, the pastors of all the churches in the city came together one morning to consider the propriety

of inviting Dr. R. A. Torrey to conduct a city-wide evangelistic meeting. To that pastor's conference came the Episcopalian rector of the city. The rector asked to make a statement. He proceeded as follows: *"I want to put my self right before all you pastors of the city, in my relation to the proposed evangelistic meeting. I cannot cooperate with you in the movement, and I want you to understand my convictions in the matter. I do not believe in what is known among you as evangelism. I do not believe in what you call conversion under the spontaneous operation of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. I believe in covenantal grace and that people become Christians by baptism and confirmation into the Church. Believing as I do, I cannot consistently engage with you in your proposed evangelistic campaign!"* All this the rector said very frankly and earnestly. Then in seeming justification of his position, after a moments hesitation he continued: *"I want to say to you Presbyterian pastors here, that if you live up to the covenantal teaching of your church, you cannot engage in an evangelistic meeting. You should either abandon our covenantal teachings or quit holding evangelistic campaigns. By under taking to carry out both, you make two plans by which men become Christians. As I see it, these Baptist preachers are the only preachers in our city who can consistently carry on an evangelistic meeting. They do not believe in covenantal grace, but they consistently hold every man to a personal experience of religion, which they call conversion and regeneration."* ("Denominationalism Put to Test.")

Further study of the apostolic churches as described in the New Testament, reveals several facts in connection with the ORDINANCES WHICH WERE ADMINISTERED BY THEM. These facts may be stated as follows:

1. The ordinances were two, and only two, in number: Baptism and the Lord's Supper-Matthew 18:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-30.

All the attempts to deduce footwashing as an ordinance, from the Scriptures, fail. Plainly the apostles had no such ordinance. Neither were the

two ordinances mentioned above held in the light of sacraments. To speak of the Lord's Supper as the "Sacrament" is not only unscriptural; it is anti-scriptural.

2. The ordinances were church ordinances. This is admitted with practical unanimity by all the great denominations. In the light of this admission, "open communion" becomes not only an unscriptural practice, but likewise a glaring inconsistency. And if the ordinances were given to Baptists, as I have endeavored to show, then the receiving of "alien immersion" is of all things most inconsistent for Baptist churches.

3. They were symbolic ordinances, designed to picture great truths and possessing no saving power at all. There is no need for me to discuss this, as the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace dealt with above prohibits us from attributing saving efficacy to the ordinances, for, of course, if salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, it cannot be by baptism, the Lord's Supper, or the doing of any works on our part.

4. Baptism was administered by immersing the candidate in water. Not even the slightest hint of sprinkling or pouring is to be found in the New Testament. Many clear cases of immersion are recorded. That was evidently the only form of baptism, for Paul in Eph. 4:5 writes, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism " And indeed the meaning of the term "baptize," if studied in the original, is enough to make perfectly clear to the unbiased mind that immersion was the primitive mode. Besides this, all reliable scholars of the different denominations frankly admit that immersion was the "mode" of baptism practiced in apostolic times.

5. The Lord's Supper, being a church ordinance, was restricted to church members. This being the case, it was of course preceded by immersion.

How do the beliefs of Baptists churches today square with the New Testament teaching concerning ordinances? The answer is, they are in perfect accord.

Other denominations are sadly at variance. The Catholics admit that they changed the ordinance of baptism in the twelfth century because sprinkling is more convenient. I quote just here from Cardinal Gibbons (Faith of Our Fathers, pp. 316, 317): *“For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, baptism was usually conferred by immersion. But since the twelfth century baptism by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion. Baptism is the essential means established for washing away the stain of original sin, and the door by which we find admittance into the Church. Hence baptism is as essential for the infant as for the full-grown man. Unbaptized infants are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven. Baptism makes us heirs of heaven and co-heirs of Jesus Christ.”*

Protestant churches (remember again that Baptists are not Protestants), the direct descendants of the Catholic Church, got their infant baptism and their perverted modes of baptism from their parent, the Catholic Church. The Campbellites and others who hold baptism essential to salvation, get their baptismal regeneration from the same source.

As regards the Lord's Supper, we find that the Catholic and Protestant world have departed from the simplicity of the New Testament idea that the bread and wine is merely a symbol or memento which is to be taken in remembrance of the Saviour. The Catholics hold to transubstantiation, the doctrine that the bread and wine becomes the actual body and blood of Christ. The Lutherans hold to consubstantiation, which is but a modification of the Catholic view. Others, such as the Presbyterians and Methodists, hold the sacramental or spiritual blessing idea, which makes of the ordinance something more than a mere memorial. Besides this, most denominations in actual practice do not make immersion a prerequisite to the partaking of the

Lord's Supper as did the churches of the New Testament, for they practice "open communion" which admits everybody who wants to eat--immersed, sprinkled, unsprinkled, or what not.

Further, we find that the apostolic churches were DEMOCRATIC IN THEIR FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT. This means, of course, that they recognized the absolute lordship of Christ, and had no human head or master. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23 :8-10) is the New Testament teaching. There was no higher or lower order of clergy; no popes or bishops in the modern sense, to boss the rest around. Peter had no thought of being a pope, for he called himself a fellow-elder with other preachers (I Peter 5:1). When a successor was needed to fill the place of Judas Iscariot, Peter did not appoint him, but the one hundred and twenty members of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:15-296). When the first deacons were appointed, their appointment was not by Peter, nor by the apostles as ruling elders, or as constituting a college of bishops. They were chosen by the multitude of disciples, or church. We find that churches transacted business without outside interference or dictation. They elected their own officers, and by vote of the congregation received and excluded members. For example, Paul writes to the church at Rome (Rom. 14:1), "Him that is weak in faith, receive ye." This indicated that they were in the habit of receiving members. In I Cor. 5, Paul tells the church at Corinth to exclude an unworthy member. In II Thess. 3, he gives similar counsel to the church at Thessalonica. Again, from Acts 9 we gather that Paul himself was refused membership in the church at Jerusalem, because at that time the church was in doubt about his conversion and was afraid of him.

Having a democratic form of church government; being composed of individuals who were on an equality---and having no visible, earthly head, churches were separate and distinct, and were bound together in no organic way. This is conceded by all the earliest and most reliable historians as having been the order for several centuries. Geisler, the historian, says in writing of the churches of the first two centuries: "*All congregations were*

*independent of one another.” (Vol. 1, Chap. 3). Mosheim, the Lutheran historian, says (Vol. 1, p. 142), “During a great part of this (second) century all the churches continued to be, as at first, independent. . . each church was a kind of independent republic.”*

Do Baptist churches accord with the apostolic way in regard to their church government and polity? Anyone at all acquainted with Baptist churches knows that democracy in its purest form is to be found in them. Each church is separate and distinct as, in apostolic times, and when churches meet together in associations and conventions they come together in only a cooperative, voluntary way. There is no organic union in one big “Church.” And furthermore no association or convention has the right to dictate to the local church. Baptist churches today, as in apostolic times, have no dignitaries or ecclesiastics to impose their will upon them. True, in these days we sometimes have an occasional individual who desires for himself ecclesiastical powers with which to force co-operation among Baptists. Such an individual is in each case predestined to an early fall.

But let us, for the sake of comparison, take a glimpse at the government of other churches.

Catholics give church members no privileges but to obey “The Church,” and no voice whatever in the government of the Church.

The Lutheran Church is an episcopacy with legislative powers governing both the doctrine and polity of particular congregations and individuals.

The Episcopal Church has legislative courts and does the same.

The Presbyterian Church is what has been termed “a centralized aristocracy,” composed of legislative courts with a gradation in authority, from the sessions of the particular church to the General Assembly of the

whole denomination. From the decisions of the General Assembly there is no appeal, either for churches or individuals.

The Congregational Church comes nearer the Baptist position in this matter than most others, but veers farther away on some other points.

The Methodist Church is an episcopacy with a system of ecclesiastical machinery that leaves little room for the autonomy of the local church or the expression of individuality on the part of its members.

This form of church government is not only unbiblical; it proves to be unwise in many instances from the standpoint of what is expedient. The matter of where preachers shall labor, the choice of their respective fields, is taken out of their own hands so that they must needs go where they are sent. In this system a preacher may be sent where he does not want to go and where he feels that neither the Lord nor the people want him. In one case that came under my observation, a man was sent to a smaller pastorate to which was attached a smaller salary than he had been accustomed to receive. The change was so arbitrary and unsatisfactory that the preacher rebelled and only remained on his new field long enough to dispose of his household goods. If I was correctly informed, he left with the avowed intention of joining another denomination. Such happenings are very embarrassing to both the church and pastor. They are the natural outgrowth of an unscriptural, ecclesiastical system.

The Campbellite or “Christian” Church received its form of government from its founder, Alexander Campbell, who, from his brief association with the Baptists, had imbued some of their ideas. Campbellites profess a congregational form of government, but in reality the pastor is vested with episcopal powers to receive members without a vote of the congregation.



Another thing that is to be clearly gathered from the New Testament concerning the churches of that day is that they WERE ENTIRELY FREE FROM COERCION. In other words - they believed in religious liberty. Religion was a purely voluntary matter. They were deeply impressed with their duty to preach, teach and persuade, but their work ended there. As to whether or not the individual accepted the gospel and affiliated with the church, was a matter to be decided by the individual himself apart from all coercive measures of any kind. There was entire separation of church and state. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" was the admonition of Jesus. With such a conception as the New Testament churches had of freedom of conscience, religious persecution was with them impossible.

Again let us ask, how do Baptist churches of today accord with the principles of freedom held by apostolic churches? The answer is they hold these principles still, just as they held them in the first century. They hold that it is their duty and obligation to preach the gospel to all the world, but they seek to force no one to accept it. They believe that every man has the individual right to settle for himself the question of his relation to God. Consequently they believe that infant baptism is a sin against God and against little children, in that it forces a religious rite upon a helpless child and takes from it the privilege of obeying Christ for itself. Baptists put neither priest, ordinance, nor anything else between the individual and God. They hold that every person can, through Jesus Christ, approach God and deal with Him for himself. In church relations the same voluntary principle holds good. No high ecclesiastic forces churches into measures. No set of ecclesiastics run the churches' affairs for them, and force acceptance of the leaders they choose for the people. Baptist people govern themselves, and each church determines the measure and kind of cooperation that it will engage in with other bodies and organizations.

To Baptists, union of church and state is an unspeakable evil, and one that they have never been a party to. They have through the ages suffered

cruel imprisonments, punishments, and even martyrdom at the hands of other peoples, peoples of other faiths, through the civil powers, wielded the sword of coercion and persecution.

Let us now take a glance at other denominations and observe their attitude on this point. Catholics give the individual no personal prerogative. The Church holds the soul of the individual and can by excommunication destroy all hope for eternity. The history of the Catholic Church is one that reeks with blood. Through long periods Catholicism was the state religion, and so fiercely did it persecute that dissenters were forced to hide in the “dens and caves of the earth.” I need only mention the massacre of the Huguenots in which hundreds of people were butchered, or the horrors of the Inquisition, in which devilish ingenuity devised every torture with which to afflict Baptists and others who held dissenting religious views. I write these lines from Brazil, where on every side is to be seen the evidences of Catholic intolerance. Just last week news came of how Catholics broke up services that were being held by Baptists in the town of Bom Jardim, a few miles away.

Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists stand with the Catholics in abridging the freedom of the individual conscience because of their practice of infant baptism. “Campbellites place an ordinance between the sinner and the Savior, and thereby forbid his unlimited approach to God.” Episcopalians in England derive their support from the government and Baptists are forced to pay to support a church in which they do not believe. Dr. John Clifford, a noted Baptist preacher, went to jail time and time again because of his refusal to pay to help support the Episcopalian Church. Lutherans have united with the state and have used their power to persecute. For instance, Henry Crant, Justice Mueller, and John Peisker, Baptists, were beheaded in Jena, in 1536, by the Lutherans. Among their announced views was the doctrine that all infants are saved without baptism. (See McArthur's “Why I Am A Baptist.”) Presbyterians have consented to the unholy alliance of Church and state

and have persecuted also, The part that John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism, had in burning Servetus, the Anabaptist, at the stake is too well known to mention in detail. Congregationalists persecuted by means of civil power in the early colonial days in America. Clark, Holmes and Crandall, Baptist leaders, were fined, imprisoned and publicly whipped in Boston. On asking what law of God or man he (Clark) had broken, Endicott replied to Clark, "YOU have denied infant baptism and deserve death."

And I may add that persecution of Baptists does not all belong to the past. In almost every place today where Baptists stand for the whole Bible and preach their doctrines, they meet with persecution. They are called "narrow," "bigoted," and are pointed at with scorn. Many times, because their beliefs do not permit them to engage in all sorts of union movements and programs, they are bitterly criticized. In my own ministry I have in one instance had my church boycotted by the members of other denominations because I preached the New Testament teachings concerning the ordinances. The forms of persecution are not the same as in days gone by, but persecution that is none the less real is often resorted to by those who do not espouse the purely voluntary principle of the New Testament and Baptists.

Another characteristic of the churches of Christ in apostolic times was their REVERENCE FOR THE SCRIPTURES AND THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD GIVEN TO THEM THROUGH INSPIRED MEN. To them the Word of God, whether contained in the Old Testament or delivered through the mouth or by pen of inspired men, was sufficient.

Christians of those days did not butcher the Old Testament as do the Modernists of our day, who parcel it out into bits and call this part a portion of the "J" document, this other a part of the "E" document, and so on. To them the Old Testament did not merely contain a revelation from God; it was the revelation. The teachings of the apostles they received as authoritative.

Here again we distinguish the likeness between Baptist churches of today and the churches of the early times. To Baptists, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament constitute the final authority on all matters of belief and practice. The great doctrine that constitutes the bedrock upon which all of their other doctrines are laid is this: "The Bible, the Bible alone, is our only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. As one has aptly put it, "if you can't find it in the Bible it isn't Baptist doctrine; if it is Baptist doctrine you can find it in the Bible." Baptists believe that each individual has the right to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself. They do not believe in studying and interpreting in the light of someone's comments, as do Christian Scientists, who study in the light of Mrs. Eddy's "Science and Health," or Russellites, who interpret by the aid of Pastor Russell's "Bible Studies," or Catholics, who, when they read the Bible at all, read the imperfectly translated Douay version, in the light of the Church's interpretations appended to each page in the form of "notes." Baptists believe that the Bible says what it means and means what it says, and that it is so written as to be understood by the common people. They do not believe that it is right to seek to justify a practice by a set of regulations drawn up by fallible men. Consequently, that a thing is found in a "Discipline" or "Catechism" adds little weight to it, for them. But while these things are true, it is also true that Baptists have always been willing to state their beliefs. This they have done repeatedly in the form of "Confessions of Faith." These confessions merely place before the world their interpretation of what the Bible teaches on fundamental matters. They are not binding creeds forced upon all Baptist bodies, for each church has the privilege of making its own statement of belief.

What is the attitude of other denominations toward the Bible? It is not the Baptist attitude, else there would not be the division that exists today. Much is said today about church union, and Baptists are often blamed for the schismatic condition of Christendom. But it can be truly said that Baptists are ready to unite with those of other faiths at any time that they are

willing for union to be consummated upon the principle of absolute adherence to the New Testament.

The Catholic view, for instance, is the exact opposite of the Baptist. Catholics believe in the Pope as the source of doctrine, and they hold he is infallible in his decisions. On this point we have the statement of Cardinal Gibbons as follows: *“When a dispute arises in the Church regarding the sense of Scripture, the subject is referred to the Pope for final adjudication. . . He pronounces judgment, and his sentence is final, irrevocable, and infallible.”* Again, in the same book (Faith of Our Fathers), he says: *“The Scriptures can never serve as a complete rule of faith and a complete guide to heaven independent of an authorized, living interpreter.”*

Other denominations occupy positions between the Baptists and the Catholics. The Lutheran, Episcopal and Methodist churches are vested with legislative powers ample to allow them to fix doctrine and legislative conduct for the particular congregations and for individuals. As we have already seen, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church is vested with supreme power in matters affecting doctrine and polity.

There is yet another thing that was considered fundamental among, New Testament churches, and that was what has been termed, THE COMPETENCY OF THE SOUL, UNDER GOD, IN RELIGION.” “Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God,” is the teaching of Paul. Every soul was deemed competent to deal with God without the interference of human priests or mediaries. Absolute freedom of conscience was allowed, and coercion was never resorted to, in matters pertaining to religion, as has already been pointed out.

In this we find Baptists to be strictly apostolic. Baptists believe that man, as man, has the capacity to know God, and under the power of the Holy Spirit to do God's will. *“This competency of the soul under God,”* as one writer puts it, *“is at once exclusive and inclusive. It excludes all human*

*interference, all proxy in religion, all ideals of priestly or episcopal intervention. Religion is a matter between the individual soul and God. It includes all the rights of an absolute democracy, and constitutes every believer his own priest and king.”* It might not be out of place just here to quote Dr. E. Y. Mullins on this point. He says: *“The Biblical significance of the Baptists is the right of private interpretation and obedience to the Scriptures. The significance of the Baptists in relation to the individual is soul freedom. The ecclesiastical significance of the Baptists is a regenerated church membership and the equality and priest hood of believers. The political significance of the Baptists is the separation of the church and state. All of these grow naturally and of necessity out of the doctrine of the competency of the soul in religion.”*

And now let us take a brief look at other denominations and note their attitude in this matter. Everyone who is at all familiar with the Catholic position will admit very readily that it is in direct antithesis to the Baptist doctrine of the competency of the soul. Underlying the whole scheme of Roman Catholicism is the idea of the incompetency of the soul. This is seen in the auricular confession, the denial of the right of private interpretation of the Bible, infant baptism, the priestly monopoly of the elements necessary to the “communion” and numerous other things.

Protestantism is a mixture of the Baptist and Catholic positions. A quotation from Dr. M. P. Hunt (The Baptist Faith) will make this clear. He writes as follows: *“In many things the Protestant world is now with the Baptists, but in some things it still clings to the rags of Catholicism. As, for instance, the episcopacy, infant baptism, and baptismal regeneration. They are all unscriptural, and first saw light in the Catholic Church, and were nourished by its unscriptural conception of the incompetency of the soul in religion. In holding to the doctrine of justification by faith, the Protestant world is at that point one with the Baptists, while in baptizing their children into the church in unconscious infancy they are one with the Catholics. In the matter of civil and religious liberty, the Protestant world in America is*

*now in full sympathy with the Baptist position, while those churches that have the episcopal form of government get the same from the Catholics. Take the 'Disciples,' who are less than a hundred years old, and they are one with the Baptists in the matter of believer's baptism; but at the same time one with the Catholics in holding baptism to be essential to salvation."*

Other characteristics of the apostolic churches could be taken up and their identity with Baptist characteristics established. But surely enough has already been said to demonstrate that Baptists are apostolical as regards their faith and practice. One who reads the New Testament cannot help but see the doctrinal identity of Baptists today with the churches of the New Testament. Dr. A. T. Robertson has said: *"Give a man a New Testament and a good working conscience, and a Baptist is the sure result."* Instances are on record where several denominations have been seeking to get into their church a new convert, and, as a rule, whenever it is announced that the individual is making a study of the New Testament, and will let that guide him, it is generally conceded that the Baptists have won.

If I wished to take the space I could go on at length and tell of I. N. Yohannan, a Persian, converted under the preaching of a Presbyterian missionary, but who, upon reading the New Testament, came from Persia to New York to get Baptist baptism. I could tell the story of John G. Oncken and his family in Hamburg, Germany. They, becoming believers and being without ecclesiastical guides, shut themselves up to a study of the New Testament with this result: A BAPTIST CHURCH! I could tell of Judson and Rice, who were sent to the foreign field by another denomination, on the voyage studied the New Testament and arrived on their field with convictions that led them to join a Baptist church, even though it meant for them to renounce the support of those who had sent them. I could tell of how in the state of Parahyba, Brazil, men were converted under the preaching of a Presbyterian missionary and were made Baptists in belief by reading the New Testament. They sent to the city where I now reside (Pernambuco) for a Baptist preacher to come and baptize them.

*“It is certainly true that, judged by the doctrinal test, Baptists validate their claim of church perpetuity!*

*“Some say that Baptists cannot trace their history through the centuries because of the irregularities of beliefs among the dissenting sects. Well, when we remember that the true churches of Christ have been persecuted in every age and driven into the dark caves and fastnesses of the mountains, with what their enemies state concerning them we might expect some differences to appear among them. But are Baptists today free from these little differences? The fact is we have many Unitarian Baptists among us at the present time which we are trying to get out of our communion. “ –*

*-J. L. Smith, in “Baptist Law of Continuity.”*



## VIII

### Points to be Remembered

We have seen in a former chapter that all churches and denominations, with the single exception of Baptist churches, originated in post-apostolic times, and moreover that their origin may be traced to a human head and founder. Applying Jesus' historical test, which requires that the true church must have had Him for the Founder, and must have been perpetuated through all ages, we eliminated all churches save those of the Baptists. In the preceding chapter we applied the doctrinal test, with the result that we found Baptist churches alone to be apostolical in doctrine, form and practice. Other denominations, we saw, failed to meet this test; each of them showing wide departure from apostolic doctrine and practice. Already it has become apparent that Baptist churches are identical with the churches of the New Testament era, and consequently may rightly claim to be the true churches of Christ. However, we shall not stop here. We proposed in the beginning to devote some time to proving Baptist church perpetuity by statements of reliable historians.

Before we hear the testimony of these historical witnesses, it might be well for the sake of clearness to deal briefly with several matters bearing more or less on the subject. These points, indicated numerically, follow:

1. Let it be borne in mind as indicated at the beginning that Baptists do not attempt to establish their claims by the Baptist name. Some say that Baptist churches are not the true churches because they are not called by the name Baptist in the New Testament. The plain fact is that they were not called by any distinguishing name at that time, but were simply spoken of as "churches." And why? Plainly because all churches were then of one faith and consequently needed no name, except the church at such and such a place, as for example, "the church at Antioch," "the church at Corinth," etc. But it can be readily seen that as time passed, and spurious organizations

calling themselves churches sprang up, distinguishing names came to be used as a matter of necessity. As for Baptists, they have during the course of centuries been called by different names. These names were usually bestowed upon them by their enemies and persecutors, as I have previously tried to show. Sometimes in one land a certain name was applied to them while at the same time in another land they were being called by another name. The same kind of churches existed, characterized by the same evangelical doctrine and life, but the names they bore were different. It is very easy to understand how this could be in a time when churches were widely separated and when there was little intercommunication. As late as colonial days in America, Baptists were often termed “Anabaptists” and “Catabaptists.” indeed, in reading some historical documents relating to the early history of Kentucky I found that the Baptists were referred to as Anabaptists. Most surely the dropping of the “ana” in no wise changed the characteristics of the churches. No more were the Waldenses changed when in the course of time they came to be called Anabaptists. So the thing insisted upon is not identity of name, but rather continuity of doctrine and life held by peoples meeting as bodies of baptized believers in Christ.

2. Let it be remembered that those who deny Baptist perpetuity differ widely as to when Baptists had their origin. Their very uncertainty, and their complete divergence of opinion about the matter is in itself a good argument for the thing they oppose. Dr. W. A. Jarrell, in preparing his manuscript for his book on perpetuity some years ago, wrote a number of letters to high officials and scholars of the Catholic and various Protestant churches, asking the question, “*When, where, and by whom was the first Baptist church originated?*” The answers received showed hopeless confusion and uncertainty. These men, unwilling to concede that the first church that ever existed was a Baptist church, were hard pressed to find an answer” and their answers failed to correspond with each other.

Permit me to further illustrate on this Point: I have here on my writing table two books written by men who violently opposed the Baptist

perpetuity idea. In dating the origin of Baptists, one says that the Baptists were started in Germany in 1521 by Nicholas Stork. The other says that the first Baptist church was founded in Amsterdam by John Smyth, an Englishman, in 1607. The fact is, those who deny that Jesus started the first Baptist church at Jerusalem simply cannot place their finger on the date of the beginning of the first Baptist church, and the man who started it. They cannot correctly name the date because it doesn't exist! They cannot name the man this side of Christ, because he never lived!

3. Note the confusion that prevails among those who claim that Jesus did not found the local assembly, but a “universal, invisible Church.” For instance, Dr. C. I. Scofield, in his “Synthesis of Bible Truth,” says that ecclesia is used in the New Testament in four different senses, as follows: “To designate the whole body of the redeemed during the present dispensation, to designate a local church, to designate groups of local churches, and to designate the visible church or body of professed believers without reference to locality or numbers.” Confusion is here worse confounded! Who can read the New Testament with unbiased mind and get the impression that Jesus founded several different kinds of churches? This teaching could only have arisen as a theoretical necessity. Further, we find that the Westminster Confession contains still another conception of church, in which those who have never become believers are members. This Confession says that the church consists “of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children.”

4. There are those who readily admit a perpetuity of Baptist principles but who are not willing to admit perpetuity of Baptist churches. For instance, H. C. Vedder, in his “Short History of the Baptists,” devotes most of his introduction to an argument against Baptist perpetuity, then, strange to say, begins his history of the Baptists in the New Testament times! He does not admit the continuance of Baptist churches, but devotes upwards of two hundred pages to what he calls a “history of Baptist principles.” There immediately arises this question: If Baptist principles have had continuous

existence from apostolic times, then surely there must have existed people who held those principles. For the perpetuity of Baptist principles necessarily involves the fact that there lived individuals who held them. Were not the individuals who held Baptist principles Baptists? And were not the churches made up of such individual Baptist churches? If not, I am greatly concerned to know what kind of churches they were. The position that there has been a perpetuity of Baptist principles but not of Baptists is illogical, and it ill becomes a person of thoughtful mind to hold such a position.

5. None deny that there have existed from the days of the apostles on, companies, congregations, and sects of Christians dissenting from the established and commonly accepted forms. When the prevailing churches fell into errors, and departed from the gospel teaching, those who continued godly separated themselves from the multitude and worshipped and served God according to their understanding of the Scriptures. These people, true to apostolic teaching, constituting in the strictest sense what remained of the true church of Christ, were bitterly persecuted, termed “heretics,” and had applied to them all sorts of odious names. And because they usually wore the names applied to them in hatred by their enemies, the names varied. Consequently it would be foolish for one, because the name Baptist cannot be traced back successively to apostolic times, to deny that people holding Baptist principles and in a real sense Baptists have existed.

6. Objection is often made to tracing Baptist descent through the so-called dissenting “sects,” that existed from the New Testament times on, upon the ground that there were irregularities among them as to doctrine and practice. Some of the churches included under the same name as that of the peoples through whom Baptists trace their perpetuity, practiced things out of harmony with the things that Baptists practice today.. Therefore, it is argued that Baptists err in claiming kinship with them. Let us think about this objection for a few moments. It ought to be evident to anyone who will think it over that churches, absolutely independent, bound together in no

close organic way, driven into seclusion, scattered and separated by persecution, would in all probability come to differ somewhat in minor matters of doctrine and polity. Moreover, some might even depart so far from the Scriptures' teaching as to become unworthy of the name borne by them. There is no doubt that this very thing happened in many instances among the peoples through whom the Baptists trace descent. Biased historians have seized upon these more or less isolated instances, and have magnified them in an attempt to show that the whole "sect" was not baptistic in its doctrines and practices. Upon the same principle it could be argued that certain churches of the apostolic era were not true churches. For instance, the church at Corinth was very imperfect; irregularities existed, yet no one asserts that it was not a true church of Christ. One could magnify the irregularities and variations that exist between Northern and Southern Baptist churches, or between Southern Baptists and the Baptists of Canada or England, and erroneously conclude that they are not to be classed as the same people. And, indeed, there are churches calling themselves by the name "Baptist" that have without doubt so far departed from the Scriptures as to no longer be true Baptist churches. It is quite unfair, however, to judge a people as a whole by the actions of a few churches that go astray from the truth. In properly estimating them we must find out what they in the main stand for. We must ascertain what were the principles that generally characterized them.

It should be remembered that much of what is on record concerning those who held Baptist views in ages past has come from the pens of their bitter foes. Those who wrote about them generally hated these "dissenters" with deadly and malignant hatred and did not scruple at persecuting them to the death. Can the testimony of such witnesses be considered as trustworthy? All too often have historians, even some who bear the name Baptist, been willing to characterize Baptists of ages gone by according to the records of their persecutors, who delighted in nothing more than to exaggerate their faults. Strange to say, some historians seem to give more credence to the statements of their enemies than to those contained in the extant writings of

these Christians themselves. It seems to me that the histories of Newman and Vedder go to this extreme just mentioned. As I have compared their writings concerning the various bodies of Christians who withstood Rome in the earlier days with the writings of other Baptist historians, I have been unable to keep from feeling that they do these peoples a deep injustice. Those noble men and women who kept alive the great doctrines of the New Testament faith through bloody times of persecution, who maintained evangelical religion in the face of Romish apostasy, often at the cost of life--surely they bore enough during their lifetime without having perpetuated against their memory, by biased historians, the calumnies of their enemies.

7. It might well be asked at this point, How far can a church depart from the truth and still be a New Testament church? Those who claim that Montanists, Novations, Paulicians, Waldenses, etc., were too heretical for Baptists to claim kin with, might well ponder this question. Even Dr. A. H. Newman recognizes that churches may have irregularities and still be true New Testament churches, for in his history of "Antipedobaptism." page 28, he says: "That a church also may make grave departures in doctrine and practice from the apostolic standard without ceasing to be a church of Christ, must be admitted." If we can determine just how far a church may depart from the truth and still remain a New Testament church, we shall then be prepared to examine the beliefs of the various parties and "sects" of ancient times to determine whether or not we may justly trace the Baptists through them.

On the matter of what constitutes a true New Testament church I wish to quote with approval the words of Dr. T. T. Martin, as found in his splendid book on the New Testament church. He says: "*Only two doctrines are essential to a New Testament church. Other doctrines are important, precious, but only two are essential to a New Testament Church. They are the WAY OF SALVATION and the WAY OF BAPTISM.*" *The Commission makes this clear. Matthew 28:19-20 R. V.: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." A body of people holding these*

*two doctrines and in this New Testament order may be in error on other doctrines: yet it is a New Testament church. For instance, if there is in the West a church called a Baptist church that holds immersion for baptism, but does not hold the New Testament way of salvation, then it is not a New Testament Church. If there is a church in New York or England called a 'Baptist' church that holds the New Testament way of salvation but does not hold immersion as baptism, then it is not a New Testament church. If there is a church called a Baptist church that holds the New Testament way of baptism, but that one ought to be baptized before being saved, then it is not a New Testament church.”*

There have been Baptist churches within recent time that practiced footwashing. Others have held erroneous views relating to the Sabbath. In our day, I have known of Baptist churches in the North having a woman for pastor, and I have known churches to adopt various unscriptural plans for the carrying on of their work. But the point is, none of these things kept them from being New Testament churches. Just as a Christian may be disobedient and still remain a Christian, so a church may be disobedient and yet remain a New Testament church---though admittedly an unworthy one. For, let us repeat, according to the terms of the Commission, *two doctrines and two only are essential to a New Testament church: THE WAY OF SALVATION AND THE WAY OF BAPTISM.*

*“This church was not swallowed up by the Catholic Church and ceased to exist in the Dark Ages, as Protestantism teaches, but in fact has a continuous line of churches through all these centuries, under various names, but holding the same principles as the church founded by Christ and true Baptist churches hold to-day. There were no real Protestant churches until the sixteenth century. Who furnished the millions of martyrs, who were cruelly put to death by the Catholic Church;? There is but one answer: they were Baptists.”*

-J. T. Moore, in “Why I Am A Baptist”

## IX

### Baptists Under Other Names

We have touched on the fact that from the time that corruption began to gain the ascendancy and God's order began to be perverted and changed, there have been dissenters--those who protested against the evil and corruption, and banded together to live and act in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures. Those who maintained the New Testament form, doctrine and teachings were termed by the corrupt churches "sects," and were denounced as "heretics" All historians admit that these "sects" or "heretics" existed all along down through the ages.

In these churches which stood for the New Testament teaching against corruption, there were leaders and learned men who became extremely well known and well hated because they dared to champion the cause of truth against apostasy. In many instances a large number of those holding the true faith had applied to them the name of the leader. When a new name came to be applied to those holding Baptist beliefs, historians often write as though a new sect originated. In truth it was only a new name that originated, and out of the mouths of enemies at that. A new name applied to the same people, holding the same peculiar beliefs, in no wise changed them.

Now, before I begin to suggest some of the peoples of ancient times through whom Baptists may properly claim historical continuity, let me reemphasize: two points which I request the reader to bear in mind throughout the reading of the entire chapter. First, all I am seeking to establish is that there has always from the time of Christ, been groups of individuals who held on essential points the New Testament faith, and who banded together in churches that were essentially baptistic in faith and practice. Second, only two doctrines are essential to a New Testament church; The way of salvation and the way of baptism. If a group of churches are sound on these two cardinal points they may properly be called Baptist



churches. There is no doubt that, due to circumstances that prevailed and which we might profitably dwell upon if space permitted, some of the “sects” had irregularities existing among them. Some of the peoples whom I shall mention held erroneous ideas and indulged in some extravagances. However, if I can show that they held pure the two cardinal doctrines mentioned as essential to a Baptist church, I shall have proved my contention that they were Baptists. It is held against some of the “dissenters” for instance, that they had extravagant ideas about the Second Coming of Christ. That does not disqualify them from being Baptists. So did the Thessalonians have these erroneous views, and Paul had to write II Thess., to correct them. So do some Baptists to-day go to extremes in making programs and placing the events connected with Christ's return.

But let us proceed to very briefly notice some of the “sects” that maintained separation from the movement that came to be known as Catholicism. We may well begin with the:

## **MONTANISTS**

I am well aware that a few Baptist historians hold up their hands in horror at the thought of Baptists claiming kin with the Montanists. (Cf. Newman and Vedder.) With preconceived antipathy for the Baptist continuity idea they seek to draw as dark a picture of the early “sects,” as they call them, as is possible. From many historians I have gleaned information concerning the Montanists. My conclusion is that their irregularities have been greatly exaggerated. In some of the churches there were irregularities, no doubt, but I am convinced that on the whole they were a great and good people holding the doctrines essential to a Baptist church. Let us notice the admissions of historians concerning them:

Vedder says (Short History of the Baptists, pp. 58, 62):

*“They clearly apprehended the truth that a church of Christ should consist of the regenerated only. . . Of course the Montanists immersed--no other baptism, so far as we know, was practiced by anybody in the second century. There is no evidence that they baptized infants, and their principle of a regenerate church membership would naturally require the baptism of believers only.”*

Should we be ashamed to claim kinship with these churches, composed of regenerate people, duly immersed upon profession of faith in Christ? But let us read further the testimony of historians:

*“ ‘Montanism’ was a protest against corrupt and sinful living and lax discipline. The substance of the contention of these churches was for a life of the spirit. It was not a new form of Christianity, it was a recovery of the old, the primitive church set over against the obvious corruption of the current Christianity. The old church demanded purity; the new church had struck a bargain with the world and arranged itself comfortably with it, and they would therefore break with it” (Moeller, Montanism, in Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia.)*

*“As there was at that time... no essential departure from the faith in action, the subject of baptism, church government or doctrine, the Montanists, on these points, were Baptists.” (Jarrel, Perpetuity, p. 69.)*

*“Montanism continued for centuries and finally became known under other names” (Eusebius, Church History, p. 229, note by Dr. McGiffert.)*

*“The severity of their doctrines gained them the esteem and confidence of many who were far from being of the lowest order.” (Mosheim, Ecel. History, Vol. 1, p. 233.)*

*“Montanism is best understood as a reaction against a condition of the church and of the Christian life, which seemed to the Montanists to be*

*pitched too low and also to have decayed from an earlier and purer standard.”* (The Ancient Catholic Church, by Rainy, p. 130.)

*“Montanists held that membership in the churches should be confined to purely regenerate persons; and that a spiritual life and discipline should be maintained without any affiliation with the authority of the state.”* (Armitage's History, p. 175.)

*“Montanus was charged with assuming to be the Holy Spirit himself; which was simply slander.”* (Armitage, p.175.)

*“History has not yet relieved the Montanists of the distortion and obliquity which long held them as enemies of Christ; while in fact they honestly, but in some respects erroneously, labored to restore that Christ-likeness to the churches which had so largely departed.”* (Armitage, p. 176.)

## **THE NOVATIANS**

These were so called because of the leader of the puritist movement who bore the name Novatian. He was a member of the Church of Rome planted by Paul, but which became so corrupt that separation was necessary in order to preserve the faith of Novatian, Dr. J. B. Moody says:

*“He neither began nor propagated a sect. Others followed his example in separating from the corrupt churches and thus followed the divine command, and thus their walk was orderly. The disorderly constituted the apostasy.”*

Robinson says (Eccles. Researches, p. 126):

*“A tide of immorality pouring into the church, Novatian withdrew and a great many with him... Great numbers followed his example, and all over the Empire puritan churches were constituted and flourished*

*through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of name and a succession of them continued until the Reformation.”*

Vedder says (Short History, p. 64):

*“The Novatians were the earliest Anabaptists; refusing to recognize as valid the ministry and sacraments of their opponents and claiming to be the true church, they were logically compelled to re-baptize all who came to them: The party gained great strength, in Asia Minor, where many Montanists joined them.”*

Dr. J. T. Christian, in his recent Baptist history, shows that the Novatians held to the independence of the churches, and recognized the equality of all pastors in respect to dignity and authority.

Dr. J. B. Moody, after having studied the Novatians in the light of a dozen or more historians, says of Novation:

*“He contended that... salvation... was of the Lord, by grace through faith.”*

Without multiplying quotations we find that the Novatians were Anabaptists, holding the scriptural view on the way of salvation, pure in life and scriptural as regards their conception of the ministry and church government. I see no reason as to why Baptists should not trace continuity of existence through them.

## **THE DONATISTS**

Dr. J. B. Moody, who read widely on subjects pertaining to church history, says relative to the Donatists:

*“Those who contended earnestly for the original pattern were called in some countries Novatians and in others Donatists. These men did not originate sects, but separated from the growing apostasy and perpetuated the true churches.”*

In the case of the Donatists, separation from the corrupt occurred in the year 311 A. D.

The French historian Crespin gives the following as the view held by them:

*“First for purity of church members, by asserting that none ought to be admitted to the church but such as are true believers, and true saints. Secondly, for purity of church discipline. Thirdly, for the independency of each church. Fourthly, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt. They were consequently re-baptizers or Anabaptists.”*

From this it is apparent that they held the doctrines essential to a Baptist church.

Curtis says (Progress of Baptist Principles, p. 21):

*“Donatists... seem to have formed the germ of the Waldenses.”*

Benedict says (Church History, p. 4):

*“After the Donatists arose they (the Montanists) were often called by that name.”* Jones says (Hist. Chris. Church): *“There was hardly a city or town in Africa where there was not a Donatist church.”*

## THE PAULICIANS

Dr. J. T. Christian says in his Baptist History, pages 76 and 77:

*“The Paulician churches were of apostolic origin and were planted in Armenia in the first century.”*

An old book of the Paulicians called the “Key of Truth,” was discovered a few years ago by Dr. Coneybeare of Oxford. In this book the Paulicians claim for themselves apostolic origin. Dr. Coneybeare, who translated the “Key of Truth “ and who is probably the greatest authority on the Paulicians, tells us that the Paulicians and Bogomils were persecuted but persisted here and there in many hiding places until the Reformation, when they reappeared under the form of Anabaptism.

Mosheim says:

*“They baptized and re-baptized by immersion. They would have been taken for downright Anabaptists.”*

Dr. Christian says:

*“Baptist views prevailed among the Paulicians. They held that men must repent and, believe, and then at a mature age ask for baptism which alone admitted them into the church.”*

Adeney says (Greek and Eastern Churches, page 217):

*“There it is quite arguable that they (paulicians) should be regarded as representing the survival of a most primitive type of Christianity.”*

From the references above it may be seen that the Paulicians claimed apostolic origin, held Baptist doctrines and persisted until they were absorbed in the Anabaptist movement.

## **THE ALBIGENSES**

Many historians, such as Mosheim, Gibbon, Muratori, Coneybeare and others, regard the Paulicians as the forerunners of the Albigenses, and indeed the same people save only for name. Dr. Christian states in his history, previously referred to, that recent writers hold that the Albigenses had been in the valleys of France from the earliest ages of Christianity. Because of persecution they left hardly a trace of their writings, so that our knowledge of them is not as full as we could wish. Jones, in the history already quoted from, says that they held the two doctrines necessary to a New Testament church. He also tells us that they rejected infant baptism.

Other “sects” holding these New Testament doctrines in common, but called by such names as Petrobrussians, Henricans, Arnoldists, existed, but space does not permit a detailed account of them. Of these Dr. A. H. Newman says (Recent Researches Concerning Med. Sects, p. 187):

*“There is much evidence of the persistence in Northern Italy and Southern France, from early times, of evangelical types of Christianity.”*

## **THE WALDENSES**

The close connection of the Waldenses with the peoples whom I have previously mentioned is recognized by historians. Jones says (History, Vol. 2, p. 4):

*“When the popes issued their fulminations against them (the Albigenses) they expressly condemned them as Waldenses.”*

Some have tried to begin the Waldenses with Peter Waldo and to make of him the founder, but without success. Peter Waldo did not start the Waldenses, neither are they called after him, for he and the Waldenses have their name from the same origin. On this point Jones says (H., Vol. 2): “The words simply signify 'valleys,' inhabitants of valleys, and no more.” Peter Waldo was so called because he was a 'valley man,' and he was only a leader of a people who had long existed. The Waldenses held the opinion that they were of ancient origin and truly apostolic. In regard to some historian's way of dealing with them, Jones remarks: “The very generic character of the Waldenses is overlooked by most writers respecting the wide-spread community to whom it applied... They were spread all over Europe for many centuries. . . Whatever local name they bore, the Catholics called them all Vaudois or Waldenses.” Of their origin, Vedder says (Short History, p. 122):

*“The Waldenses, in their earlier history, appear to be little else than Petrobrussians under a different name... The doctrines of the earlier Waldenses are substantially identical with those of the Petrobrussians” the persecutors of both being witnesses.”*

Some have tried to make it appear that the Waldenses practiced infant baptism. Of course, as I have previously pointed out, a people so widely scattered, with churches in many sections, may have in some of their churches had heretical practices. But my study of the Waldenses from many sources has led me to conclude that to charge the Waldenses generally with having practiced infant baptism, is a base slander. I concur with Dr. Christian when he says: *“There is no account that the Waldenses people ever practiced infant baptism.”*

Of the doctrines held by the Waldenses, Vedder has this to say (S. Hist., pp. 123, 124):

*“Roman writers before 1350 attributed the following errors to the Waldenses: 8. They assert that the doctrines of Christ and the apostles,*



*without the decrees of the Church, suffice for salvation. 9. They say that baptism does not profit little children, because they are never able actually to believe. 10. They affirm that they alone are the church of Christ and the disciples of Christ. They are the successors of the apostles.”*

Vedder also goes on to give a list of other beliefs held by them and similar to those held by Baptists today. Then he adds:

*“Also, we find attributed to them certain tenets which were afterwards characteristic of the Anabaptists...Maintaining these views, they were the spiritual ancestors of the Anabaptist churches.”*

The historian Keller has this to say:

*“Very many Waldenses considered, as we know accurately, the baptism on (profession of) faith to be the form which is conformable with words and example of Christ.”*

No one can make a study of the Waldenses and fail to see very rapidly that they held the two doctrines essential to a Baptist church. They were a great and noble people, who maintained the true faith in the face of bitter and almost continuous persecution. Baptists need feel no shame in claiming kin with them.

## **THE ANABAPTISTS**

There is much evidence that the Waldenses came to be known later as Anabaptists. The Reformation gave opportunity for the various “Sects” in hiding, which we to-day identify as Baptists, to come forth and declare

themselves. These hated, so-called “sects” came to be known by the general name “Anabaptists.” Dr. Vedder says:

*“It is a curious-and instructive fact that the Anabaptist churches of the Reformation period were most numerous precisely where the Waldenses of a century or two previous had most flourished... That there was an intimate relation between the two movements few doubt who have studied this period and its literature. The torch of truth was handed on from generation to generation.”*

Similarly Dr. Christian says:

*“In those places where the Waldenses flourished, there the Baptists set deep root... Many, able preachers of the Waldenses became widely known as Baptist ministers... Many details marked the Waldenses and the Baptists as of the same origin.”*

Again, he says, with reference to the Waldenses and Paulicians:

*“In my judgment both parties were Baptists.”*

If we ask the opinion of those hostile, we find Baronius, the learned Roman Catholic historian, saying (Danveis Baptism, p. 253): “The Waldenses were Anabaptists.”

Again, Vedder, who, let us remember, is hostile to the idea of Baptist perpetuity, has this to say (S. Hist., p. 130):

*“These Anabaptist churches were not gradually developed but appear fully formed from the first... Complete in polity, sound in doctrine, strict in discipline. It will be impossible to account for these phenomena without an assumption of a long existing cause. Though the Anabaptist churches appear suddenly in the records of the time contemporaneously with the Zwinglian Reformation, their roots are to be sought further back.”*

Further, he says on pages 136, 143:

*“The Anabaptists, like Baptists of today, argued that there is no command or example for infant baptism in the New Testament, and that instruction and belief are enjoined before baptism. . . The teachings of the Swiss Anabaptists are accurately known to us from three independent and mutually confirmatory sources: The testimony of their opponents, the fragments of their writings that remain, and their Confession of Faith. The latter is the first document of its kind known to be in existence. It was issued in 1527 ... It teaches the baptism of believers only, the breaking of bread by those alone who have been baptized, and inculcates a pure church discipline... The . . . Confession corresponds with the beliefs avowed by Baptist churches today. It is significant that what is approbriously called “close communion” is found to be the teachings of the oldest Baptist document in existence.”*

I shall close my discussion of the Anabaptists with a quotation from Dr. W. D. Nowlin (Fundamentals of the Faith):

*“As to the origin of the Anabaptists, church historians differ, but it is probable that in many instances they were the revival of the remains of the*

*earlier sects or at least of their sentiments, which still lingered in many localities. Undoubtedly it was the quickened life and thought of the Reformation that brought them again into notice and resulted in the vast increase of their members. Anabaptists held to the complete separation of church and state, liberality of the individual conscience and the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. They opposed infant baptism; admitted none but regenerated persons to baptism and church membership; and practiced immersion only for baptism: As a result they were bitterly persecuted and outlawed. Nevertheless they greatly increased in numbers and extended over a large part of Europe. . . The Baptists of the last three hundred years are the direct descendants of the true Anabaptists of the period of the Reformation; perhaps we might more correctly say, the Baptists were then called Anabaptists. So we find Mosheim, whose authority is great as a church historian, saying: 'The true origin of that sect which acquired the name Anabaptist is hid in the remote depths of antiquity, and is consequently extremely difficult to be ascertained.'*

I have been dealing with so-called “sects” more commonly dealt with by church historians, and have shown that they held views in the main essentially Baptist. I have also indicated by historical quotation the connection that the peoples had with each other. However, there are several bodies of Christians through whom we could trace continuity of organized Baptist life if space were available. I shall take time to barely indicate these Christian bodies through whom Baptists connect with apostolic times.

There are, for instance, THE WELCH BAPTISTS, who make well authenticated claims to apostolic origin. I can do no better than to state the facts concerning them in the words of a writer to the “Religious Herald” of some years ago:

*'The Welch Baptists claim their origin direct from the apostles, and their claim has never been successfully controverted. They maintain that the light of a pure Christianity has been preserved among her people during all the 'Dark Ages. 'They were a pastoral people, dwelling in their mountain homes. They were subjected to almost constant persecution, and therefore sought to conceal themselves in their mountain recesses, that have been so appropriately styled 'the Piedmont of Britain. 'And yet the fact of their early existence is placed beyond peradventure or doubt. They attracted the attention of the Romish Church, and as early as the year 597 a monk visited them, by the name of Austin, and sought to win them to his views.'*

Dr. J. T. Christian, in his recent Baptist History, presents an abundance of historical evidence which proves Welch Baptists of apostolic origin. He is well worth reading on this point.

Benedict, in his history of the Baptists (page 343f.), shows most convincingly that Welch Baptists are of early origin. According to him, they were ancient in Wales in 597. He shows that at that date they had a college and at least one association of churches.

Further, the history of IRISH BAPTISTS is very interesting reading in connection with the thought of Baptist perpetuity. Baptists had churches in Ireland at a time not vastly remote from the days of Paul. Patrick, the great Irish preacher, was born about 360, but according to historians, Christianity in Ireland antedated Patrick's arrival by a long period.

Of Patrick, Dr. Vedder writes as follows:

*“Romes most audacious theft was when she seized bodily the apostle Peter and made him the putative head and founder of her system; but next to that brazen act stands her affrontery when she 'annexed' the great missionary preacher of Ireland and enrolled him among her 'saints'. . . From the writings of Patrick we learn that his teachings and practices were in many particulars at least evangelical. The testimony is ample that they baptized believers. . . There is no mention of infants... Patrick's baptism was that of apostolic times... immersion.”*

Of the churches of Ireland, Vedder further says:

*“The theology of these churches up to the ninth century continued to be remarkably sound and scriptural.”*

I could go on to cite historical references to show that these Irish Baptists sent missionaries to Northern France and Southern Germany and in that way are related to the “Baptists under other names” that I have already mentioned.

Surely I have presented evidence ample to prove my claim that from the days of Christ there has always been in existence churches holding the two doctrines essential to a New Testament church. I have been able to give only a scrap of the historical evidence at my command. The more one studies on this question the more dogmatic they are forced to become in the belief that history justifies the Baptist claim to continuity of Baptist church life throughout the ages. History indeed vindicates the Master's promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His church!

*“No church or denomination that began this side of Christ's personal ministry has any Bible right to make claim to be a church of Christ. Therefore Christ's promise to the church He built was not made to Catholicism nor to the various sects of Protestantism that originated in and since the days of Luther's Reformation, but it was made to that church that no historian, friend or foe, has ever been able to find its origin this side of Christ's personal ministry, namely, the Baptist church. This is no new theory but a fact that is believed and taught by all loyal and informed Baptists the world over.*

-J. T. Moore, in “*Why I Am A Baptist.*”

## X

### Statements of Historians

We saw in the last chapter that from the days of Christ and the apostles there have existed churches that held to the New Testament way of salvation and baptism. These churches have shown to be, on essential points, Baptist churches, I wish for us now to spend a few moments considering the statements of historians of different denominations concerning Baptist origin and perpetuity. Some of these statements have been much used and often quoted. This, however, has in no wise affected their truth. Indeed they should carry greater weight, having stood the test of time and criticism.

The charge is sometimes made that even Baptist historians do not believe in Baptist continuity. In reply to this it may be said that some Baptist historians do not. Some are too “broad” to risk the charge of narrowness that would be hurled at them if they laid claim to perpetuity. Some have pedobaptist and even modernistic tendencies, and hold to the “invisible” Church theory. But it can be truly said that most Baptist historians are firm believers in Baptist continuity. And it is interesting to note that those who seek to discredit it are careful not to assert that Baptist continuity cannot be traced. For instance, Dr. Vedder says: *“One cannot affirm that there was not a continuity in the outward and visible life of the church, founded by the apostles down to the Reformation. To affirm such a negative would be foolish, and such... could not be proved”* (S. Hist., p. 9.). Vedder, however, takes the position that it was to the “invisible” Church that Christ promised perpetuity. He evidently expects the reader to accept this merely upon the authority of his word, without proof, biblical or otherwise. He offers no proof because none can be offered. As I have already shown, there is no such thing as an “invisible” Church. There has either been a continuity of visible churches, or else Christ's promise has failed.



The Baptist historian A. H. Newman disclaims belief in Baptist continuity, but he also is very careful not to assert that such continuity cannot be traced. Indeed, he goes so far as to admit that all did not go off into apostasy, for he says (*History of Antipedobaptism*, p. 28): “*That there were hosts of true believers can by no means be doubted.*” I have shown that these “hosts” were Baptists, gathered into New Testament churches!

The Baptist historian McGlothlin, like Vedder and Newman, does not venture to assert that there was not a continuity of Baptist churches. His statement is (*Guide*, p. 29), “*Anabaptists may have had some connection with earlier sects.*”

Among the better known Baptist historians of the past who were believers in Baptist perpetuity, may be mentioned Robinson, Crosby, Irving, Orchard, Jones, Backus, Benedict and Cramp. Of these historians Dr. Armitage says: “*In the main their leading facts and findings have not been proven untrustworthy, and no one has attempted to show their general conclusions untenable. . . Their historical acumen is quite equal to that of other church historians*” (*Armitage's History*, p. 11)

I want that we shall consider a few statements from noted Baptists themselves concerning their origin and continuity, after which we shall consider what historians of other faiths have to say about them.

The Baptist historian that is regarded by many leading Baptists as their greatest historian is John T. Christian. Dr. Christian's new *Baptist History* (Baptist S. S. Board, 1922) presents unassailable proof of the continuity of Baptists. I quote from the preface to his great work this ringing statement: “I have no question in my own mind that there has been a historical

succession of Baptists from the days of Christ to the present time.” Dr. Geo. Lorimer (The Baptists in History, p. 49):

*“That the Baptists are more likely the oldest, is generally conceded and grows more certain with the progress of scholarly investigation.”*

Dr. J. B. Moody (My Church);

*“Church perpetuity is scriptural, reasonable, credible, historical and conclusive.”*

Dr. J. L. Smith (Baptist Law of Continuity):

*“We have submitted the testimony of more than forty of the world's best historians--not one of them a Baptist --who expressly and clearly point out the movement of these Baptist people through the long centuries back to the apostolic days.”*

Dr. J. W. Porter, noted author and editor says:

*“If Baptists have not perpetuity, then Christ's prophecy and promise have failed. This is unthinkable.”*

H. B. Taylor (Bible Briefs):

*“Baptist churches are the only institutions that are divine on this earth. Without them Matthew 16:18 has failed of fulfillment.”*

Dr. T. T. Eaton:

*“Those who oppose Baptist succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material furnished by other churches, and with those baptized by regular ordained ministers.”*

Dr. R. B. Cook (Story of the Baptists):

*“Baptists are able to trace their distinctive principles to the apostolic age . . . When from the union of the church and state Christianity became generally corrupt, there still remained, in obscure places, churches and sects which maintained the pure doctrines and ordinances of Christ, and hence it is certain that these churches and sects held substantially the same principles which are now held as the distinctive views of the Baptists.”*

Dr. D. B. Ray (Baptist Succession, p. 10): *“Baptists have with one voice denied any connection with the Romish apostasy, and claimed their origin as a church from Jesus Christ and the apostles.”*

Dr. D. C. Haynes (The Baptist Denomination, p. 21):

*“The Baptist church is the primitive church-there has never been a time when it was not in being.”*

Dr. Geo. W. McDaniel (Churches of the New Testament):

*“There is no personality this side of Jesus Christ who is a satisfactory explanation of their origin.”*

I could go on almost indefinitely with quotations from noted Baptists, showing that great and representative men of that faith, after investigation and thought, have been firm believers in the perpetuity of Baptist churches. Some of these have written books that offer conclusive proof on this point. I mention “Baptist Succession,” by Dr. D. B. Ray; “Baptist Church Perpetuity,” by Dr. W. A. Jarrell; “The World's Debt to the Baptists,” by Dr. J. W. Porter; “Fundamentals of the Faith,” by Dr. W. D. Nowlin; “The New Testament Church, by T. T. Martin; “My Church,” by J. B. Moody, as examples. To the books just referred to, are to be added many historical works by men whose names I have made no mention of.

So much for the beliefs of Baptists relative to the continuity of their own churches. Let us now see what historians and great men of other faiths have to say about Baptist origin and perpetuity. I begin with those who have been the bitterest enemies and persecutors of Cardinal Hosius, the president of the Council of Trent. He says:

*“If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists, since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past that have been more generally punished, or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel punishment than these people.”* (Quoted from Christian's History).

Cardinal Rosius wrote in A. D. 1554. He dates the history of Baptists back twelve hundred years. This is an important concession. Date them back to 354 A. D. and we have little trouble following them the rest of the way.

Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, co-worker with Luther and Calvin in the Reformation of 1525 and bitter enemy of the Baptists says:

*“The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for thirteen hundred years has caused great trouble to the church”*

This admits the existence of Baptists in the year 225 A. D.

Mosheim, Lutheran historian of great note says:

*“Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists”* (Inst. of Ecel. History.)

Robert Barclay, Quaker, says:

*“There are also reasons for believing that on the continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the apostles!”* (Inner life of the Societies of the Common wealth, pp. 11, 12.)

John Clark Ridpath, Methodist, author of that monumental work, “Ridpath's History of the World: in a letter to Dr. W. A. Jarrell (Baptist Church Perpetuity, p. 59), says:

*“I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A. D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists.”*

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Campbellite or “Christian” church says:

*“From the apostolic age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced.”*(McCalla-Campbell Debate on Baptism, pp. 378, 379.)

Sir Isaac Newton, learned English philosopher, student of the Scriptures and of history, says:

*“The Modern Baptists, formerly called Anabaptists, are the only people who have never symbolized with the Papacy.”* (Quoted from Baptist Law of Continuity, p. 39.)

Edinburg Cyclopedia:

*“It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described under the appellation of Anabaptists. Indeed, this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.”* (From N. T. Church, p. 22.)

Tertullian was a Montanist. He was born about fifty years after the death of John the apostle.

I quote next from “Crossing the Centuries,” by W. C. King, having as associate editors some of the great men of America, such as former President Roosevelt, President Wilson, David Starr Jordan, Lyman Abbott, and a number of presidents and professors of leading universities. Of the Baptists it has this to say:

“Of the Baptists it may be said that they are not reformers. These people, comprising bodies of Christian believers, known under various names in different countries, are entirely distinct and independent of the Roman and Greek Churches, have an unbroken continuity from apostolic days down through the centuries. Throughout this long period they were bitterly persecuted for heresy, driven from country to country, disfranchised, deprived of their property, imprisoned, tortured and slain by the thousands, yet they swerved not from their New Testament faith, doctrine and adherence.” (From the N. T. Church, p. 25.).

The Dutch Baptist historians claim apostolic origin for the Baptists, according to Dr. J. T. Christian, who has given much study and thought to this question. Such is the claim of Herman Schynn (*Historia Christianormn*), while Blaupont Ten Cate says (*Christian's History*, p. 95): *“I am fully satisfied that Baptist principles have in all ages, from the times of the apostles to the present prevailed over a greater or smaller portion of Christendom.”*

The claim of Dutch Baptists to apostolic origin was thoroughly investigated in the year 1819. The King of Holland appointed J. J. Dermout, his chaplain, a scholarly man and Dr. Ypeii, professor of theology in Groningen, both members of the Dutch Reformed Church, to write a history of the Dutch Reformed Church and also investigate the claims of Dutch Baptists. They prepared the history, and in it they devote a chapter to the Baptists. A portion of what they have to say about the Baptists reads as follows:

*“The Mennonites are descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses, who were driven by persecution into various countries; and who during the latter part of the twelfth century fled into Flanders; and into the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, where they lived simple and exemplary lives, in the villages as farmers (in towns by trades) free from the charge of any gross immoralities, and professing the most pure and simple principles, which they exemplified in a holy conversation. They were, therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.*

*We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages. The*



*perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics that their denomination is the most ancient.”* (History of the Dutch Reformed Church, by A. Ypeij and J.J. Dermout, VoL 1, p. 148.)

Other authorities could be cited, and quotations could be multiplied, but it is unnecessary to go on indefinitely with these. I shall offer only two more ere I close the chapter. Enough has already been written, however, and sufficient proof has been produced to convince the open, unbiased, teachable mind that Jesus founded a Church, that that church was the local assembly; that He promised its perpetuity, and that His promise is seen fulfilled in the churches today known as Baptist churches.

I submit the following from Dr. J. W. Porter's book, “Random Remarks,” concerning Dr. John Clark, who was pastor of the first Baptist church in America, located at Newport, R. I. Dr. Porter says:

*“Dr. John Clark received his baptism from Rev. Stillwell's church in London, and this church received theirs from Holland, and the Holland Baptists from the Waldenses, and the Waldenses from the Novations, and the Novations from the Donatists, and the Donatists received their baptism from the apostolic church, and the apostolic church from John the Baptist, and John the Baptist from heaven.”*

In 1921 or 1922 I clipped an article that appeared in the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, and simultaneously in several other denominational papers of the South. This article deals with the ancestry of the Baptist church

at Dyer, Tennessee. It shows a continuity of Baptist church life from the present to the days of Jesus. I am not informed as to the one who made the research, neither have I had at my command all the books necessary to enable me to verify each historical reference given. I give the article in full below for the consideration of the reader:

## **BAPTIST SUCCESSION BACK TO CHRIST**

**Link One.** The Baptist church at Dyer, Tennessee, was organized by J. W. Jetter, who came from the Philadelphia Association.

**Link Two.** Hillcliff Church, Wales, England. H. Roller came to the Philadelphia Association from The Hillcliff Church. See minutes of Philadelphia Association, book 3, item 1.

**Link Three.** Hillcliff church was organized by Aaron Arlington, A. D. 987. See Alex Munstor's Israel of the Alps, p. 39.

**Link Four.** Lima Piedmont church ordained Aaron Arlington in.940. See Jones' Church History, p. 324.

**Link Five.** Lima Piedmont church was organized by Balcolao, A. D. 812. See Neander's Church History, vol. 2, p. 320.

**Link Six.** Balcolao came from the church at Timto, Asia Minor. See Neander's Church History, vol. 2, p. 320.

**Link Seven.** Timto church was organized by Archer Flavin, A. D. 738. See Mosheim's History, vol. 1, p. 394.

**Link Eight.** Archer Flavin came from the Darethea church, organized by Adromicus, A. D. 671, in Asia Minor. See Lambert's Church History, p 47.

**Link Nine.** Adromicus came from Pontifossi, at the foot of the Alps in France. See Lambert's Church History, p. 47.

**Link Ten.** Pontifossi church was organized by Tellestman from Turan, Italy, A. D. 398. See Nowlin's Church History, vol. 2, p. 318.

**Link Eleven.** Turan church was organized by Tertullan from Bing Joy, Mrica, A. D. 237. See Armitage's Church History, p. 182.

**Link Twelve.** Tertullan was a member of the Partus church at the foot of the Tiber, that was organized by Polycarp, A. D. 150. See Cyrus' Commentary of Antiquity, p. 924.

**Link Thirteen.** Polycarp was baptized by John the Beloved or Revelator, on the twenty-fifth of December, A. D.. 95. See Neander's Church History, p. 285.

**Link Fourteen.** John was with Jesus on the Mount. Mark 3: 13-14; Luke 6: 12-13.

“The church is here to save men out of the world. It is here to save them out of the system that is called the world.”

“The church bears the same relation to the world that a lifeboat and its crew do to a ship pounding to pieces upon the rocks.”

“The church is here to impress upon men two immense facts, the fact of the SOUL, and the fact of ETERNITY.”

-I. M. Haldeman, in *“The Mission of the Church”*

“His marching orders are His program for that church (The church at Jerusalem) and every other Baptist church until He comes again.”

-H. B. Taylor, in *“Why I Am A Baptist.”*

## XI

### **What is the Mission of the Church that Jesus Built?**

In the preceding chapters I have sought to show the reader the Biblical teaching as to what a genuine New Testament church is. With this I have presented historical evidence to prove to a demonstration that Baptist churches have had continuous existence from the time of Christ until now. I trust that the views of you who have read thus far have narrowed and become more distinct, so far as your conception of the church is concerned.

Now that we are clear that Baptist churches are the true New Testament churches, divinely perpetuated throughout the ages, let us go further and inquire concerning the mission of the church in the world. The world has many erroneous views concerning what a church is for. Those who belong to the different so-called churches share in many of these mistaken notions, and in some cases Baptists have come to have a perverted idea as to the proper function of a church. It is no uncommon thing for one to see in the magazines and newspapers of today the bold charge that the churches have “failed.” By this is meant that some churches have failed as measured by the standard that some individual or group of individuals have set up. Let us consider for a few moments some of the erroneous views that are commonly held concerning what a church is for.

As some conceive it, A CHURCH IS TO BE CHIEFLY ENGAGED IN THE WORK OF CIVILIZATION. In proportion as churches aid a nation to advance in the arts and sciences of civilization, they are thought of as having succeeded. Especially does this idea obtain as regards Christian efforts on the foreign mission fields. If only the heathen can be brought to dress properly, observe rules of cleanliness and sanitation, and adopt the

ways and manners of civilized nations, it is often considered that the missionary has abundantly succeeded.

But, as I shall presently seek to prove, it is not the primary business of churches to civilize. When on the mission field the dominant motive comes to be to civilize, then the labors of the workers on that field are a failure from the standpoint of the true mission of the church.

Then there is the CLUB IDEA OF THE CHURCH that some have. It is to be feared that some look upon church membership largely as they do membership in some club or fraternal organization. Church work comes to be a sort of pleasant diversion, and it seems quite the nice and respectable thing to be a church member, especially if the church is one of the fashionable kind that includes in its membership some of the socially prominent persons of the community.

But of this idea it may be said that if a church is merely on a par with clubs, lodges, societies, and other such organizations, it has little to justify its separate existence.

Again, there are those who hold THE SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN IDEAL FOR THE CHURCH. To them the church's main concern should not be preparation of individual souls for life in an eternity beyond, but the transforming of society as a whole until this world becomes a better place for men to dwell during this present life. Their chief emphasis is not upon the then but upon the now. To the end of approximating the ideal they have in view, they insist that the church engage in all sorts of humanitarian projects; that it deal with politics and legislation, and that it layout an ambitious program of social service and reform. To those who

conceive of a church in this way, as their ideas are carried out, the churches come to deal less and less with the spiritual and more and more with the physical. They are the advocates of the “institutional” church, where, as one writer puts it, one can get anything from a sermon to a sandwich. In the church buildings of such a church recreational features are prominent. They have swimming pools, reading rooms, shower baths, gymnastic apparatus, social balls, etc. Often supper is served from the church kitchen, so many nights a week at so much per plate. All sorts of social affairs are constantly being planned. All in all the church building is used in such a way that people come to look upon it as a place to have a good time.

If Christ should enter some church buildings today, I am sure that He would throw out a lot of the things to be found in them. He would overturn and cast out the gymnastic apparatus, the motion picture machines and the other amusement paraphernalia, just as He overturned the tables of the money changers long ago and drove out those who desecrated and secularized the temple. His words to those who desecrate and secularize the places of worship today would be the same as to the same kind of culprits of long ago, when He said: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer.” Is there any reason in the world to believe that Jesus looks more leniently today upon the secularizing of the house of worship than He did two thousand years ago,? Those who bring all sorts of secular things beneath the church roof, follow exactly in the steps of the Jews whom Jesus drove from the temple.

Of the view that makes of a church an organization whose primary concern is the improvement of social conditions, and the physical betterment of humanity it may be said that it is wholly at variance with the truth concerning the real mission of a church. True, social conditions improve where the gospel is preached and churches thrive. Most great moral reforms have had their genesis among Christian people, but these things ought to be

considered merely as by-products of church activity and influence and not as things of paramount concern.

In regard to the matter of the church's mission, when there are so many divergent opinions, where shall we go for the truth concerning the matter? There is but one place to go --- THE NEW TEST AMENT. It is not a question of what this person or that thinks the church should be, or engage in. It is a question as to what Jesus Christ founded His church for, and what orders He left for it to follow. Strange indeed that men should ever go astray in regard to the church's mission, when it is set forth so very clearly in His own words.

For Baptists to err in regard to their mission is inexcusable. Other denominations, sects, and so-called churches may engage in the things mentioned, and may make humanitarian projects their chief concern if they please to do it, without being liable to such strict censure, because they have no Commission or orders from Christ. He is not responsible for their existence, and they are not responsible for the carrying out of the Commission which He gave centuries before they came into being. But Baptists are responsible, because it was to a Baptist church that the Lord Jesus Christ gave His Commission. This Commission forever settles the question of what a church exists for by clearly defining its mission and purpose. Some will no doubt think me very "narrow" for saying that the Great Commission is a Baptist Commission, but "narrow" or not, it is the truth. The whole of my book thus far is proof of this fact. A well-known editor recently expressed the truth that I am trying to convey, in these words: *"This Commission was given to none but Baptists. All present were Baptists because they had been baptized by John or by the twelve, all of whom had been baptized by John the Baptist. It was given to them, not as preachers or individuals, but as a church, for it was to be obeyed until the end of the age and none of them would live that long. But the Master had*

*promised that the church He founded would not be destroyed by the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18); and to that church and other churches founded through their missionary labors the Master gave this world-wide and age-long Commission. No infants, no seekers, no probationers, no sinners, no proselytes, none but disciples or Christians, are included by the Master in His orders to be baptized. This Commission was given to Baptists, for every one present was a Baptist. It is a very definite command to make men Christians by preaching the gospel to them, and then to make them Baptists by giving them Baptist baptism, for that is the only kind there was at the time the Commission was given. No one else but Baptists can obey this Commission, because no one else has the kind of baptism that Jesus commanded Christians to submit to. And no one else can do what this Commission enjoins, namely, make the disciples Baptists by giving them Baptist baptism.”*

And now let us examine the Commission that Jesus gave to His church, and let us analyze it for a few moments. These are the words: “Go ye therefore and teach (R. V. 'disciple') all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Here is the church's mission. Nothing less than this, nothing more should be included in its program. As one has put it, “*That should be the horizon of our visions and the limits of our tasks.*” Note well what the Commission includes:

## **MAKE MEN CHRISTIANS**

That is the first, the foremost, the most important thing to make disciples or Christians. A study of the Commission in the original will show that the emphasis or accent is upon making disciples. When in church and denominational affairs we major on education, hospitals, orphanages, or



anything else no matter how worthy, we are going contrary to the Great Commission. The Commission puts first the making of disciples. Disciples or Christians are to be made by preaching the gospel to the lost. It is the gospel that makes Christ known to men. When they hear the gospel and receive Him as their personal Saviour they become children of God. John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." The main concern of every true church ought to be soul winning. To follow the Commission demands that each church shall be intensely missionary, both as regards the lost of the immediate community in which the church exists, and the lost unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Often the building of a "plant" (?) comes to be thought of as the main thing, the securing of social recognition or something apart from the thing that the Master emphasized. I repeat, the first task given by the risen Lord is to make Christians. This must always precede baptism and indoctrination. In John 4:1 we are given the example of Jesus on this point, where we are distinctly told that, Jesus made disciples before He baptized them. Those who baptize infants, and those who baptize to help make disciples are plainly at outs with both the Master's precept and example, as are those who receive "probationers" and seek to indoctrinate before discipling. As I indicated earlier in the chapter, the Commission is a Baptist Commission. It puts salvation before baptism and church membership. It was not only given solely to Baptists; it is obeyed by them alone. For remember the statement made earlier in the book, "*Baptist churches are the only churches on earth that require a person to profess to be saved before the person unites with the church or is baptized.*"

But let us examine the Commission further and we shall see that the second part of this three-fold Commission is the command to

## **MAKE CHRISTIANS BAPTISTS**

We are to make men Christians by preaching salvation through faith in Christ to them, then, we are to make those Christians Baptists by baptizing them according to His orders. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” While the command to make disciples takes the place of precedence in the Commission, the command to make Baptists is just as obligatory and binding upon us. Some censure Baptists, claiming that they put too great an emphasis upon baptism. This criticism is wholly unjust, for Baptists place baptism exactly where the Master placed it in the Commission. They hold that it should never precede salvation, but that it should in every case follow it. They do not believe that they are warranted in stopping with the making of disciples, for their orders read---”baptizing them,” and as they see it they have no right to change their orders.

The third part of the Commission is just as explicit as the rest; it commands the

## **INDOCTRINATION OF BAPTISTS**

It reads: ...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The “all things” means every teaching of Jesus contained in the New Testament, such, for instance, as the teaching concerning the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, the security of believers, and stewardship. To separate some of His teachings into a group and call them “non-essentials” and refrain from teaching them is to violate His command. It is a sad fact that most of the denominations omit two-thirds of the Commission and only take note of the part that refers to making disciples. They assume,

although incorrectly, that the Commission was given to them as well as to Baptists, then they show their unfitness to be custodians of Christ's sacred trust by cutting off two-thirds of the Commission---the portion that commands to immerse and to teach all things that He commanded. Baptists are absolutely the only people who are willing to carry out all three parts of the Commission.

It is often the case nowadays that what is commonly termed “Christian Education” is justified and taught from the last clause of the Commission. This is either the result of a faulty exegesis or else it is willful misinterpretation of the Scriptures. This passage cannot rightly be interpreted to refer to the teaching of history, mathematics, biology, psychology and such as is taught in denominational schools and colleges. Jesus said, “All things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Christian education in the truest sense is education in the things of the Word of God. That is the only education authorized in the Commission. Many good arguments can be made in favor of Christian schools, but the point I am making is that they are not authorized by the Great Commission.

The last clause of the Commission places upon Baptist churches the responsibility of teaching and indoctrinating all of those who are saved and added to the church. No teaching of Christ is to be ignored or omitted, but every doctrine is to be taught, no matter how many charges of “narrow” are called forth, or how displeasing it may prove to those who minimize certain teachings of Christ on the ground of their being “non-essential.”

I bring this chapter to a close by recapitulating the things said before.

## WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT?

It is not the mission assigned by the world, set forth by the press, and conceived by some churches. It is not the civilization of mankind, it is not social and moral reform, it is not the physical, intellectual and social elevation of the race---save as the things come about incidentally as by-products of Christianity. But the mission of the church is that which was given by the Founder, Jesus Christ, in the Great Commission, namely, to make Christians, immerse, and indoctrinate them. Or, to put it more at length, the divine program for the church is this: To preach the gospel to every human being that lives in this world; to baptize those who accept a free salvation through Christ; then to teach the saved and baptized until they know the commands of Christ, and until His will is expressed through those redeemed lives unto the world.

*“Baptists gave modern missions to the world, and every missionary of every denomination is following the lead of the Baptists. “The fact that other denominations are permitted to believe and worship as they please is due to Baptist blood and tears. “No one can cite an instance in history when Baptisft ever persecuted anyone for conscience sake-”*

-J.W. Porter, in *“Random Remarks”*

## XII

### **The Church that Jesus Built – Justifying Its Existence**

In the earlier chapters we found from doctrinal and historical study and comparison that Baptist churches are the only churches that can rightly claim Jesus Christ for Founder, or that coincide with the doctrinal teachings of the New Testament. In the preceding chapter, I sought to show what was the Master's purpose in founding His church, as indicated in the words of the Great Commission. This Commission was proven to have been given to a Baptist church and consequently is rightly claimed as a Baptist Commission. Let us next examine to see how Baptists have responded to the orders given them by the Master. Have Baptists tried to do the things that the Master left for them to do? Have their labors through the ages been indicative of their divine origin? What has been their work and influence? A volume might be devoted to answering these questions, but I shall be able to mention only a very few Baptist achievements, and those in only the briefest way.

I am persuaded that many are not aware of the tremendous debt that the world owes to the Baptists. Many of the most priceless things that humanity possesses today have been bequeathed by Baptist churches. Yet, because of their depth of conviction and the tenacity with which they cling to their faith, many look with strong disapproval upon Baptists today. They get far less notice by the press than many denomination's much smaller. The amount of notice given them by newspapers and magazines would never lead one to believe they are the largest single evangelical body of Christians in the world, today, but it is nevertheless the truth.

Let us consider what Baptists have done with regard to the thing that Jesus placed the "accent" on in the Commission, namely, MAKING

CHRISTIANS. Have they been a missionary people? Indeed they have. In the apostolic age Baptists “went everywhere preaching the Word.” In the apostle Paul Baptists possessed the greatest missionary of all ages. In the period of one short lifetime Paul well nigh spread the gospel over the known world. So zealous were the Baptists of that early time that within a few decades there were literally millions of Baptists throughout the Roman Empire. Then began the gradual development of the Roman apostasy, and with this the lessening of missionary endeavor, The time came when Catholicism dominated governments and with the sword and torture rack sought to exterminate all who refused to bow the knee to the authority of the Pope. No longer was it possible for Baptists to carry on their missionary labors in the same way. That they persisted in so great numbers through those trying ages of persecution, and that many were martyred because of their preaching the gospel, proves, however, that they never ceased to be a missionary people. When the Reformation brought some relief from Roman oppression, we find that the Anabaptists literally swarmed. So much did they increase that the Reformers were constantly irritated by the evidences of their growth. Had it not been for oppression and fierce persecution, I believe I am safe in saying that Baptists would have taken this world for Christ.

Today there are tremendous missionary efforts being put forth by all of the large denominations. The modern missionary movement is one of the greatest movements of our times. Who started the modern missionary movement? IT WAS WILLIAM CAREY, A BAPTIST. Baptist churches were the first in modern times to support workers in a foreign land. Before other denominations in America were doing anything along the line of foreign missions, Baptist churches were sending funds toward the support of Carey and his work. Later Judson, who had been inspired by the example of Carey, went out under the Congregationalists, but during his long sea voyage he was made a Baptist by reading the New Testament. He was baptized following his arrival, severed connection with the people who sent him out, and was adopted by American Baptists as their missionary.

Not only were Baptists pioneers in the starting of the modern missionary movement, they have preached the gospel for the first time in many lands. For instance, in Bermuda, Cuba and India they were the first of the so-called evangelical churches to preach the gospel. In America the Baptists were the first to preach the gospel in the vast territory west of the Mississippi river. Today Baptist mission stations girdle the globe. In every clime are to be found Baptists in pursuance of the Master's last command to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

As to the second part of the Commission, which command the baptizing of Christians, Baptists alone have obeyed. Others have either ignored, or else minimized and perverted this part of the Commission.

Now as the third part of the Commission, the teaching to observe all things whatsoever Jesus commanded"---how do Baptists stand? In answer it may be truly said that Baptists are the only people who have been willing to teach absolutely "all things commanded. They have always believed in education and in indoctrination. So it is not surprising that Baptists started the modern Sunday school movement. The view most commonly held is that Robert Raikes started this movement, but this is untrue. The honor belongs to William Fox, a Baptist deacon, as Dr. T. W. Porter abundantly proves in his book, "The World's Debt to the Baptists." Deacon Fox started his Bible school in 1783, and two years later helped to organize the "Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools." This society organized by Baptists was the first organization for the promotion of Sunday schools in the world, so far as we have record. However, so far as individual Sunday schools are concerned, the primacy belongs to Welch Baptists. In Wales some Baptist churches maintained Sunday schools at least 132 years before the Raikes movement. And in this connection it is well to point out that the school of Raikes was not a Sunday school in the modern sense. True, it met

on Sunday, but not for Bible study. The Bible held no place in the course of study.

Not only is it true that Baptists started the modern Sunday School movement, they have likewise led in Sunday School work. A little investigation will prove this. For instance, it was a Baptist, B. F. Jacobs, who gave the world the "International Uniform Lesson System." It was a Baptist, Dr. Warren Randolph, who was the first secretary of the International Lesson Committee. It was a Baptist, Dr. T. R. Sampey, who worked out the first course of advanced lessons for the International Sunday School Association of America.. It was a Baptist, Dr. B. H. DeMent, who occupied the first chair of Sunday School Pedagogy ever established in any theological school in the world, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The first Sunday School Clinic ever held was held under the auspices of the Baptist S. S. Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Not only have Baptists occupied the place of primacy in teaching the "all things commanded" by word of mouth; they have likewise been first in teaching by means of the printed page. Being pre-eminently a "Bible people," they have sought to sow down the whole world with Bibles. The oldest Bible society in existence, The British Bible Society, which has circulated millions of copies of the Scriptures, was founded by a Baptist preacher, Rev. William Hughes. The mission of William Carey had before his death published Bibles in forty languages, embracing one-third of the world's population. Much of the translating was done by Carey himself.

It was Judson's labors that produced the first Bible in Burmese. This is the only translation that is used in Burma today. Joshua Marshman, a Baptist, gave the Chinese their Bible. Frances Mason, a Baptist, gave the Bible to the Karens. Lyman Jewett, a Baptist, gave the Bible to the Telugus.



Nathan Brown gave to both the Assamese and the Japanese the Bible in their own tongue. Other Baptists have had a great part in Bible translation. For instance, the English-speaking world is indebted to Baptists for the most accurate version of the Bible that is printed in their tongue. I refer to the American Bible Union Version, which was translated solely by Baptists.

In addition to the work of translating and circulating the Scriptures, it is relevant to mention that the first marginal references in our English Bible were prepared by John Cranne, a Baptist, in 1637.

But passing from the specific work, of carrying out the Great Commission, I am sure that it would not be amiss for me to make brief mention of Baptist achievements along some other but more or less related lines.

Some charge Baptists with being an ignorant folk. It is quite true that a great deal of their work is among the lowly, and that they number among their members millions of the common people, but the charge of widespread ignorance can not be sustained. As proof of this I need but mention a few facts, as follows: Baptists have more money invested in educational institutions in America than any of the evangelical denominations today. And Baptists have more students in educational institutions in America than any other denomination of evangelical Christians. The largest giver to the cause of education, in America is professedly a Baptist. The greatest university in point of size and endowment in America is run under Baptist auspices and professes to be a Baptist institution. The largest theological seminary in the world is a Baptist school. On the foreign mission fields Baptists are in the front rank along educational lines. Indeed, it is sometimes said that they are placing too great stress upon education in foreign lands. And it cannot be said that Baptists have only numbered educational men

among their ranks during the last few years, for if we go back to the beginning of educational work in America we find the same thing to be true. For instance, the first president of Harvard University was a Baptist, as was also the second, while one of the largest sums of money given for the endowment of Harvard during its early days was the gift of a Baptist.

Baptists have had many great scholars and writers. It was John Bunyan, a Baptist, who wrote "Pilgrim's Progress," a book that has had the greatest sale of any book ever written, with the single exception of the Bible. It was John Milton, a Baptist, who gave to the world one of its greatest literary productions, "Paradise Lost." It is a Baptist, Dr. A. T. Robertson, who is the author of the world's standard Greek grammar of the New Testament, and who is recognized as being the world's greatest Greek Scholar. These names are but a few of the many that could be mentioned.

Baptists have had a large part in the development of America and in the shaping of her ideals and institutions. To Baptists, American people, in part, owe their democratic form of government as well as their ideals of religious and political freedom. The very Constitution of the United States came into existence as a result of Baptist teaching, for Thomas Jefferson, the framer of the Constitution, got his ideas of democracy from the Baptists. Dr. J. W. Porter shows this beyond dispute in his book, "The World's Debt to the Baptists." On page 76 he writes as follows: "The conception, the faith that calls things into existence, the confidence of the practicability of a free government, whose ultimate earthly power is vested in the masses of the community. This idea was plainly obtained by Jefferson himself from a small Baptist church meeting month after month to govern itself by the laws of the New Testament, in his own neighborhood. It was certainly the Baptist churches of this country who were the first to suggest and maintain those ideas of religious liberty."

In addition to Baptist influence as regards the Constitution, the first amendment to the Constitution, fully guaranteeing religious freedom and the protection of religious rights, was secured through the efforts of Baptists.

Dr. Porter truly says: *“The government of Rhode Island was the first in the world to fully and clearly embody the principles of religious liberty. This was due to Roger Williams, a Baptist preacher.”* And to this Bancroft, the historian, adds:

“Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was from the first the trophy of Baptists.”

It was Baptist churches that held before the world the precious truths of equality, liberty, and religious freedom and it is but fitting that it should have been a Baptist woman, Betsy Ross, who designed and made the American flag, the stars and stripes, which symbolizes to the world freedom, both religious and political, for all.

Along many other lines than those mentioned, Baptists have been and are a blessing to the world. As by-products of their religious life and co-operation, many benevolent enterprises have been and are being carried on.

In the Southern states alone they maintain twenty-six hospitals and many orphanages, where many thousands of people are ministered to every year.

Having noted that the Great Commission was given to Baptists and having found from history that they have always been devoted to the

carrying out of Christ's orders, we should not be surprised to find that in our own America they are growing more rapidly in proportion than any other non-Catholic denomination. I say non-Catholic because the Catholics are constantly being increased by immigration. Baptist growth by baptism in 1925 was nearly 350,000! Since the beginning of the Republic Baptists: have grown from 10,000 in 1776 to over eight million at the present time. From one Baptist to every 264 of the total population at the time of the beginning of our nation, there is now one Baptist for every 13 of the total population.

In foreign lands their growth is marvelous. It is estimated that in Russia alone, since the World War, Baptists have had an increase of over two million!

Let Baptists stick to the task outlined in the Commission, and the blessings of God will continue to rest upon them. For the past two thousand years they have, through "dungeon, fire and sword," followed the teachings of the Founder, and their record proves that they have abundantly justified their existence!

*"Church membership is not left to your conscience or to your whims or to your reasonings; it is a matter of loyalty and obedience to Jesus Christ, who bought us and saved us by His own precious blood. Conscience is not a standard of right or wrong for any man, for conscience is a creature of education and needy teaching-"*

*"For if the church that Jesus built was a Baptist church, then no churches but Baptist churches are churches of Christ, and every man will have to face the Lord Jesus at the judgment and tell Him why he joined some*

*church founded by an uninspired man, instead of the one founded by the Lord Jesus Himself.”*

--H. B. Taylor, in *“Why I Am A Baptist.”*

*“When Baptists enter the scheme of union by a process of comprise and cancellation, they are negotiating for a casket and a lot in the cemetery.”*

-J.W. Porter, in *“Random Remarks.”*

## XIII

### Conclusion

With the facts presented in the foregoing chapter full before us, we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that Baptist churches are the only true churches of Christ---the only churches authorized by Him to carry out the Commission and to administer His ordinances. Many of our day will make almost any concession in order to be thought of as "broad". How many, many times I have heard some individual who aspired to the position of one of great "broadness" remark "Oh, it doesn't matter which church one belongs to. One church is just as good as another." That all sounds very nice, but can it be true in the light of the facts that we have studied? What right has any man to set up a rival organization to the one founded by the Son of God and to call it "just as good"? What right has anyone to call such a man-originated institution "just as good?" The church that Jesus founded is very dear to His heart. Its importance is indicated by the fact that to it alone He has committed the task of carrying on His work in the world. That His church is the object of His tender solicitude and care is indicated by the fact that in spite of persecutions, wars, turmoils, the rise and fall of nations, the decay and death of human languages, He has preserved and perpetuated His church. Most certainly it ought to matter to any sincere Christian who wishes to be obedient to his Lord, as to which church he belongs to. He ought to want to belong to a church that can claim Jesus for Founder and Head rather than to a man-founded institution. He ought to want to be identified with the church to which Jesus committed His ordinances, the church He has perpetuated through the centuries and which has New Testament warrant for its doctrines and practices.

In revival meetings, particularly those of the "union" type I have often heard evangelists tell people to "Join the church of their choice," no matter

which that might happen to be. Some may call me narrow for saying it, but I could not conscientiously tell anyone to do that. As I see it, a mere “choice” perhaps dictated by fancy, caprice, or mere sentiment, is not enough when it comes to settling the church question. The question with each Christian ought to be, “Which is the true church-the one that Jesus founded? Which is entirely scriptural in its doctrines and practices?” It is a great thing to point a lost person to Christ. It’s also a great thing to point a saved person to the path of full obedience. For a new-born soul to make a wrong choice with reference to the church, and to unite with a church whose doctrines are unscriptural, means to start out on a career of life-long disobedience to Christ.

“Union” meetings, in which sentiment is more exalted than truth, and in which Christ's commands are bartered away lightly for popularity's sake, are the cause of many people entering upon a lifetime of disobedience. In such meetings where the full truth is not preached, people usually form their church affiliations upon the basis of which church, relatives or friends belong to, which church the evangelist belongs to, or something else equally trivial. In fact, almost anything may help decide, except the one thing of importance- --the teaching of the Word of God.

BAPTISTS CANNOT BE CONSISTENT AND MIX UP IN DENOMINATIONAL HODGEPODGES FOR UNION REVIVALS. For a union meeting to please all concerned, the preacher must keep his mouth shut on certain truths. For a preacher to preach what the Word of God says concerning the security of believers, baptism, the Lord's Supper, church truth, etc., would be to wreck a union meeting. In such a meeting a Baptist cannot properly counsel new converts concerning “the all things” that Jesus commanded without arousing indignation and criticism. Is it right to engage in meetings where a part of the plain teaching of the Word of God is not welcomed? The truth, the whole truth, as taught in the whole Word of God,

without addition, or subtraction-- that is what Baptists have always stood for. In so far as they engage in union efforts they depart from their time honored principles.

I do not wish to convey the impression that Baptists are to be selfish, churlish, unsociable, unkind, or anything of the sort. They should rejoice when Christ is preached by whatever sect or denomination. They should rejoice at every soul that is saved. Their spirit should never be that of hostility or unkind controversy. But certainly their first loyalty and allegiance should be to Christ and His Word. On His commands there can be neither compromise nor concession. They are to “contend earnestly (not angrily) for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

Reader, you who have followed me through the pages of this book, if a Christian, are you also a member of a genuine New Testament church? It will pay you to be strict about the matter of your church affiliation. This is not a matter that affects your salvation, but it is one that affects your reward with God. Jesus taught that “He that breaketh one of these least commandments and teacheth men so shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The person that belongs to a church that minimizes and breaks some of the commands of Christ, necessarily lends his influence toward “teaching men so.” By so doing, they place themselves in the class of those whom Christ said should be “called the least” in the Kingdom. The question of your church affiliation is something that you will one day have to give an account for when you stand before the judgment Seat of Christ. It will pay you to do what is right about the matter irrespective of what it may cost you and irrespective of what anyone in the world may think about it.



I have tried to set forth the truth on the church question in this book-, plainly and simply. My aim has been to enable you who read to know your duty in the matter of what church you should belong to. As to whether or not you will DO what you know to be the right thing---that is a matter for which you are answerable, not to me, but to your Lord.

*“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”* (James 4:17.)

### **BOOKS READ OR QUOTED**

Below is given a partial list of books read in whole or in part, in preparing the manuscript for this book:

A History of the Baptists, by John T. Christian.

A Short History of the Baptists, by H. V. Vedder.

History of the Baptists, by Benedict.

History of the Baptists, by Thos. Armitage.

Manual of Church History, by A. H. Newman.

History of Anti-pedobaptism, by A. H. Newman.

A Century of Baptist Achievement, by A. H. Newman

The Baptist Denomination, by Haynes.

History of the Christian Church, by Jones.

The Story of the Baptists, by Cook.

Progress of Baptist Principles, by Curtis.

The Baptists in History, by Geo. C. Lorimer.  
Baptist History Vindicated, by John T. Christian.  
History of the Christian Church, by Schaff.  
History of the Christian Church, by Fisher.  
History of the Apostolic Church, by Schaff.  
History of the Popes, by Ranke.  
The Ancient Church, by Kellen.  
Ancient British and Irish Church, by Cathcart.  
Church History, by Kurtz.  
Source Book for Ancient Church History, by Ayer.  
Lectures on Baptist History, by W. R. Williams.  
Distinctive Principles of Baptists, by Pendleton.  
Doctrines of Our Faith, by Wallace.  
Baptist Succession, by Ray.  
Church Perpetuity, by Jarrell.  
The Church, by Harvey.  
Directory for Baptist Churches, by Hiscox.  
The Ancient Catholic Church, by Rainey.  
History of England, by Macaulay.  
Ten Epochs of Church History, by Walker.  
Baptist History, by Isaac Backus.  
Guide to Study of Church History, by McGlothlin.  
Ecclesiastical History, by Mosheim.

The Churches of the New Testament, by McDaniel.

Fundamentals of the Faith, by Nowlin.

World's Debt to the Baptists, by Porter.

My Church, by J. B. Moody.

The New Testament Church, by T. T. Martin.

The Church and the Kingdom, by Thomas.

Axioms of Religion, by Mullins.

Synthesis of Bible Truth, by Scofield.

The Mould of Doctrine, by Thomas.

Methodist Episcopal Church Discipline.

Baptist Beliefs, by Mullins.

Bible Beliefs, by H. B. Taylor.

Ecclesia-the Church, by B. H. Carroll.

Denominationalism Put to Test, by Tull.

Baptist Churches Apostolical, by Newman.

Seven Baptist Fundamentals, by Connor.

The Baptist Faith, by M. P. Hunt.

The Baptist Position, by J. F. Love.

Baptist Law of Continuity, by Smith.

The Church a Composite Life, by Prestridge.

Compendium of Baptist History, by Shackelford.