

Baptist Handbook For Church Members

By M. L. Moser, Jr.

Foreword

For many years I have felt the need of a small book on church membership, written from the viewpoint of an independent Baptist, to place in the hands of members of independent Baptist churches to help them to know the meaning of church membership and to better understand the doctrines and polity of Baptists, and particularly the reasons why we are independent Baptists and not affiliated with one of the various and sundry organizations among Baptists. After consulting with other pastors, and being unable to find such a book, I decided to prepare one myself.

The book is intentionally brief, but an effort has been made to discuss the more important things an independent Baptist should know. In this revised edition we have added the chapter on *Church Officers* and then have made extensive revisions on other chapters which we feel add to the value of the book. It should be studied with Bible in hand since, in order to save space, most Bible references are given but not quoted.

It has been our intention to prepare this book in such a way that it could be used either as a Study Course book over a period of two weeks (nine daily lessons, and one day for examination), or a class for new members immediately after they have joined a church. It is our hope that this book will not only serve and meet the need for the church of which I am pastor, but will also be a tool and aid for other independent Baptist churches. If the book proves a blessing in that it helps someone to be a better Baptist, its purposes shall have been achieved.

The book is also available in the Spanish language having been translated in 1981.

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It is a distinct principle with Baptists that they acknowledge no human founder, recognize no human authority, and subscribe to no human creed. For all these things, Baptists of every name and order go back to the New Testament. And while no competent Baptist historian assumes to be able to trace a succession of Baptist churches through the ages, most of them are of one accord in believing that, if we could secure the records, there would be found heroic groups of believers in every age who upheld with their testimonies and, in many cases, with their lives, the great outstanding and distinctive principles of the Baptist churches of today.

Bureau of Census for 1926
United States Department of Commerce

I The Meaning of Church Membership

God is a God of order. One can hardly look at our solar system without noting that it is a mechanism so meticulous in its operation that everything must function precisely or else disaster and chaos would result. God has a plan for every saved person, and the church is in the center of God's plan for Christians today. But it is remarkable how many people claim to be saved by the grace of God through Christ, yet in the same breath say that they do not have to go to church to be a good Christian. They certainly didn't read that in the Bible. What they are looking for is a position that will free them from any responsibility of being faithful to God's house. Perhaps if they knew the facts as seen in the Bible concerning Christ and His church they would change their minds.

When our Lord supports something it is a good thing for us to support it, and if He is against something we ought to be against it too. The Bible tells us that Jesus

built the church Himself, and if He thought we needed it and built it for us, perhaps we ought to trust His wisdom and judgment and work and worship Him through His church as He desires. The Bible says He loves the church and He tells us we are to love our wife in the way that He loves the church (Eph. 5:25), and this gives us the depth of His affection for His church of which you are a member. Should your love be any less? If the church is that dear to the heart of our Savior, shouldn't you support it faithfully with your attendance and prayers? Christ died for the church (Eph. 5:25), and that alone should change the attitude of those who feel that church attendance is not important.

Furthermore, Christ is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22). If the Lord Himself is the Head, is it not worthwhile to be a part of it?

You see, since God always works through plans, among His plans He prescribes how man is to worship Him. During the time of the patriarchs the head of each family was in charge of the worship. Since then, God has had three houses of worship: the tabernacle, the temple and now the church. During the time of the tabernacle, God expected and commanded His people to worship and serve Him through the tabernacle. Following the tabernacle came the temple, and God expected and commanded His people to worship and serve Him through the temple. Today we live in the church age and God expects and commands *all* Christians to worship and serve Him through a New Testament church.

Furthermore, God has a plan for those who have been saved to help them live amidst this world of sin and temptations that we face while on this earth, and in the center of this plan for each Christian is a New Testament

church. God expects every Christian to be a member of a New Testament church, for God does not save an individual and then set him adrift to go through life serving self and not serving God. This book has as its purpose to help you determine what the will of God is concerning you and your church and where it should fit into your life.

* * *

"I'm now a member of an independent Baptist church." There are thousands of people who utter these words with great joy each year as they are added to the millions of Baptists who also count it a great joy and privilege to be a member of a Baptist church. These people have been saved, having received Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, and they now have the knowledge and assurance that their sins are forgiven and there is now peace in their souls. As Christians they have been obedient to the Lord's command to follow Him in baptism and to become a member of one of His churches, and this new relationship has given them great happiness. Yet many who are proud to utter these words, "I'm now a member of an independent Baptist church," fail to understand their true significance. Sometimes they live for many years without ever knowing the true meaning of church membership. This should not be true.

Every member of a Baptist church should know the seriousness and sacredness of church membership. It is surprising as to the number who hold membership in a Baptist church without realizing their privileges and opportunities or accepting their obligations. I am sure this is not intentional, but I am persuaded that they have never been brought face to face with the real meaning of church membership, nor has it been adequately presented to them. This book is an effort to set forth some of these things.

There are two questions that need to be answered relative to one's being a member of an independent Baptist church. First, what is a Baptist church, and second, what is an independent Baptist church. We shall seek to answer both of these questions in this chapter.

What Is A Baptist Church?

Just what is a Baptist church, the organization to which you now belong? It is a New Testament church. It may be said that a New Testament church is a visible, local, independent, organized congregation, composed of baptized believers associated and united together in the belief of what Christ has said, and covenanting to do

READ

THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE

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what He has commanded.

The New Testament church is the greatest institution the world has ever known. It was built by Christ during His personal ministry and He alone is its Head (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). He promised perpetuity to it and said that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Mt. 16:18; 28:20). He gave it the commission and the ordinances and died for it upon the cross (Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Eph. 5:25). Christ loved the church and desires His churches to honor and glorify Him as His representatives on the earth (Eph. 5:25-27; 3:21).

The greatest task ever assigned to any individual or group in the world's history, the task of carrying the glorious gospel of Christ the Savior to the whole world, belongs to the Lord's churches. The Great Commission is unique in that no other commission like it has ever been given or ever will be given. In fulfilling this commission, Baptist churches have done more for the world than all other organizations of the world combined.

We see then that it is a great privilege to be members of an independent Baptist church. These churches have had a glorious beginning, a blood-written history, an illustrious present and bright future based on the promises of God. Baptist churches have held true to God's Word through tribulations and persecutions, and their members have been numbered among the faithful. Truly it is a privilege indeed to be a member of a Baptist church, and especially of an independent Baptist church.

Membership also brings us great opportunities: an opportunity for fellowship in the greatest institution that can be found; an opportunity for Christian growth and development and training through the church; and an opportunity for Christian service through the work of the church in its evangelistic program both to those at home and around the world on the mission fields.

Membership also places upon us inescapable obligations: an obligation to make our church and its work first in our lives; and obligation to use our time and our talents for the glory of God; an obligation to the work of the church with our presence, our talents, our influence and our means. Churches are never stronger than their membership and a membership of worldly, careless, negligent, stunted Christians will prevent a church from accomplishing much for the Lord. Your church's need is for every member to be consecrated, trained and enlisted in active service. Each of us is obligated to be the very best member possible under the leading of the Lord.

What Is An Independent Baptist Church?

To many, an independent Baptist church is a strange phenomenon. Being accustomed to the various Baptist groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, the Associations, or one of the organized Fellowships (Baptist Bible Fellowship or World Baptist Fellowship) and others, many people cannot comprehend the nature of a church that is not affiliated with any of these. For that reason, an independent Baptist church is looked upon with some suspicion. Surely a church that stands "all by itself" must be very queer.

Actually, independent Baptist churches have existed since apostolic times. Long before the Protestant Reformation began there were independent Baptist churches in both Europe and Asia (see chapter V on Baptist History). An independent Baptist church, therefore, is nothing new or novel. It has an ancient and glorious heritage. Although in various periods of church history members of independent Baptist churches have been persecuted and even slain for the faith, such churches continue until the present day. There are many thousands of independent Baptist churches in all parts of the world.

"What are the distinctives of a Baptist church?" one may ask. They could concisely be set forth as follows:

I. A Church That is Self-governing.

The churches established by the apostles of Christ were all independent Baptist churches; that is, they were free from any outside control or membership in any kind of an organization. The New Testament does not reveal the existence of any Convention, Association, organized Fellowship, Synod, Conference, or other form of human organization exercising control over the local congregation or even existing apart from a local independent church. Each local church was viewed as a self-governing body.

An aggregation of local churches was never looked upon organizationally as a "church," but always as "churches," emphasizing the individual prerogatives of each congregation (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:16). Each local church chose its own officers (Acts 6:1-6). Each exercised its own discipline (1 Cor. 5:13). Churches were not responsible to any higher ecclesiastical body, since there were none, but were subject only to God (Rev. 2:4-5). Internal problems were handled by the individual congregation (1 Cor. 6:1-5). The maintenance of pure doctrine was the responsibility of the local assembly (1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 2:14-16).

The Holy Spirit directs each local group of believers (Acts 13:12). Such a church cannot be politically pressured because it owns its own property (in contrast to many denominational churches whose property is owned or in some measure controlled by the denomination).

In the important matter of calling a pastor, an independent Baptist church is cast upon the Lord for guidance. While they may seek counsel from neighboring pastors or Christian schools, no one can force them to accept a man they do not want. The congregation must prayerfully consider the merits of a candidate and decide whether or not he is God's man for them.

Another important characteristic is the liberty enjoyed in the matter of missionary support. While pressure is exerted upon organized Baptist churches to support their own denominational missions, independent Baptist churches may seek the will and direction of God regarding this. How did missionaries operate in Bible times? They operated just like independent Baptist missionaries operate today. When they were called as missionaries by the Lord, a church sent them out and supported them monetarily. A good Bible example is Saul (Paul) and Barnabas who were called of God to be missionaries and were sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-4). Many independent Baptist churches send out members of their own churches to both home and foreign fields, just as did the church at Antioch and other churches of the New Testament. The church at Philippi helped the church at Antioch by supporting Paul while he was on the mission field (Phil. 4:15).

Proportionately, there are more independent Baptist missionaries on mission fields than from the organized groups, and these missionaries are scattered throughout the world and on all continents. Churches not sending forth their own missionaries, choose which of these missionaries to support, sending their offerings directly to the missionary through the sponsoring church without the great overhead of the various types of organizations and mission boards or committees, many of them staffed by men drawing more money than the missionaries. In this way, 100% of the money goes to the missionary with none being taken out for operating expenses or to pay the salaries of mission board executives.

The Lord's churches have the responsibility to get the gospel to the whole world. Naturally we can't all go ourselves but we can, through our churches, support those whom God calls to go just like it was done in the New Testament. We should not only tithe a tenth of our income, but we should also set aside an amount for missions over-and-above the tithe each week. This is also to be

given through the church just like it was given through the church at Philippi in their support of the Apostle Paul. We cannot Scripturally give to missions unless we do it through a New Testament church. This is God's plan for the support of His work around the world. If we attempt to do missions using any other plan, we are going contrary to the revealed will of God.

Now that you are a member of a sound New Testament church, God expects you to support its missionaries with a weekly mission offering for this is God's method for evangelizing the world. God's way is always the best way, and nobody has the authority to change it. For this reason we need the church for proper missions-giving.

The position of independent Baptist churches may be summed up thus: they are absolutely free to obey God as they see His direction and are under no obligation to any other church or group of churches. In each phase of their service for the Lord they must exercise spiritual discernment.

Actually, therefore, the independence of a church simply enhances its dependence upon the Lord. This tends to develop prayer and faith to cultivate spirituality among the members.

An independent Baptist church places proper importance upon correct Biblical doctrine. Among the doctrines emphasized are the following: the verbal, plenary inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, absolute deity, sinless life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His high-priestly work in heaven, salvation by grace through faith, the reality of Satan and his work, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the pre-millennial coming of Christ, a period of great tribulation on earth, the return of Christ to establish an earthly kingdom, the judgment and eternal doom of the lost, and the eternal reward of the saved.

Independent Baptist churches stand as a protest to the religious unbelief (often called modernism, liberalism or neo-orthodoxy) that has engulfed so many of the large denominations and is now invading the ranks of Baptists. Men claiming to be ministers of Christ deny the verbal inspiration of Scripture, question the virgin birth of Christ, deny the necessity of faith in the shed blood of Christ for salvation, accept the theory of organic evolution, and in many other ways oppose the historic faith. Yet such men are accepted as ministers in good standing in some church groups. In obedience to the Word regarding false teachers (2 Tim. 3:5; Eph. 5:11; etc.) independent Baptist churches refuse to cooperate with denominations and councils of churches, such as the World and National Council of Churches as well as the State and local

Council of Churches.

Independent Baptist churches stand firm for the doctrines as laid down in the New Testament that have separated them from other denominations. We adhere to the New Testament doctrine of the church, thus denying the modern doctrine of an invisible, universal church which is unknown to the Scripture, and holding fast to the Biblical doctrine which identifies the church as a local, visible body. We hold fast to the Bible doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (the ordinances of the church), meaning that we reject "alien immersion" and receive only Scriptural baptism, and practice the Bible doctrine of Closed Communion. We do not maintain these doctrines simply to be "different" or to hold ourselves "aloof" from others, but because we sincerely believe the Bible teaches these doctrines and that, as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are obligated to obey His commands in keeping (preserving or guarding) these ordinances as He has given them unto His churches (Jn. 14:15).

II. A Church With A Bible-centered Program.

One of the first things many people notice about an independent Baptist church is the fact that almost all members come to church with their Bibles. Not only do people bring their Bibles, but they use them in the regular services of the church. The Bible is looked upon, not as an obscure religious textbook to be studied primarily by a priest or minister, but as the guide for every Christian and the source of instruction for his daily life.

The pastor uses the Bible in his pulpit ministry. He reads from it and his congregation follows him in searching out various passages. He is not endeavoring to foist upon the people some human observations concerning "religion," but rather he is seeking to unfold the exact revelation which God has given us in the Bible. Preaching in independent Baptist churches is not simply delivering some ethical or social precepts, but is an exposition of the written Word of God as found in the Bible.

The educational program of the church is likewise centered around the Bible. Every teacher teaches from it. Most independent Baptist churches do not study the International Sunday School Lessons as most churches do where quarterlies are studied rather than the Bible, but they study the Bible book-by-book, studying one or two chapters each Sunday until the study of the book is completed. This is much better than using the typical "hop-skip-jump" method of the quarterlies, and there is much value in studying God's Word directly. The same

is true in the Bible Study on Sunday evenings, for the Bible is again studied directly, and in many independent Baptist churches, rather than a study of the Bible book-by-book as on Sunday morning, they study the Bible doctrine-by-doctrine, covering every major Baptist (Bible) doctrine within a year's time. This makes for a church that knows the Bible. The study of the quarterly system will not develop a church member with a real knowledge of the Word of God. The study of the Bible does.

The same emphasis is seen in the missionary program of the church. Both home and foreign missionary efforts are geared to one purpose — the winning of the lost to Jesus Christ. All the missionary work is simply a means to the end of bringing people to read, understand and obey the Word of God. The primary aim of all missionary and evangelistic effort is not social betterment but spiritual regeneration — personal salvation.

In recognition of the truth in all that has been written above, independent Baptist churches are caused to place loyalty to Christ and His Word above loyalty to an earthly organization or program. Everything is tested by the Word of God, not by its relation to a denominational program.

Independent Baptist churches are seeking, as enabled by God, to perpetuate New Testament churches, remembering that the church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Thus we see that membership is a privilege and an opportunity which carries with it great obligations. Too many members have not learned these things and their church means little to them and they mean little to their church. It has been said that 60% of the members of the average church are unenlisted and inactive. That condition needs to be changed. Will you help change it by making your membership really count for Christ and His church?

II The Church Covenant

The Church Covenant is a voluntary agreement entered into by members of a Baptist church whereby they promise to conduct their lives in such a way as to glorify God and promote the ongoing of the Lord's church. Every member should study it carefully and refer to it often and seek to live up to it for it clearly outlines the obligations of church membership. The following Church Covenant with a few additions (shown in italics), is the one in general use by most Baptist churches:

Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ (Jn. 1:11-12; Mt. 28:19-20).

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale *and use of non-medical and desctructive drugs* and intoxicating drinks as a beverage, *to shun pornography*; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church of like faith and order, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word .

That these obligations outlined in this Covenant are all Scriptural may be seen as follows:

I. Salvation and Baptism (Jn. 1:11-12; Mt. 28:19-20).

II Duties to the Church.To walk together in Christian love (Jn. 13:34-35)

To strive for the advancement of the church and promote its prosperity and spirituality (Phil. 1:27; 2 Tim.

2:15; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Pet. 3:11.

To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine (Heb. 10:25; Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 11:23-26; Jude 3).

To give it pre-eminence in my life (Mt. 6:33)

To contribute cheerfully and regularly (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:1-24).

To transfer my membership when I move and be active in church work wherever I live (Acts 11:19-21; 18:24-28).

III. Duties in Personal Christian Living.

To maintain family and secret devotions (1 Thess. 5:17-18; Acts 17:11).

To religiously educate the children (2 Tim. 3:15; Dt. 6:4-7; Psa. 78:5-7; 48:13).

To seek the salvation of the lost (Acts 1:8; Mt. 4:19; Psa. 126:5-6; Prov. 11:30)

To walk circumspectly in the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment (Eph. 5:15; Phil. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:11-12.

To avoid gossip and excessive anger (Eph. 4:31; 1 Pet. 2:21; Col. 3:8; Jas. 3:1f).

To abstain from the sale or use of alcoholic beverages and non-medical drugs. (Eph. 5:18; Hab. 2:15).

To be zealous in our efforts for Christ (Tit. 2:14).

IV. Duties to Fellow Church Members.

To watch over one another in love (1 Pet. 1:22).

To pray for one another (Jas. 5:16).

To aid in sickness and distress (Gal. 6:2; Jas. 2:14-17).

To cultivate sympathy and courtesy (1 Pet. 3:8)

To be slow to take offense, always ready for reconciliation (Eph. 4:30-32).

III Church Officers

The church of which you are a member is both an organism (meaning something alive) and an organization, and just as organizations require officers, so does a New Testament church. Your church has various officers but only two of these are scriptural officers, pastor and deacon, both of which are ordained. Other officers have been appointed as the need arose, such as treasurer, clerk and trustees, but these are not scriptural officers and are officers of expediency.

The pastor is looked upon as the "chief of staff" in the church and this office has long been considered by

Christians as the “highest office.” We will look at these various offices individually.

The Pastor

While the pastor is an ordained officer of the church, you should understand what ordination does and does not do. Gaines S. Dobbins in his book “**The Churchbook, A Treasury of Materials and Methods**” writes:

“Ordination, in the New Testament view, confers no grace, no ecclesiastical power, no special rights of office not possessed by any other devout and trusted member of a church by its authorization. Ordination is simply recognition and confirmation by a church of one of its member’s evident call of God to the gospel ministry” (pg. 51).

While it is the special duty of the pastor to preach the gospel, Baptists believe that the Bible teaches very plainly that every Christian man has the right to preach Christ to lost sinners. After the death of Stephen it is said, “And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except* the apostles” (Acts 8:1). Yet, the office of pastor is a specially set-aside office designed by the Lord for the preaching of the gospel.

In the New Testament the pastor is called a bishop (1 Tim. 3:1-7) which means an overseer and is a description of his work. He is also called elder (Tit. 1:5-7) which has reference to the dignity of the office, having been derived from the Jewish synagogue where the word elder was used in reference to an aged person. He is also called a minister (Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7), which means a servant, showing that he is to serve in spiritual matters. The term pastor (Eph. 4:11) which is more commonly used today signifies a shepherd, and this shows the primary relation that he sustains with the church.

The pastor, being the bishop or overseer is to take the oversight of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines the word overseer as “superintendent, supervisor.” He is responsible for the pulpit and all preaching and teaching of the church and is accountable to the Lord. He also administers the ordinances and has the responsibility for carefully instructing and guiding the spiritual interest of his flock (Eph. 4:12).

The pastor has an authority not belonging to other church members. Edward T. Hiscox in his book “**The Baptist Directory, A Guide to the Doctrines and Practices of Baptist Churches**” says concerning this:

“Though pastors cannot rightfully assume authority as being ‘lords over God’s heritage,’ yet there is a sense in which the ministerial office should command and receive a deference rendered to no other. The Apostle enjoins that ‘the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour’ (1 Tim. 5:17) and, also, to ‘obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves’ (Heb. 13:17). Here is a sense, therefore, in which they are to *rule*, and the people are to *obey*” (pg. 21).

The pastor is placed “over” the church (1 Thess. 5:12). There is a sense in which he “rules” in the church (Heb. 13:7; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:24). He is made the “overseer” by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28). The word “double honour” as used in 1 Timothy 5:17 has reference to the pastor’s salary, the word “honour” coming from the Greek word meaning “honorarium” and could be so translated. Your pastor is worthy of generous pay or “double salary” is what Paul is saying.

Because of the position of the pastor, there are certain responsibilities placed upon the membership of the church. The pastor is to be followed (Heb. 13:7). There is an “obedience” and a “submission” to the leadership of the pastor (Heb. 13:7). This does not mean dictatorship, although pastors are often accused of this (1 Pet. 5:2-3). At times their scriptural place in the church may be challenged. If so, the pastor must “take” the oversight of the church when challenged (1 Pet. 5:2).

Paul issued some special warnings to the churches which were directed primarily through the pastor of the church. In Acts 20:28-31 Paul warned that problems could arise from the outside (Acts 20:29) but that the more serious problems with much greater danger to the church would arise from the inside of the church. This danger would be revealed by men (or women) “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). God has given us warnings about such men (or women) and told us what we are to do in regards to them. We are to “beware of them” (Col. 2:8-10); “have no fellowship with them” (2 Thess. 3:6); “mark them” (Rom. 16:17-18), etc.

In First Corinthians Paul issues a severe warning concerning those who would destroy the church by causing divisions. He says temple (church) defilers shall be destroyed (1 Cor. 3:17). That he is referring to the church of Corinth is seen by his reference again to the divisions of the church (1 Cor. 3:22) which had previously been mentioned in the first chapter (1 Cor. 1:11-13). God promises to destroy that individual who defiles, injures or destroys one of His churches.

How these men are to be destroyed is not said, but

no doubt it will be in accordance to their effort and effect. The severity is such because of the indwelling Spirit in the church. Paul warns that divisions hinder the full and complete blessing of the Holy Spirit, because the church is God's dwelling place or "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). We cannot minimize the seriousness of this offence, for God hates "a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren" and says it is "an abomination unto him" (Prov. 6:16-19).

The pastor occupies the unique position as God's spokesman in the church. His position is also unique in that he has a divine call from the Lord. No other officer in the church has the divine call whether that office be that of Youth Director, Music Director or Deacon. Only the pastor has the divine call. However, there is a sense in which God does direct certain ones into the field of special service, such as a Youth Director, Music Director or some other form of full-time service, but this is not the same, nor should it be considered the same, as that of the call of the pastor.

When the Lord directed the letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, they were given to the pastors (angels) of the churches who in turn would deliver them to the church of which they were pastor (Rev. 2 and 3). The message in each case was directed to the pastor (angel) of the church. What that pastor is to say is what God wants the people to hear, and what the pastor delivers is as from the mouth, lips, heart and mind of the Lord Himself (Ezk. 33:7). He that hears the messenger, hears God; he that obeys the messenger obeys God; and he that despises the messenger, despises God (Lk. 10:16). It is through the pastor that Christ sends His messages, addresses His judgments, His rebukes and His directions. As long as the pastor keeps himself true to his proper doctrine and work, he should be followed.

Yet pastors are all fallible men — none are perfect. We must remember that every church member is also fallible, whether he be a deacon, the oldest member of the church, or the youngest or newest member. It is easy to take "pot shots" at the pastor, for he stands before all and his life is an open book for all to read. David, the "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) made some serious mistakes, yet he was still God's man. The Apostle Peter also made some serious mistakes, not only when he denied the Lord at His trial, but also later, for the Apostle Paul withstood him to his face (Gal. 2:11), yet he was still God's man. Your pastor will also make mistakes, yet he is still God's man. You need not try to "take care of the pastor." He is God's man and God will take care of him.

I want to quote the following which was prepared by Bro. Joe Hocking, retired pastor of the Bodine Baptist Church of Oklahoma City. This was adopted by the Bodine Baptist Church and entered into the permanent records of the church in November of 1981:

Regarding the Office of the Pastor

1. First he must be a man who has been called of God to preach the gospel of Christ (1 Tim. 1:12; Eph. 3:7).

2. The Holy Spirit leads His preacher to a particular field of service. The church, also led by the Holy Spirit, extends a call, asking him to consider being their pastor and leader. The preacher accepts or rejects the church's call.

3. Responsibilities of the pastor to the church.

a. He is to preach the Word of God, all of it (2 Tim. 3:16; 4:12).

b. He is to *oversee* the ministries of the church, to feed the flock of God (the church, all ages in the church), and to guard and protect God's sheep and lambs from the wolves (Acts 20:28-30).

c. He is to care for the spiritual needs of God's people (the church). By personal counseling; prayer and Scripture helps; being on call 24 hours a day to minister whenever he is needed. Also, to minister to the sick; visit hospitals; minister and comfort the dying and their families, preach funerals; marriage counseling; drug and drink counseling; conflicts between brethren (peacemaker); weddings; etc.

d. He is to teach and administer the church ordinances Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

e. He is to seek God's will for the direction of the church; to be faithful to pray for the church's needs; to guide the church in the direction God leads as a faithful *undershepherd*. He is to formulate the plans to accomplish ministries, then to lead the church in implementing these plans (c/f "Partnership Ministry" "Good-Neighbor Ministry" etc.

f. He is to oversee the administration of the church; to call business meetings as the need arises; to moderate the business meetings; to make recommendations and to guide the affairs of the church and see that the will of the people (voice of the church) is carried out as has been voted on by the majority (See above, Acts 20).

g. The pastor is accountable to God for how he assumes his responsibilities. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, *as they that must give account*, that they

may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17)

4. Responsibilities of the church to the pastor.

a. The church is to pray for their pastor; for God to give him wisdom to lead the church, and to *willingly follow his leadership* (Heb. 13:7).

b. The church is to submit to his God-ordained authority over the church, so that he may have a joyful ministry in the church (Heb. 13:7).

c. The church, especially the men of the flock, are to help him and be supportive of his pastoral ministry (See Exodus 17:8-13 — two men who held up Moses’ hands in battle).

d. The church is responsible to provide his family needs as well as the expenses of running the operations of the office he holds (1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

e. The church is to *protect the pastor and his family* from those who would go about sowing seeds of doubt and discord among the membership; casting a shadow upon his ministry and accusing him of misdeeds in the ministry. It is a dangerous thing to attack this sacred office; and equally as dangerous to allow others in the church to do so (1 Tim. 5:19-20; Prov. 6:16-19).

f. The church should exercise firm church discipline to those who refuse to live in harmony with the other members; who are bent on destroying the fellowship of the church (Mt. 18:15-19).

g. The church member should always consult the pastor first, on any problem or matter of concern, and not spread talk around until it gets built up all out of proportion (the devil will see to that). Most often, when you sit down with your pastor, with an open Bible and prayer, things will be clearly understood and resolved so that peace can continue and that misunderstanding doesn’t create confusion.

h. *There can be only one leader in a church.* The pastor is that man. A church cannot survive when it has a divided allegiance towards more than one leader.

i. When God is finished with the pastor in a church, He will lead him to another work. Unless he is found unfit for the ministry, or is guilty of open sin, he is to be respected for the office he holds by all the members.

j. If any member of the church, after serious counsel with the pastor, still cannot follow his leadership, that member should, in the spirit of Christian love, quietly seek another church and pastor where he or she can serve the Lord. If that same member persists in trying to destroy the integrity and ministry of the pastor, he or she should be dealt with in accordance with church discipline as found in Matthew 18:15-19.

In summary your pastor needs your help if he is to be the kind of pastor he wants to be and that God wants him to be. He deserves your respect. Paul told the church of Corinth to accept Timothy and to respect him (1 Cor. 16:10). You need to trust your pastor. Some put him under a microscope and scrutinize his every word and deed.

Your pastor also needs encouragement. Tell him how his ministry has helped or benefited you. Offer your services to him and make yourself available for work he might delegate to you. When he becomes the object of criticism, don’t become a party to it. He has enough problems already without adding to them. Defend your pastor against those who criticize him. Criticism, even when the truth, is a way Satan has of getting your pastor “down in the dumps” and worse still, destroying his ministry.

Remember him on special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, and a year-end bonus with a church-wide offering shows him your love and appreciation of his ministry.

By all means pray for your pastor. This was one of Paul’s most frequent requests. Your pastor needs men like Aaron and Hur (Ex. 17:8-12) who will pray for him and hold up his hands and support him in order to help him be the kind of pastor God wants him to be. God does not want church members to tear down a pastor but to hold him up and build him up with their support and prayers. It is then that God’s blessings will be poured out upon the church, and your pastor will be a better man of God.

The Deacon

The office of deacon is the second ordained office within the church, and just as the ordination of the pastor conferred no ecclesiastical powers or special rights, neither does it with the deacon. The great over-all justification for the office of deacon was its creation to help the pastors. If there is any way that deacons can set preachers free, not so much as “free from” as “free to” do certain things, it certainly should be one of the primary duties of deacons. Deacons are also to provide an effective force of leadership, though it is recognized that all deacons do not lead.

We must also keep in mind that the movement of leadership is forward and not backward. Sometimes deacons drag their feet and instead of moving forward they want to either sit still or move backward. They seem to feel that it is their special assignment to keep things from moving too fast, apparently on the theory

that someone has to object. But, if deacons, placed in their position by the Lord and the church are committed to a New Testament program of evangelism in their church under the Spirit of God, the church will move forward. Stephen got results and so will any deacon so dedicated. The man with aspirations to be another Stephen can count on God's help.

The man who agrees to serve as a deacon in a New Testament church agrees to be an example, to the limit of God's endowment, in all the life of the church. He is to be an example in spirit, love, devotion and loyalty. A deacon should be as loyal in the program of the church as the preacher is. He should be an example in every realm. This certainly means an example in attendance. How would it be if the membership of the church attended Training Union, Wednesday night's service, visitation night or revival meetings like the deacons? Examples, to be effective, need to be seen. There are other areas such as tithing and soul-winning and the churches visitation program where the deacon will commit himself to exemplification.

The deacons should also have certain secular qualifications. These receive minor treatment in the Scriptures, but because of the things they were to do, it was taken for granted that they would represent the best of human leadership.

In reading over the qualifications of deacons in both Acts 6:1-8 and in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 one can see that no deacon has all of the biblical qualifications brought to perfection. This may cause a man to feel that he is not qualified to be a deacon for he recognizes his own weaknesses. But one must remember that preachers have this same feeling. As pastors look to the New Testament and read what God expects of them they too feel ashamed, unworthy and inadequate. One should not be surprised to find this same feeling in men asked to serve as a deacon. A church, therefore, should not expect to find perfect men to fill the office of deacon, for none of us will attain or obtain that perfection until it is realized in heaven. One should never decline the office of deacon "because they are not good enough" for they will never get any better by declining opportunities to serve the Lord and His church. One should expect that as a sincere and saved man who has to a degree some of these qualifications, he will continue to grow spiritually, so there should be improvement in his spiritual life the longer he serves as a deacon.

One should not minimize the importance of this office within the church, for the deacons more than anyone else have the ability to "make or break" the pastor of the church. When the deacon thinks of the preacher in the

light of the New Testament teachings, there ought to be a conviction that God created the office of deacon in order that it might make the pastor's ministry more effective. The deacon should uphold and extend the ministry of the man that God has called to serve as pastor. They in a sense are the cabinet of the pastor and the pastor will share with them the responsibilities and labors of the watchcare of the church. Deacons are to be in full sympathy with the pastor and give him their full cooperation, else there will be constant strife within the church. If a deacon reaches that point where he cannot support the pastor and follow his leadership, he should resign his office rather than becoming a constant irritant to the pastor or even worse still, become the leader of a faction in opposition to the pastor. Dobbins in his book **The Churchbook** says deacons "are to be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit within the church in the bonds of peace" (pg. 14).

It is well to have a conviction about the New Testament church that harmony in the church is not simply to be desired but is divinely commanded. In fact, anything short of that is heresy. The oft-repeated phrase that Baptists can be recognized because they are "fussy" is provocation for righteous indignation. The devil started that, and it is a bit of his ingenious propaganda. There is nothing religious or Christian about a fuss, nothing at all. Harmony is the New Testament pattern; it is the Spirit's desire. A departure from harmony is a departure from the will of God and is therefore sin.

There is much confusion as to the work and authority of deacons today, so we must look carefully at the New Testament to learn just what are the duties and responsibilities of deacons. Dobbins in his book **The Churchbook** previously cited says:

"Deacons are *servants* of the church. Only within recent years has the body of deacons been referred to as the "board." The objection to this designation is that it may somehow imply that deacons are managers rather than ministrants. Deacons are not to give orders to the church; they are to receive instructions from the church. Deacons are not to decide for the church, they are to carry out the decisions of the church ... They should never arrogate to themselves any authority for running the church. Their greatest service to the church will usually be found in their assistance to the pastor" (pgs. 65-66).

Robert E. Naylor in his book **The Baptist Deacon** sees this same danger and writes:

“There are churches where deacons have appropriated to themselves authority which is contrary to New Testament teaching. It may have gone so far that ‘bossism’ has developed. There is a ‘board’ complex and a general feeling that deacons are ‘directors’ of the church. Nothing could be farther from the Baptist genius of the New Testament plan” (pg. 3).

A little further on, Naylor under the sub-heading “Promoters of Church Harmony,” writes:

“Another need met by these seven men in the sixth chapter of Acts was that they became protectors and promoters of church harmony. How serious the breach in fellowship had become in the Jerusalem church is not certain. The expression ‘a murmuring’ is dramatic enough. Someone was needed to pour oil on the troubled waters. These deacons were God’s answer, and they healed the breach and restored the fellowship. This work of the seven is not to be forgotten. Unfortunately, deacons do not always serve thus in modern churches. Sometimes a faction in the church is ‘deacon led.’

“When a man becomes a deacon, he loses the privilege, if such exists, of participating in a church row. A member in the ranks may claim that often abused privilege, ‘speaking his mind.’ When a man becomes a deacon — selected and called by the Holy Spirit, chosen by a church, dedicated by personal choice — he forfeits the right to promote, in any fashion, a division in the life of the church.

The one inescapable duty of the deacon in the New Testament was the protection of the church fellowship. When things arise that are divisive, it is time for a deacon who believes the Book to stand up and say: ‘We cannot do it this way in this church. We must have harmony and peace if we are to honor Christ.’ That could make the difference between a great, fruitful church and an ineffective, dried-up one. If deacons were needed then for such harmony, they surely are needed now. The kind of world in which church fellowship must thrive demands deacons” (pg. 11).

The office of deacon was first established by the Apostles in the church of Jerusalem to assist them in the distribution of goods to some of the Grecian widows who felt they were not being looked after properly. When the twelve discovered that the business of distributing the contributions to the poor saints occupied too much of

their time, they “called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:1-4). Williams Rutherford in his book **Church Members’ Guide for Baptist Churches** says:

“It will be seen that the first duty imposed upon deacons was to attend to the wants of the poor ... Very few deacons seem to feel that attention to the poor is a part of their duty, when it was the very duty for which deacons were first appointed” (pgs. 76-77).

This is commonly referred to as “The Table of the Poor.”

In addition to the “table of the poor” since the deacons are to work very closely with the pastor, they are also to serve the “table of the pastor.” This is a duty that has been given to them by custom, but they should make recommendations to the church if they should see that the pastor’s needs are not adequately taken care of by the church. As J. M. Pendleton says in his **Church Manual**:

“Deacons must serve the pastor’s table. It is not for them to decide how liberally or scantily it shall be supplied. The church must make the decision, and enlarged views should be taken when it is made; for the energies of hundreds of pastors are greatly impaired by an incompetent support” (pg. 34).

How long should deacons serve? Some churches have a custom that once a deacon is elected as an active deacon in the church, he remains such for life unless removed for disciplinary reason. This does not allow for any of the younger members of the church to occupy the office of deacon where such is the custom. It is possible in such cases, especially where the number of deacons is limited to a small number, that the deacons may all be above 50 years-of-age and none of the younger men of the church will ever be able to serve in the office of deacon until the older deacons gradually die from old age. Did God intend for deacons to remain active in the church until their death? Actually the Bible does not say anything about the term of office. It is strictly tradition and custom.

The majority of churches have a system whereby this can be avoided and it is by means of rotating deacons.

Dobbins in his book **The Churchbook** describes it in this way:

“How long shall deacons serve? A deacon, duly elected and ordained, is obviously a deacon for life, unless his deaconship should be voided by the church. But this does not mean that he is to be in active uninterrupted service as deacon for the whole of his life. In a given church there may be several ordained ministers who hold membership, yet only one of them serve as active pastor. Likewise there may be a number of ordained deacons in a church, but only those of them in active service whom the church designates.

“The plan of rotating deacons in service has grown in favor among the churches. This plan provides that a deacon shall be elected to serve for a limited time. In beginning the plan, a church usually designates one-third of the deacons to serve for one year, one-third to serve two years, one-third to serve three years. The order of service may be determined by priority of original election. At the end of the designated term of service, the deacon is usually ineligible for re-election until the lapse of a year” (pg. 68).

By following such a plan of rotation, some of the younger men of the church can have the opportunity of serving as deacon as well, and often times, they may be able to serve better because of their youth.

An effective use of deacons in some churches is a division of the church roll into equal family groups with each group being assigned to a deacon. As a member of the church, you and your family will be assigned to a deacon. He is to feel an especial concern for you and will be in contact with you should any need arise. If you should become absent in your attendance at church, he will probably visit with you or at least call you on the telephone first in order to see if you have needs that he might help you with. Of course, any needs he finds will be brought to the attention of the pastor. We hope that you will assist him by taking the initiative to contact him when you do have needs whether they be in cases of sickness or spiritual.

Other Officers

Church Clerk. The business of the clerk is to keep a record of the proceedings of the church. It is therefore important for the clerk to be present at every service of the church and maintain an accurate record of all actions

of the church. In case he is absent from a service, it is his responsibility to see that someone is there to record the activities of the church for him. Dobbins in **The Churchbook** says concerning this office:

“He should be regular in attendance, interested in every phase of the church’s life, quick to perceive the difference between essentials and nonessentials, reliable and trustworthy. The efficient clerk, is more than a recorder of minutes of business meetings. The clerk, if he magnifies his office, is the church’s historian. He records interestingly all significant events as they transpire — the services Sunday by Sunday, special occasions and meetings, deaths and funerals, marriages and births, building projects and local missions, progress of the several organizations, election of officers and change of pastors ... The clerk will use every endeavor to keep the church membership roll in good order” (pg. 70).

A clerk can however write too many details. Where discussions are held and there are differences of opinions expressed by the members, it is better to simply give a summary of the opinions expressed rather than to try and record every word that is spoken, and it is also better not to mention the names of those speaking lest in later years it cause some embarrassment either to them or their families. Only pertinent dates, motions, and decisions should be recorded.

For the protection of church records, the church clerk should provide copies of all minutes to the pastor to be kept in the church office. This will provide duplicate copies of all church records so that in case of fire, at least one copy will have been preserved. I know of one church, Central Baptist Church in Little Rock, where several years of church records were lost due to a fire. The church clerk maintained the records in his garage where he did his work, and the garage burned destroying several years of church minutes and records. If duplicate records had been provided to the pastor, a copy of those records would have been preserved.

Treasurer. The treasurer is also elected by the church. He may or may not be a deacon, though tradition has assigned this work to deacons though there is no scripture that assigns them this work. Needless to say, he should be a man of unquestioned integrity. If possible, he should also be acquainted with good business procedures, skilled in bookkeeping and accountancy, accurate and dependable in all his work. Monthly reports should be provided to the pastor as well as to the church.

Trustees. Trustees are not scriptural officers but

secular officers required by the laws of the various states. Since they are required by the state, their duties and number may vary from state to state. They are not considered officers of the church but are the legal representatives of the church and act on behalf of the church in all legal matters including the buying, selling and holding of the church property. They may or may not be chosen from the deacons. Title to the church property is held in the name of the trustees. Should occasion arise for the church to sue or be sued, the trustees are its legal representatives. Since trustees hold such legal and financial responsibilities for the church's physical well-being, it is the decision of some pastors and churches to have the trustees involved in monthly meetings as a group, combined with the deacons or with all church officers, to keep current on the physical needs of the church buildings and property, as well as to make recommendations to the church concerning financial matters.

The trustees are subject to the church's direction and they have no authority except as it is granted to them by the church. They are entirely under the direction of the church and are not an independent body. They cannot hold, use, nor dispose of the property placed in their hands except as instructed by the church.

In many churches the trustees are elected on a rotation basis as are the deacons. Dobbins in his book **The Churchbook** says concerning them:

“Committee of trustees, one-third of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for three years, and, until their successors shall be appointed, will hold in trust the property of the church. They shall have the actual care of the place of worship, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action” (pg. 19-20).

Church Staff. There are others that are often added to a church position that have been called the “Church Staff.” These are referred to by various titles such as Assistant Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant to the Pastor, Educational Director, Music Director, Youth Director, Church Custodian, etc. *It should be understood that each of these work under the supervision of the pastor and that he alone has the responsibility of choosing them, or if necessary, relieving them of their duties.* Needless to say, it is imperative that each member of the church staff must have the full confidence of the pastor and must work in complete harmony with him, giving him their full

cooperation. If the time should come when there is either a loss of confidence or a failure to give the pastor their full cooperation, then it should be the duty of that one to resign or else the pastor has the right to relieve him of his position in order to seek someone who will give him their full cooperation.

Bro. Joe Hocking, retired pastor of the Bodine Baptist Church of Oklahoma City prepared the following set of guidelines which govern the relationship between the pastor and the church staff which were accepted and entered into the permanent records of that church.

Information Concerning Church Staff Members

A church staff members is a church employee, hired by the pastor to assist him in a particular area of church work. He is under the direct supervision of the pastor and is responsible to answer to the pastor only in regards to his work assignments.

1. A staff member is asked by the pastor to come work on his staff; to perform the duties assigned to him by the pastor. The church members do not assign work for the staff members to do. A staff member is not called by the church as is a pastor.

2. The pastor is responsible to assign the work of the staff member; to assist him by teaching and instructing him in the various ministries for which he will be responsible. The pastor is to observe his work habits, check his progress and see that their assignments are done properly, just as any supervisor on any other job would be responsible to do.

3. As the staff member works under the supervision of the pastor, he can also be dismissed from employment by the pastor should this ever be necessary.

4. The pastor, not the church, is responsible to make any recommendations for salary or benefits for the staff member. The pastor alone is the only one who is qualified to recommend these since he works with the staff member on a daily basis, and is the one who knows the actual worth or progress of his staff members. The pastor will recommend raises for his staff members, on a regular basis, for church approval, and when, in the pastor's opinion, the church can afford to do so from a financial standpoint.

5. A pastor's assistant is a strictly technical type work. He has absolutely no pastoral duties whatsoever. He should not be consulted by any member on a matter of a pastoral nature.

6. A pastor's assistant is an “hourly” employee,

who is not required to perform any duties after work hours (40 hours per week).

7. Any staff member who is asked by the pastor to come work on his staff is thoroughly aware of all the above items, and has agreed to them *before* he is placed on the church staff.

8. The church should be aware of the above items and never seek to change this work relationship between the pastor and his staff. The church should respect the pastor's office in regards to who works with him, and of the pastor's and staff member's need to have this understanding.

9. To disregard the above will produce conflict in the church; eventually friction between the pastor and staff member, and will end in a dismissal of staff member when the pastoral "chain of command" is not adhered to just like in any other job where you have a supervisor or manager.

IV Church Growth

Every saved person should have a desire to grow spiritually. This is Scriptural, for the Lord commanded in 2 Peter 3:18 "Grow in grace," which simply means "grow spiritually." When we are saved we are not immediately full-grown Christians, but "babes in Christ." As babes, the Lord commands us to "grow." To remain a "babe" is a shame and a tragedy. Only by growing in spirituality can we please God and glorify God in our lives

How can a Christian "grow in grace"? Are there certain principles we can follow that will help us grow in grace? Yes, and we list some of these principles.

1. Know that you are saved. It is impossible to grow as a Christian if you are not one. Jesus told Nicodemus "Ye must be born again" (Jn. 3:3, 7). John says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:12-13). Make sure of your salvation. You cannot grow spiritually if you are unsaved.

2. Join an independent Baptist church and go to work for the Lord just as soon as you have been saved. You cannot live as good a Christian life outside the Lord's church as in the church. You cannot grow spiritually if you do not obey the Lord's first command for you as a Christian. Christ loved the church and gave

Himself for it (Eph. 5:25), and He wants us to love it and give ourselves to it. We should not only unite with the church, but we should attend all its services. Go to work in the church. Make it the most important interest and activity in your life. The Bible says, "Seek ye first" the work of the Lord, and we must do this if we are to grow.

3. Begin regular Bible study and prayer. The Bible is God's Word and was written for and to us. The Bible is God talking to us and prayer is God's child talking to God. You should read God's Word. Read it through. Read it by book, by subjects, and by all means, read it daily. The more you read it, the more it will mean to you. You should study it at home. It is important to have a special time with the Bible each day (2 Tim. 2:15), but there needs to be more. This is where the preaching and teaching of a Bible-centered church comes in. Jesus gave the responsibility of teaching to the church (Mt. 28:20). Because the church has the responsibility of teaching it, it behooves us to take advantage of it. It is all according to God's plan. Not only is an individual instructed to study (2 Tim. 2:15), but God also instructs the church to teach him (Mt. 28:20). When both the individual and the church cooperate together in the study of the Word, it results in the spiritual growth of the believer. The church services are not enough food all by themselves, for we need time at home spent in Bible reading and study, but nothing is quite like sitting under a godly man who teaches the Bible.

We need the church because we need the nourishment. As has been said so often "this Book will keep you from Satan, and Satan will keep you from this Book." It is equally true that a good sound New Testament church will keep you from Satan, and Satan will keep you out of a good sound New Testament church if you let him. Remember that!

Then you should pray. Pray about everything. Pray daily, pray as you work, and as Paul says, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). The best thing for a home is to have a "family altar" when all the family gathers together for Bible reading and prayer. If you don't have one, begin one today.

4. Have Christian Fellowship. Being a Christian, you are in the minority. Christ said it would be like that (Mt. 7:13-14). Because of this you probably feel quite alone unless you are active in a good church. Most of your neighbors are not Christians. Most of those you work with or go to school with are lost, and for this reason you will have a hard time finding anyone you can fellowship with who believes like you do unless you find them within your church. Remember, the fellowship of

the world (your unsaved neighbors, friends, school companions, or fellow workers on the job) will hinder or even prevent your spiritual growth and cause your love for Christ and His church to grow cold (1 Jn. 2:15). Your closest friendships should be with other Christians and members of your church. Who else is going to pray for you when you have problems and burdens? Visit their homes, and invite them into your home. With your friends within your own church you will find that this friendship will enrich your life, and it will give you great strength in resisting temptation and aid you in growing spiritually. Few Christians who are out of the church are doing much for the Lord. They get no Christian fellowship, encouragement or motivation. You need the church for fellowship and spiritual growth.

5. Separate yourself from the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The world is against God (1 Jn. 2:14-17). We are *in* the world, but we are not *of* the world. Therefore, you should separate yourself from everything that is worldly and that would hinder your work for Christ. As long as you hold on to worldly things you cannot grow spiritually.

6. Develop and use your talents for the Lord. Every Christian has abilities and talents that he can use for the Lord. When the Lord saved you He gave you at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:11). The reason He has given you these gifts is that you might be used by Him in His overall plan for mankind. This shows your importance to God: you do have a place in His planning somewhere.

A spiritual gift is an ability to do a job. These are listed in the Bible and the best way to understand their purpose can be seen in chapter twelve of First Corinthians. The Lord here compares the church to a human body in its operation, and just as a person is not all that he could be if parts of him are missing or not working, so it is with your church. God sets members in the body (church) as it pleases Him (1 Cor. 12:18) for He knows which gifts are needed in which church, and He leads and directs each Christian to the church that needs his gifts or abilities. That person then becomes a part of that body using his gifts to help it function properly. What does all this mean for you? God has a church for *you* that *you* might function in that church using *your* gift to help. You may have the gift of teaching; the church needs teachers. You may have the gift of leading; the church needs leaders. Use your abilities to speak, to sing, to handle business, or as a mechanic, carpenter or plumber, or you may visit shut-ins or simply help others for you can be an encouragement to others in need. The church needs all of these and more.

This means also that we need the church in order to

use our gifts in the way God intends. The church needs you and you need the church. Look at what God says about growth and how the church operates. "From whom the whole body fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase in the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16). When every joint (member) supplies that which he can (through his gifts) the body (church) works effectually and grows, and is edified in love. If you did not understand that, read that verse again carefully.

Christian, you are robbing somebody and some church out of a blessing when you sleep in during morning services or you let a football game or sports activity prevent your attendance at church or you simply are just too lazy to go to church. Your church needs your God-given gift or gifts; that is why God added you to the body. If you are saved and not a member of an independent Baptist church, you are hindering God's plan for you and His church. You need the church to fulfill God's plan for your life. God gave you your gifts and He has a church in which He plans for you to use them. Remember, this is God's plan, and God's way is always the best way. You need the church in order for God to use you by way of the gifts you have received from Him when you were saved. The church needs the talents of every member. Dedicate your talents to Him today (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

7. Read good books and good Christian literature. Every home should have good religious books and papers. Subscribe for some of the monthly newspapers published by independent Baptists. I publish **The Baptist Challenge** which is available on the internet:

www.centralbaptistchurch.org/challenge.htm

which I believe should be in every Christian home, and there are other good papers published by other independent Baptists also.

Buy good religious books. Don't waste time on unclean and filthy books and magazines. Remember too that all religious books are not good. Consult your pastor if you are in doubt. The Challenge Press is continually publishing good books that should be read by all independent Baptists, and this list of books is increasing each year.

8. Be honest with God with your money. One-tenth of your gross income (income before deductions) belongs to God. Bring your tithe to God's house every

Lord's day. The church where you are a member is God's storehouse today and this is where your tithes belongs. *If the church is not worthy of your tithes, it is not worthy of your membership*, and you should seek membership in a church that is a sound and independent Baptist church, even if that church be in another city. Better to have your membership in a Bible-believing and Bible-practicing independent Baptist church in another city and support that church with your tithes and offerings, than to put your money and influence in a worldly modernistic church that either denies the fundamentals of the faith themselves, or supports those who do deny the Word of God, as is so true with the churches of the Conventions.

If you are dishonest toward God in money matters, you cannot grow spiritually. Study carefully the chapter on this further on in this book.

9. Exercise self-control. Satan continually will try to hinder your Christian life and the Lord's work by bringing jealousy, quick temper, selfishness into your life. Such a spirit is of the devil. If any of these appear in your life, destroy them by prayer and Bible study.

10. Seek the counsel and help of your pastor. Your pastor is one of the best friends you have. God has set him in the church to help you, to teach you, and to lead you. Confide in him. There is not a more difficult job than pastoring a church, so pray for him. Work for him. When you are in trouble he will be ready to help you. When you are tempted, he will help you fight your battle with Satan. When you need spiritual guidance you will find no better earthly friend than your pastor. Seek the fellowship of your pastor, for as you walk with him, you will be walking closer to God, for he is God's man.

11. Live for Christ one day at a time. Each morning you awake, you find that God has given you a new day to use for Him. Live for Him every minute of it; in your business, at your job, in your home, at school, in your social relationships, and on the streets. Don't be just a Sunday Christian, but live for Christ every day and twenty-four hours per day.

Another thing about living for Him one day at a time is that if you fail, as you sometimes will, then only one day is ruined. If this happens, then get on your knees, confess your sin, and ask God to help you do better the next day. As you live for Christ one day at a time you will soon be living weeks and months and years for Him. This is the way to victorious living. If you do fail, don't give up but try to do better next time. Peter failed by denying the Lord, but he didn't give up. He came to the Lord and was forgiven and became the mighty preacher on the day of Pentecost. Don't give up! Get up, get

right, and go on for God!

12. Win others to Christ. The greatest work in the world is soul winning, and every Christian can and should bring others to Christ. Dedicate yourself to it today. Pray for the Lord to lay some soul upon your heart. Pray much for that person, and then go and talk to him personally about his soul. Paul's method was to tell of his own experience, and everywhere he went he gave his testimony of how God saved him. Use your personal testimony in witnessing to others. Use the Bible in talking to the lost, for it is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) and has life and power in its words. When they have been saved, then lead them to openly confess Him before men and to follow the Lord in baptism and church membership. This work will give you the greatest joy you have known as a Christian (Psa. 126:5-6).

Spiritual growth is possible. Seek it!

V

Baptist History

It is sometimes asked, "When and where did Baptists originate? Who were their founders? What is their history?" These questions are very important questions and need an honest answer.

To find the beginning of Baptist churches, one must go back to Christ and His apostles. All other churches must date their origin with men in recent centuries. Baptists are the only churches that had their beginning with the ministry of the Lord Jesus when He built His church out of the material prepared by John the Baptist. This will of necessity be a brief outline of Baptist history, but if you are interested in more detailed information, ask your pastor about books along this line. Let us now look to the beginning of Baptists.

Baptist Beginnings

1. Christ built His church during His personal ministry here on earth. The Lord stated that this was one of the things He came to do (Mt. 16:18). The word "church" in this passage speaks of the church as an institution and the church of Jerusalem was the first church established and the prototype or pattern church for all other New Testament churches. Before the Lord ascended into heaven He said that the work He had come to do was completed (Jn. 17:4; 19:30). Since building

His church was part of the work He came to do, it was therefore built. Though we cannot point to a specific Scripture declaring that the church at Jerusalem was organized on a particular day, that it was organized by the Lord during His personal ministry is evident from the following.

The first members of the church were apostles (1 Cor. 12:28). This church the Lord built had all the essentials of a church. It had a message (Mk. 16:15); an organization (Acts 1:21-26); a form of discipline (Mt. 18:15-18); a church roll (Acts 1:15); the ordinances (Mt. 28:18-20); a commission (Mt. 28:18-20); a treasurer (Jn. 12:6). It was a church prior to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42) for you can only add to that which already exists, and it was a functioning church prior to the day of Pentecost for the church elected Matthias as an apostle to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:15-26). That this was a valid election by the church is attested to by the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:26 for He says, "And they gave forth their lots (votes); and the lot (vote) fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The Holy Spirit further ratifies or shows His approval of this election on the part of the church in Acts 6:2 by including Matthias along with the original eleven saying, "Then the twelve." The apostle Paul also recognized the election of Matthias as a valid election (1 Cor. 15:5).

2. This church was a Baptist church, for Baptist churches today are like it in organization, doctrine and practice. This first church was organized out of material prepared by the first Baptist preacher, John the Baptist (Jn. 1:6; Mt. 3:1, 13-17; Acts 1:22). A church organized out of people baptized by a Baptist preacher must be a Baptist church (1 Cor. 12:28). Furthermore, Baptists alone can trace their teachings and principles back through the ages to Christ.

3. Churches like this first church have continued to exist from that day to the present time. Christ promised that they would not cease to exist (Mt. 16:18; 28:20). Those churches today which claim that they and the churches of the Reformation have restored New Testament Christianity overlook the fact that the church Jesus built would not have to be restored, for He promised they would not cease to exist. If these churches did cease to exist for a period of time, then Christ's promise failed, and we know that is not true or possible. Churches like the one Jesus built have existed in every age down to the present hour.

Historians of various denominations admit that Baptists have existed through the ages since Christ. The following list of quotations are taken from the book **Baptist Doctrine In One Year** by M. L. Moser, Sr., pgs. 230-

236. [Available from the Challenge Press.]

Quotations Proving Baptist Antiquity

Cardinal Hosius, Roman Catholic, the president of the Council of Trent. Cardinal Hosius wrote in A.D. 1554 and this dates Baptists back to at least 354 A.D.

"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 sorts of punishment than these people."

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

The institution of Anabaptism is no novelty, but for three hundred years has caused great disturbance in the church, and has acquired such strength that the attempt in this age to contend with it appears futile for a time."

Mosheim, Lutheran historian of great note:

"Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of modern Dutch Baptists.

Robert Barclay, Quaker, says:

"We shall afterwards show the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and 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 times of the apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of Divine Truth, and the true nature of spiritual religion, it seems probable that these churches have a lineage or succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church."

Crossing the Centuries edited by William C. King, having as associate counselors, editors and contributors

such as: Cardinal Gibbons, Roman Catholic; Bishop John H. Vincent, Methodist; President Theodore Roosevelt; President Woodrow Wilson; W.H.P. Founce, President of Brown University; Albert Bushnell Hart, Ph.D., L.L.D., Head of the History Department of Harvard University; George B. Adams, M.A., Ph.D., Litt.D. of Yale, and many more such famous men, 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 independent of and distinct from the Greek and Roman churches, and 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 the New Testament faith, doctrine and practice.”

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**, pg. 59) says:

“I should not readily admit that there were Baptist churches as far back as A.D. 100, although without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were Baptists.”

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

“I would engage to show that baptism as viewed and practiced by the Baptists, had its advocates in every century of the Christian era ... and independent of whose existence (the German Anabaptists), clouds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age, to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced.”

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

“The Baptists are the only body of known Christians that have never symbolized with Rome.”

Edinburg Cyclopedia:

“It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Anabaptists. Indeed this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.”

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

Professor Wm. C. Duncan, of the Department of Greek and Latin, University of Louisiana:

“Baptists do not, as most Protestant denominations, date their origin from the Reformation of 1520. By means of that great movement they were brought out of comparative obscurity into prominent notice. They did not, however, originate with the Reformation; for long before Luther lived; yea, long before the Catholic Church itself was known, Baptist and Baptist churches flourished in Europe, Asia and Africa.”

Charles H. Spurgeon, eminent Baptist pastor and professor:

“History has hitherto been written by our enemies, who never would have kept a single fact about us upon the record if they could have helped it, and yet it leaks out every now and then that certain poor people called Anabaptists were brought up for condemnation. From the days of Henry II to those of Elizabeth we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated of all men for the truth’s sake which was in them. We read of poor men and women, with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold, and anon of others who were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism. Long before our Protestants were known of, those horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the ‘one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.’ No sooner did the visible church begin to depart from the gospel than these men arose to keep fast by the old way. The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men’s ears with Holy Scriptures, and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet, here we are, blessed and multiplied; and

Newington sees other scenes from Sunday to Sunday. As I think of the multitudes of your numbers and efforts, I can only say in wonder — what a growth! As I think of the multitudes of our brethren in America, I can only say, What hath God wrought! Our history forbids discouragements.”

Dr. Dermont, chaplain to the king of Holland, and **Dr. Ypiej**, professor of theology at Graningen, a few years since received a royal commission to prepare a history of the Reformed Dutch Church. This history, prepared under royal sanction, and officially published, contains the following manly and generous testimony to the antiquity and orthodoxy of the Dutch Baptists:

“We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists ... were the original Waldenses, and have long in the history of the Church received the honor of that origin. On this account, *the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages.*”

Many more similar quotations could be given, but these are sufficient to prove to the honest inquirer that historians, even of other denominations, admit that Baptists have existed since the apostolic days.

4. Baptist churches alone find their beginning with Christ. Three things must be true concerning the beginning of the church in order for it to be a scriptural church. It must have the right founder — Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:18); the right place — Palestine (where Christ lived); and the right time — during Christ’s personal ministry. Any church that does not meet these three requirements cannot be the church that the Lord built.

When and where did all these other denominations begin? The following table showing the origin and founders of the various major denominations is prepared from the statements of church historians and is listed in the book **Baptist Doctrine In One Year** on page 237:

Roman Catholic.....	610
Greek Orthodox.....	1054
Lutheran — Martin Luther.....	1530
Episcopal — Henry VIII.....	1530
Presbyterian — John Calvin.....	1541
Congregational — Robert Browne.....	1581
Friends.....	1624
Church of the Brethren (Dunkards) — Alexander Mack.....	1708

Free Will Baptists — Paul Palmer.....	1727
Seventh Day Baptists — John C. Beissel.....	1727
Methodist — John and Charles Wesley.....	1729
United Brethren in Christ — P.W. Otterbein & M. Boehm...	1800
Evangelical — Jacob Albright.....	1800
Cumberland Presbyterian — Ewing, King & McAdow.....	1810
Unitarians — W. E. Channing.....	1825
Churches of God in N. America — John Winebrenner.....	1825
Plymouth Brethren — J.N. Darby.....	1829
Mormons (Latter Day Saints) — Joseph Smith.....	1830
Primitive Baptists — Daniel Parker.....	1831
Christian — Alexander Campbell.....	1837
Church of Christ — Alexander Campbell.....	1837
Christadelphians — John Thomas.....	1844
Seventh Day Adventists — James White.....	1845
Spiritualism — Andrew Jackson Davis.....	1845
Church of God (New Dunkards) — George Patton.....	1848
Advent Christian Church — Jonathan Cummings.....	1852
Salvation Army — William Booth.....	1865
Jehovah’s Witnesses — Charles Taze Russell.....	1872
Church of Christ Scientist — Mary Eddy Baker.....	1879
Church of God — Daniel S. Warner.....	1880
Christian & Missionary Alliance — A.B. Simpson.....	1881
Brethren Church.....	1882
Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant.....	1885
Swedish Evangelical (Free Church).....	1888
United Evangelical.....	1894
Ch. of Christ (Holiness) USA — W.H. Hoople & Bressee.....	1907
Federal Council of Churches (National C of Churches).....	1907
Churches of God, Holiness — K.H. Burruss.....	1914
Assemblies of God.....	1914

What is true of the above listed churches is true of all other denominations, as they also would fail to meet these three requirements.

Baptists are the only churches that can meet these requirements. No man this side of Christ can be named as the founder of Baptists. Nor can any date this side of His personal ministry be pointed out, nor any location outside of Palestine be set for their beginning.

5. The Universal Church Theory. Some say that all churches are members of the “Universal Church,” therefore, all churches are churches of Christ. But according to the Bible, there is no such church as a “universal church.” The word “universal” is no where used in connection with the Lord’s church. In fact, the word “universal” nowhere appears in the Bible. The only churches found in the New Testament are local churches, either as particular churches or the church as an institution. A church founded hundreds of years after

Christ established His church does not become a New Testament church simply by making the claim.

Baptists claim to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself the chief Corner-Stone (Eph. 2:20). But as important as the beginning of the church is, the doctrines of the church are of equal importance. Are the doctrines of Baptists according to the teachings of the New Testament? Many things which are old are not true. There are creeds and sects that boast a venerable antiquity, yet the Word of God utterly condemns them. Any organization that cannot claim Christ for its founder and cannot match its doctrines with the New Testament has no right to the name of a Christian (Baptist) church, no matter how old it may be.

Baptist history, though brief since most of it was written by their enemies, constitutes one of the most interesting chapters in the records of Christianity. Let us trace briefly the high points of this history.

The doctrines of the gospel became corrupted during the apostolic age, and the ordinances soon thereafter. Many Jewish and Gentile converts brought into the churches many of their old religious notions and sought to incorporate them with the faith of Christ. These, along with many philosophical ideas of the times and with other perversions of the truth, very early turned some of the churches aside from the faith once delivered to the saints. Still the majority of the churches maintained the doctrines and customs in their original purity. However, those churches which were strongest and most prosperous were most exposed to corruption by alliances with the world. Following a period of extreme persecution in which there were many martyrs, a nominal Christianity began to come into being and united both Church and State. With this, nominal Christianity lost its simplicity, its spirituality and its power, and a temporal hierarchy took over control of the nominal church. This was the great apostasy of the early centuries which developed into the Catholic church.

But all the churches did not go off into this apostasy and departure from the truth. There were many churches who were true worshipers that kept the doctrine of the gospel and the ordinances in their New Testament purity, and this they continued to do throughout all the dark ages of doctrinal and moral corruption which followed. They never were identified with the Catholic church, either Greek or Roman, nor did they ever form alliances with governments or form hierarchies among themselves. These were all independent Baptist churches or congregations without organization and with no other bond or union than a common faith and fellowship. These churches took the Word of God as their guide and saw no scriptural example or justification for organized

Fellowships, Conventions or Associations. History had taught them that the great hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church had begun on as simple a scale as an organized Fellowship, yet grew through the Association stage, through the Convention stage, to the powerful stage of a full-grown dictatorship under a Pope.

These independent Baptist churches or communities were called *sects* and stigmatized as *heretics* by the dominant church. We do not claim that all of these churches were perfect or free from errors (even as all Baptists are not today), but the majority of these churches were the best and purest defenders of the Christian faith, and were the only true representatives of New Testament churches existing during these centuries. In reality, the state churches were the heretics, while those so-called sects were the true successors of the New Testament churches.

Hixcox, writing concerning this group of Baptists says:

“They were defamed and oppressed, calumniated and martyred because they bore witness to the truth of God and testified against the errors and vices of the so-called churches. History has never done them justice, and perhaps never will; because history has been too much written in the interest of their enemies, or from their standpoint. Tortured and tormented by those who should have been their defenders, crowns and miters alike pledged to their destruction, they could do nothing but suffer, and this they nobly did as Christ’s faithful witnesses.”

These early Baptists were known by various names in different ages in different lands, but retained the same general characteristics. In the *first* and *second* centuries, Messalians, Montanists, Euchites, were terms which distinguished some of these sects. In the *third*, *fourth* and *fifth* centuries arose the Novatians. Increasing with exceeding rapidity, they quite overspread the Roman empire, in spite of the cruel and destructive persecutions which they suffered. In the *sixth* century the Donatists appeared, as a new form of existing sects, or a new phase of the old faith. They multiplied rapidly, spread extensively, and long survived. In the *seventh* century appeared the Paulicians, attracting much attention, and calling down upon themselves the wrath of the Catholic church. Still they increased greatly, notwithstanding their many persecutions.

We do not claim that all of these churches were faultless, but they were the churches maintaining the true gospel and the New Testament practice of the ordinances. Without a hierarchy or organization of any

type, it is natural that they differed somewhat among themselves, even as Baptists differ today.

But in general they all took the New Testament as the rule for their faith and practice. They held to a spiritual church membership and would only baptize those who were regenerated. They denied the validity of the Catholic church and rebaptized persons received from them and hence were called *Anabaptists*. They rejected infant baptism and baptized by immersion, as did the Catholics during those ages. It is said that the Empress Theodora, after having confiscated their property, caused no less than 100,000 to be cruelly put to death for no other crime than their refusal to accept as valid the immersions of the Roman Catholic church.

It was near the close of the *tenth* century that we find these Anabaptists called Paterines. They too rejected infant baptism and spoke out against the corruptions of the Catholic church for which they suffered long and severe persecutions.

In the *eleventh* and succeeding centuries the Anabaptists were called Waldenses, Albigenses, Vaudois, Cathari, and Poor Men of Lyons. These were new names, and names usually given by their enemies. They increased, even under their persecutions to a wonderful extent, and attracted the notice, if not the sympathy, of all Europe.

These various groups were not known by the name Baptist, but they held and maintained the distinctive principles which have always characterized Baptists, i.e. (1) The freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience; (2) They denied the authority of the Popes and the right of kings and governments to interfere with the people in the matters of religions; (3) They rejected infant baptism and practiced immersion; (4) They held the Bible to be the only rule and authority in matters of faith and practice; (5) They received into their churches only such as professed to having been regenerated and promised to live a godly life.

It is conceded by all historians of note that such churches and groups did exist, separate from and persecuted by the prevailing State churches and civil authorities during all the ages from the apostles to the Reformation. It is true that when the Reformation under Martin Luther and others broke out, some of these included under the "umbrella" of Anabaptists did yield to the influence of the reformers, and through sympathy, did what the Catholics had never been able to compel them to do — abandon immersion for sprinkling and adopt infant baptism. However, these were only a small minority, and the vast majority of these Anabaptists maintained their doctrines and practices during the Reformation, requiring those who came to their

congregations from the Protestant churches to be rebaptized. Thus they became the object of persecution by the newly begun Protestant churches also.

VI Baptist Doctrine

As stated in a previous chapter, the validity of a church is not only determined by its history, but also by its doctrine. We have already seen that Baptist history can be traced back to Christ, but even if we could not, we can identify the Lord's churches by their doctrines.

The history of Baptists can be seen as a strong "chain of sand" reaching from today back to the personal ministry of our Lord, each church being a separate grandule or grain, separate and distinct from all others with no organization or hierarchy to bind them together, but strongly bound together by an agreement in doctrine.

Let us make it clear that it is not necessary for us to trace an unbroken succession of churches throughout these past twenty centuries. The fact that the Lord said they would not cease to exist (Mt. 16:18; 28:20) is proof enough that they have existed and do exist today whether we can trace their history or not. If we can identify the hoofprints of a horse on one side of a river and then find the identical hoofprints on the other side of the river, we know that the horse passed through the river whether we find his hoofprints in the river or not.

We cannot in this book take time to fully discuss the doctrines of independent Baptists. However, a brief Confession of Faith has been drawn up by independent Baptists entitled the *Orthodox Baptist Confession of Faith*. However, Baptists do not go to a "Confession of Faith" to support their doctrines but to the Bible, but this will adequately show what Baptists believe, and you will note that there are many Scriptures cited proving each statement. A check of these Scriptures prove that the doctrines held by independent Baptists today are based upon Scripture and are identical with the doctrines held by the churches of the New Testament and as taught by our Lord and His apostles.

Orthodox Baptist Confession of Faith

1. GOD

We believe that there is one, and only one, true and living God; that He is absolute in nature, perfect in

attributes, holy in character, the maker and supreme ruler of heaven and earth; that He is infinite in wisdom, marvelous in power, and amazing in love; that He is holy, righteous, and true, worthy of all confidence and love; that He unites in Himself the infinite, the eternal, and the Almighty Three — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; that the three persons of the Godhead subsist in the same divine nature, essence and being; and that they are co-extent and co-equal in every divine attribute, each one executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

Gen. 1:1; Dt. 4:39; Mk. 12:29; Gen. 17:1; Mt. 5:48; Isa. 6:3; 1 Chr. 29:11-12; Psa. 103:19; Rom. 11:33-34; Mt. 19:26; Psa. 19:9; Mt. 28:19; 1 Pet. 1:2-3; 1 Jn. 5:7; Ex. 3:14; Gen. 1:26 and Tit. 3:3-7

2. THE DIVINE TRINITY

1. God the Father. We believe that God the Father is the first person set forth in the Divine Trinity; that He is almighty, merciful and just; that He is holy, righteous and true; that He is eternally existent, glorious in nature, possessing the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence; and that He, in harmony with His divine office, loves, provides, and protects, thus exercising providential watchcare over the sons of men, and especially a fatherly care over the children of God.

Mt. 28:19; Gen. 17:1; Mt. 19:26; Psa. 19:9; Isa. 6:3; Psa. 100:5; Prov. 15:3; Psa. 139:1-6, 13-14; 103:13; Mt. 6:25-30; 10:29-31; 7:11.

2. God the Son — Virgin Born. We believe that God the Son is the second person set forth in the Divine Trinity; that He is Very God of Very God; that He is almighty, merciful, and just; that He is holy, righteous and true; that He is eternally existent, glorious in nature, possessing the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence; that God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, is actually and eternally His divine Father, and Mary the Virgin, is actually and innocently His human mother; and that He, in harmony with His divine office, mediates, seeks, and saves, thus exercising the mediatorial office of redemption.

Mt. 28:19; Jn. 1:1-3, 14 and Isa. 9:6; Mt. 28:18; Tit. 3:5-6; Jn. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 13:8; Phil. 2:6; Jn. 2:24; Mt. 28:20; Lk. 1:35 and 2:7-14; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Lk. 19:10 and Jn. 3:16.

3. God the Holy Spirit. We believe that God the Holy Spirit is the third person set forth in the Divine Trinity; that He is almighty, merciful and just; that He is holy, righteous and true; that He is eternally existent, glorious in nature, possessing the attributes of

omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence; that He restrains the world, the flesh and the devil; that He witnesses to the Truth, convicts the lost, extols the Christ, and testifies to the righteous judgments of God; that He, in harmony with His divine office, comforts, teaches, testifies, preaches, guides, regenerates, empowers, sanctifies, and anoints, thus exercising the quickening role in the works of saving the lost and the supervising role in the life of the saved.

Jn. 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 4:14; Isa. 40:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; Psa. 139:7-12; 2 Thess. 2:6-7; Jn. 3:6, 8; Eph. 1:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:2; Isa. 61:1.

3. THE DEVIL

We believe that Satan is an actual person, and not an imaginary influence; that he once enjoyed high heavenly honors and glorious heavenly privileges; that he, through pride, ambition, and self-will attempted to betray the Almighty and brought down upon his head the judgment of God; that he operates today as the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air; that he is a diabolical inventor, an arch-deceiver, and the father of all lies; that he is the greatest enemy, the mightiest tempter, and the most relentless accuser of the saints; that he shall one day be incarnated in the person of the Antichrist and in that role will finally meet the Christ in the Battle of Armageddon; that there “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head”; and that he shall eventually be cast into the lake of fire, the eternal place of punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7; Ezk. 28:12-19; Isa. 14:12-27 and Gen. 3:14; 2 Cor. 4:4 and Eph. 2:2; Mt. 24:11 and 2 Thess. 2:7-11; Jn. 8:44; 1 Pet. 5:8; Gen. 3:1-6; Rev. 12:10; Dan. 7:8; Rev. 13:1-10; 19:20; Gen. 3:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jn. 14:30; Eph. 2:2.

4. THE HOLY BIBLE

We believe that the Holy Bible is a supernatural book; that it is the very Word of God; that it is the full, the final, and the complete revelation of God’s will to man; that it has God the Holy Spirit for its author, salvation for its end, and truth in the original without any admixture of error for its matter; that it was written by holy men of old under the immediate and direct dictation of the Holy Spirit; that it is verbally inspired and a perfect treasure of holy instruction; and that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and is, therefore,

the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions shall be tried.

Psa. 119:89; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 22:18-19; Jn. 17:17; 3:32-34; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Zeph. 1:1; Psa. 19:7-11; Ex. 20:3-17; Psa. 1:2; Jn. 12:48.

5. CREATION

We believe that the Genesis record of creation is literal and not allegorical or figurative; that God personally created the heaven and the earth; that He miraculously brought forth all original matter out of nothing; that He actually fashioned all organic forms as specific creations subject to limited changes within the specie; that He definitely ordained each specie to bring forth after its kind; that He finally formed man out of the dust of the ground, not by any process of evolution but by instant action, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became immediately a living soul; that He created man in the image and likeness of God; that His every creative act was complete and perfect in itself; and that not one of His creations was conditioned upon antecedent changes naturally wrought during interminable periods of time.

Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Heb. 11:3; Gen. 1:21, 24-27; 2:7; Col. 1:15.

6. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man, originally created in holiness and actually associated with God in innocence under His law, did, by voluntary transgression of the Lord's command, fall from the high and happy state in which he was created, and, as a consequence, became a sinner alienated from God and brought upon himself and all mankind just condemnation; and that he is now, by virtue of his fallen nature, utterly void of holiness, positively inclined to evil, and actually condemned to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

Gen. 1:26-27; Eccl. 7:29; Gen. 3:6, 24; Ezk. 18:4; Rom. 5:12; 1:21-23; Rom. 3:10-18; Rev. 21:8.

7. THE BLOOD ATONEMENT

We believe that the lost sinner is guilty and already under the condemnation; that he is by nature alien to God and because of sin condemned to die; that atonement for sin was effected through the mediatorial office of the Son who by divine appointment, freely took upon Himself

our nature, yet without sin; that He, through obedience during His earthly walk, personally honored the divine Law by keeping it, and, through His death on the cross, actually satisfied the penalty of the offended law by suffering in the sinner's stead; that He, through His obedience and sacrificial death, made full and vicarious atonement for all sin; that He died, the just for the unjust, bearing our sins in His body on the tree; and that He, through the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary, evidenced eternal provision for *cleansing*, for *pardon*, for *peace* and for *rest*.

Isa. 53:6; Rom. 6:7 and Rom. 8:23; 1 Tim. 2:5-6 and Heb. 2:17 and 2 Cor. 5:21; Mt. 5:17-18 and 1 Pet. 2:24; Heb. 10:10-12; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:5; Isa. 55:7; Jn. 14:27; Mt. 11:28; 1 Jn. 1:7; Eph. 1:7 and Heb. 9:22.

8. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are solemn and inseparable prerequisites of salvation; that they are inseparable graces wrought in the heart by the quickening Holy Spirit; that the alien sinner, being deeply convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come by the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit, and by Him having his understanding enlightened so that he can see the way of salvation through Christ, does actually repent, turning to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication, and does actually believe, surrendering himself wholeheartedly to the Lord Jesus, immediately receiving Him as personal and all-sufficient Savior and openly confessing Him before all men.

Acts 20:21-22 and Mk. 1:15; Acts 11:18 and Eph. 2:8-9 and Jn. 6:44; 16:8-11; Mt. 3:1-2, 8; Acts 3:19; Lk. 13:3 and Lk. 18:9-14; Acts 9:6 and Rom. 10:10.

9. SALVATION BY GRACE

We believe that grace is elective and saving, that it embraces the personal triune and redemptive ministry of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; that it comprehends all of the labors put forth by the Almighty in the interest of perfect righteousness and the salvation of the lost soul; that it encompasses foreknowledge, foreordination and predestination; that it, and it alone, saves even unto the uttermost all who repent toward God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that salvation thus wrought is wholly by grace, "the free gift of God," requiring neither culture nor works in any form to secure it or to keep it.

2 Tim. 1:8-9 and Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:3-7 and 1 Pet.

1:2-5; Mt. 23:37; Rom. 8:28-30; Heb. 7:25 and Acts 20:20-21; Rom. 6:23; 11:6; 5:20; Isa. 1:18 and 55:1.

10. REGENERATION

We believe that in order to be saved lost sinners must be regenerated or born again; that regeneration is a re-creative act, far beyond comprehension, wrought in the believer's heart by the direct personal ministry of the Holy Spirit; that it is instantaneous, miraculous, and non-evolutionary or cultural; that it embraces the divine acts of cleansing the heart from all inward sins and of pardoning the soul of all outward guilt, in connection with the work of begetting a new creature in Christ Jesus; that the dead sinner is made to live through the new birth, becoming thereby a regenerated spirit, possessing eternal life, the gift of God; that the new birth comes after the Holy Spirit secures voluntary repentance and belief in the gospel; that it is the actual impartation of the divine life, not a mere transformation of the human life; and that the proper evidence of regeneration appears in the holy fruits of the obedient and willing faith of the followers of the Lord Jesus.

Jn. 3:3-5, 7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 3:8, 16; 1:12-13; Isa. 1:18 and Tit. 3:5-7; Eph. 2:1, 5 and Rom. 6:23; Jn. 16:8-11; Mt. 7:16-18 and Jas. 2:17-20.

11. JUSTIFICATION

We believe that justification is one of the great gospel blessings secured through Christ for all who trust Him; that it is a legal and divine decree, declaring the believing sinner just; that it is thus a state of being free from condemnation, including forgiveness for inward sins and pardon for outward sins; that it secures through faith freedom from legal bondage, exemption from the wrath of God, and possession of peace which passes all understanding; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely upon the evidence of faith in God and the Redeemer's blood; and that it brings us into a state of unchanging peace and favor with God and secures every other blessing needful for time and for eternity.

Rom. 3:24-25, 28; 8:33; 8:1 and Jn. 5:24 and Rom. 4:3-8; 6:6; 5:9; 5:1 and Phil. 4:7; Rom. 8:31-33; Gen. 15:6 and Heb. 2:4

12. THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

We believe that salvation wrought by grace is

everlasting; that the saved soul journeying through the valley of the shadow of death need fear no evil; that the Holy Spirit-begotten and born are kept by the power of God; that the believer in Christ Jesus shall not be brought into judgment; that no one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect; that they are securely held in both the hand of the Father and the Son; and that the age-old Baptist doctrine, "once in grace, always in grace," is heavenly and gloriously true.

Jn. 3:16, 36; 5:24; Jn. 6; Psa. 23:4; Isa. 37:23-24; Phil. 1:6 and 1 Pet. 3:5; Jn. 5:24 and Rom. 8:1; Jn. 10:27-29 and Rom. 8:31-33, 35-39 and 2 Tim. 1:12.

13. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is a divine work of grace; that it is not a state of sinless perfection attained through a "second blessing" or through a special "baptism of the Holy Ghost;" that it is an act of grace by which the believer is separated unto God and dedicated unto His righteous purpose; that by it we enter into divinely appointed privileges and thus become larger partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work, begun in regeneration, and carried on in the life of every believer by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God; and that it is nurtured only by heaven's appointed means, especially by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the saved through his self-examination, obedience, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer.

1 Thess. 4:3 and 5:23; Rom. 15:16 and Jer. 1:5; Prov. 4:18 and Jn. 17:17 and 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 2:29 and Rom. 8:5; 1 Tim. 4:5; Lk. 9:23; Mt. 24:42 and 7:7-11.

14. THE LORD'S RETURN

We believe that Christ Jesus is coming back to earth again; that His return shall be personal, audible, visible and bodily; that it shall mark the advent of the "day of the Lord" and usher in the millennium; and that He shall in that day turn the tables on Satan, take up the throne of His father David, put down all of His enemies, rule with a rod of iron, triumph over sin, and give the world an example of righteous government during His thousand years of personal reign on earth.

Job 18:25-26 and Isa. 9:6-7 and Zech. 14:4 and Mal. 4:2 and Lk. 1:31-33 and Mt. 25:31-34; Rev. 19:11-21 and Acts 1:11 and 1 Thess. 4:16-17 and Rev. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:4-6; 19:20 and 20:1-3 and 10; Isa. 9:7; 1 Cor. 15:25-27; Psa. 2:9 and Rev. 12:5 and 19:15; 1 Jn. 3:8 and Psa. 72:1-20.

15. THE RESURRECTION

We believe that Christ Jesus arose bodily from the grave on the first day of the week, which day we now observe as the Lord's Day, a day of worship; that His miraculous emergence from the tomb forecasted a like bodily resurrection for every member of the Adamic race; that the dead in Christ shall rise first and in glorified bodies like His; that they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; that the dead in trespasses and sins, or the dead out of Christ, shall rise at the close of the millennium; and that they shall be brought before the Great White Throne Judgment and there face the Judge of the quick and the dead.

Mt. 28:6 and Lk. 24:1-12; 1 Cor. 15:12-22; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:5-6; 11:15; Dan. 12:3; 1 Sam. 2:6; Isa. 26:19; Hos. 13:14 and Isa. 25:6-8.

16. INDIVIDUAL REWARDS

We believe that reward and salvation are not one and the same thing. We believe that the Lord shall reward His own; that He Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout; that the dead in Christ shall rise first; that a solemn separation shall take place; that the blood-washed and Holy Spirit-begotten shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and there be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body; and that the place called the New Heaven and the New Earth is ordained the everlasting dwelling place of the children of God. We believe that the wicked are children of the devil; that they are rebels against God; that they reject the free offer of salvation through Christ; that they ignore the wooings of the Holy Spirit; and that they, as a consequence, are hell-bound, being under a death sentence; that they shall spend eternity in the Lake of Fire which burneth with fire and brimstone where the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet are and shall ever be.

1 Cor. 3:11-15; 1 Thess. 4:16-18 and Mt. 24:40-41 and 13:47-50; 1 Cor. 3:8 and Rev. 21:1-8; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 8:7; Jn. 3:18; Rev. 20:10-15 and Rom. 6:23.

17. THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. We believe the righteous are they who believe in Christ Jesus, the justified by faith, and the sanctified by the Holy Spirit

and the Word; that the righteous are heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ; and that eternal life, the gift of God, is the matchless possession of the just. We believe that the wicked are they who do not believe in Christ Jesus, the condemned because of unbelief and the corrupted by the god of this world; that the unjust spurn the privileges of God's grace, choosing the life of sin and rebellion; and that eternal damnation is the inescapable portion of the unjust.

Mal. 3:16-18 and Jn. 3:6; Rom. 3:22, 24 and 4:3 and 1:17; 8:1-17 and Acts 20:32 and Jn. 15:3; Rom. 8:17; 6:23; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 21:8 and Mt. 23:37 and Prov. 29:1 and Mt. 25:41.

18. THE LOCAL CHURCH

We believe that a New Testament church, according to divine purpose and plan, is a visible, local, organized body; that it is composed of baptized believers associated together by a covenant of faith and fellowship in the gospel; that New Testament validity flows from strict obedience to essential principles of New Testament law; that it is a sovereign, independent, democratic and militant body; that its ministry is gloriously blessed with the presence and leadership of the Holy Spirit and the light and revelation of the written Word; that its work should ever be from within to without and never from without to within; that it is a self-governing body and is the sole judge, under the limitations of the Scriptures, of the measure and method of cooperation; that it is the only ecclesiastical tribunal the Lord has on earth; that its judgment concerning membership, missions, benevolence, cooperative alignments, and support is final; that it was personally founded by Christ Jesus during His ministry on earth; that it is subject to His laws and is the custodian of His ordinances; that the perpetuity of our faith, our doctrines and practices, ordinances and ordinations, has been effected through the Holy Spirit personally planting and preserving local Baptist churches of like faith and order down through the centuries even until now [See Chapter 5 on Baptist History].

Mt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:1-3; Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Mt. 16:19 and 18:15-17 and Jn. 14:16-17, 26; Acts 1:8 and 13:1-4; Mt. 18:17-18; 16:18-19; 26:26-29 and 28:19-20; 1 Tim. 3:15; Mk. 3:13-14 and Lk. 6:12-13

19. ORDINANCES

We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances personally set in the church of the living God

by the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that Baptism is the burial of a believer in water by the authority and instruction of a local Baptist church; that it symbolizes the death and the burial and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; that it also typifies the believer's death to sin, the burial of his old nature, and his resurrection unto a new life; and that it is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial spread and administered by the authority and instruction of a local Baptist church; that it symbolizes the broken body and the shed blood of the Son of God; that its observance points backward to the crucified Lord on Calvary and forward to the returning Lord in glory. We believe that these ordinances are not sacraments, but are sacred symbols, pointing to the world's only Savior, and bidding the sons of men look unto an everlasting fellowship with the King of kings and Lord of lords when He shall return to take over the reins of all government.

Mt. 26:26-29 and 28:19; Rom. 6:3-5 and Mt. 16:19 and Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 11:23-24; 11:24-25, and 26.

20. CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

We believe that the churches of God and the state should be kept completely separate; that civil officers should be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; that diligence should be had in seeking the will of God in all church matters; that missionary endeavor should ever be executed from within the local church to without; that pastors and deacons, the only divinely appointed church officers, should be duly ordained and brought to understand the sacred duties devolving upon them; that the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, should be honored both by saint and sinner; that Bible teachings should be constantly and consistently fostered by local church bodies; that members should be deliberately and prayerfully voted into the fellowship of the local body; that unruly church members should be prayerfully and Scripturally disciplined by the local church; and that church letters should be granted to sister churches of the same faith and practice.

21. CHURCH CO-OPERATION

We believe that it is the privilege and the right of local churches to co-operate with each other in carrying out the commission of the Lord; that such co-operation is righteously effected only when the principles of Christ are preserved in the work fostered; and that all associated

endeavor of local churches should be carried on in such a way as to preserve the sovereign integrity of each local body in all matters of faith and practice.

2 Cor. 8:1-6, 16-24; 2 Jn. 1-4; Mt. 16:18-19 and Acts 15:19-27.

VII The Ordinances

There are only two ordinances in the New Testament — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are not Christian ordinances but church ordinances since they were placed in the church by the Lord.

BAPTISM

There are at least four qualifications for Scriptural baptism.

1. The proper subject — a saved person. Baptism is not necessary for salvation. There is not one passage of Scripture that teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation, though some passages have been wrongly interpreted to teach it. Every Christian should be baptized, not in order to save himself or to be saved, but because he is already saved (Acts 10:48; Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 1:9; Mt. 3:15-17). Nor is there one passage of Scripture that in any way teaches infant baptism either by word or example.

2. The proper mode — by immersion. There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5), and this baptism is by immersion. The Greek word for baptize means immerse and never means sprinkle or pour. Scriptures about baptism make immersion absolutely necessary. (1) Baptism must be *in water* (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:5); (2) *In much water* (Jn. 3:23; Mk. 1:9); (3) *Going down into the water* (Acts 8:38); (4) *Burial in water* (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); (5) *Resurrection from the water* (Rom. 6:5; Col. 2:12); (6) *Coming up out of the water* (Acts 8:39; Mk. 1:10).

3. The proper purpose — to show forth salvation, not to procure it. There are four aspects relative to the purpose of baptism. It is to set forth the death, burial and resurrection to a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4, 11); illustration by figure or symbol of salvation (1 Pet. 3:21); putting on a uniform showing that we are saved (Gal. 3:27); in obedience to Christ's command (Mt. 28:19-20).

4. The proper authority — a New Testament church. A new believer needs the church because only a New Testament church has the authority to baptize.

Your neighbor cannot baptize you. Even an ordained minister does not have the authority to baptize. You cannot get proper baptism anywhere else for it is a church ordinance, and only a New Testament church (Baptist) has the right to administer the ordinance. Also, one enters by baptism into the membership of the church which performs it.

Any so-called baptism that does not meet all four of these Scriptural requirements is not a valid or Scriptural baptism. Such false or spurious baptisms are called “Alien Baptisms.”

THE LORD’S SUPPER

There are several passages of Scripture referring to the Lord’s Supper with which you should be familiar: Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:19-20 and 1 Cor. 11:17-29.

There are also certain questions that need to be answered relative to the Lord’s Supper. (1) Whose Supper is it? The Lord’s (1 Cor. 11:20); (2) What is its purpose? A memorial of Christ’s death (1 Cor. 11:24-26); (3) To whom was the Supper given? The church (Acts 20:7); (4) Who is eligible to partake of the Supper? Church members only (Acts 2:41-42; 20:7).

Baptists believe in what is called “Closed Communion” and have been unjustly criticized and called bigots, narrow-minded, etc. Is “Open Communion” Scriptural? Not according to the Apostle Paul. Paul in writing to the church at Corinth says in 1 Corinthians 11:18-20:

“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.”

This passage clearly eliminates the possibility of inviting other denominations to take the Lord’s Supper with a Baptist church, for they hold and teach doctrines contrary to Baptist doctrine and there would be divisions and heresies present which Paul expressly forbids.

The Lord further limits the Lord’s Supper to those who are members of the particular church observing the ordinance. When the New Testament tells of the Lord’s Supper being observed it says the church did it (1 Cor. 11:18; Acts 20:7). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:18, “For first of all, when ye come together *in the church* ...” not

meaning a church building, but in church capacity. This limits the observance to those who are members of the church observing the Lord’s Supper, not even to those who may be visiting from other Baptist churches. Paul also declared that one who is to partake of the Lord’s Supper must be under the discipline of the church (1 Cor. 5:11-13) and only those who are members of the church are under the discipline of the church. Open or Close Communion is impossible for one who wishes to be obedient to the Scriptures. Only Closed Communion is Scriptural.

Therefore we not only need the church to be obedient in baptism but also to observe the Lord’s Supper. It is the Lord’s church and they are His ordinances, and He desires to have them observed only within the membership of a church. Neglecting the church we miss out on the beautiful picture of the death of our Lord — the Lord’s Supper.

VIII

Baptists and Protestants

It is customary for the world to divide Christendom into two groups, Catholics and Protestants, and Baptists are listed among the Protestants. This is an incorrect classification since Baptists belong to neither group. Catholicism developed in the early centuries, while Protestantism arose in the Reformation as a protest against Catholicism. Baptists were in the world long before either Protestants or Catholics appeared [See chapter on Baptist History].

But what should our relationship be with other denominations? What should our attitude be toward them? In answering these two questions, there are two things that must be considered first.

I. Is One Church Better Than Another Church?

Occasionally a member of a Baptist church joins a church of another denomination. If you ask them why, they may respond, “I don’t think it makes any difference, just so you are saved. After all, one church is just as good as another.” This sounds very good, but is it true?

It is true that the first thing is salvation. Every person who has repented and trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior is saved, regardless of his church membership. We believe that there are saved people in

many other denominations, but they have all been saved the same way. If they have not repented and believed, they are lost, the same as any Baptist who has not repented and believed. So when we state that one church is better than another, we are not talking about salvation.

There are hundreds of denominations and churches in the world today teaching almost every kind of doctrine conceivable. Since all do not teach the same thing, they cannot all be right. In fact, many of their teachings are in direct conflict, one church teaching a doctrine that another denies. Can they both be right? If not, one must be wrong and the other right, or they both might be wrong. But if one is right in its teaching, then it must be admitted that the one that is right is a better church than the one that is wrong.

The following four statements will help clarify the whole matter.

1. A church set up by the Lord is better than a church with a human founder. As we have shown in another chapter of this book, Christ did build a prototype or pattern church during His personal ministry on the earth and He promised that like churches would continue to exist through all the ages until His Second Coming. These churches are on the earth today, and certainly must be better in the sight of God than any human institution that is not of divine origin. Since Baptist churches have existed since the days of Christ and the apostles, they must be more pleasing to the Lord than churches which can only trace their origin back a few years or a few centuries.

2. A church that teaches truth is better than one that teaches error. There are varieties of doctrines taught in churches today, some of them denying the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God and others denying that Jesus Christ was God's only begotten Son. Some deny an existence beyond the grave and deny the resurrection. Can a church that teaches one or more of these heresies be as good as one that teaches truth? Emphatically not! Other churches may not go so far in their false teachings, but do teach doctrines that are not true to the Word of God. Certainly such churches cannot be as good as a church that accepts and teaches the whole Word of God and takes as its doctrines only the teachings found in the Scriptures. Independent Baptists do believe the whole Bible and teach all that it teaches without one addition or subtraction of truth.

3. A church that teaches all the truth is better than one that teaches only part of the truth. There are many churches that teach some things that are true teachings of the Word of God. But we must contend a church that teaches all the Bible is better than one that

teaches only a part of it. Independent Baptists believe and teach the whole Word of God.

4. A church whose only authority is God is better than a church that refuses to obey Christ's commands and takes for doctrines the commandments of men. Independent Baptists seek to be obedient to Christ in all things. For this reason we believe that independent Baptist churches are better than the Baptist churches affiliated with the various human or man-made organizations for the Scriptures are absolutely silent about such organizations and the only example we have in the Scriptures are independent Baptist churches. Such organizations as Conventions, Associations, organized Fellowships are extra-scriptural and foreign to the Word of God, so that a Baptist church that is independent of man-made organizations is better than one that refuses to obey Scriptural examples by remaining independent.

I believe that a careful study of these four points will convince the reader that one church cannot be as good as another church in the sight of God, even among Baptist churches.

II. What Should Be the Attitude of Baptists Toward Other Christians?

The fact that one church is better than another does not mean that we cannot have Christian fellowship with all other true Christians, for all saved are brethren in Christ or "children of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26). However, recognizing their right to worship God as they see fit, we cannot approve of their false doctrine or practice. We believe in Christian unity, but unity must be based on the acceptance of *all* of the truth of God's Word, and Baptists can never enter into union with those who teach false doctrines.

Our attitude is not one of arrogance, but God clearly sets forth in Scripture that we must not enter into union with error. It is only in this light and in this spirit that Baptists can maintain a pure witness and testimony to the world.

IX Financing God's Church

God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:40). He has always worked by plans. He had a plan when He made the universe; He had a plan for the making of man and the establishing of the human family on earth; He had a plan for salvation and a plan for the work of His church. It

would seem strange indeed if God should have a plan for everything else, and yet left no plan for the financing of His church.

God's plan never authorized churches to use worldly schemes to raise money for the support of His work. Such practices as church-sponsored sales, dinners, raffles, bazaars, garage sales, chili suppers, ice cream suppers, bingo, etc. to raise money is certainly not God's plan. There is no such system found in the Bible as high pressure campaigns, nor did God intend for His churches to become beggars, going out into the world to beg for funds. Such schemes and practices are a disgrace to the church and certainly are not pleasing to the Lord.

God has given us only one plan for financing His churches and that is by the tithes and offerings of His people. Tithing may be a strange word to some, but it is a Bible word. The tithe is the tenth, meaning that God's people are to bring a tenth of their incomes to the Lord for His work. It is the practice today for deductions to be made from the income for most people before they receive their pay check. Let us remember that your salary or income is the total or gross amount you make *before the deductions are made*, and the tenth or tithe should be paid on the gross amount. Offerings are the amounts that are given over and above the tithe. This is the plan that God teaches all through His Word and it is the only Scriptural plan of church finance.

The key verse on New Testament church finance is found in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 which reads thus:

“Do you not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Paul here refers us back to Numbers 18:21-28 which describes for us the manner in which the temple worship and the Priests and Levites were supported through the tithes and offerings of the people. God commanded all the people to bring their tithes and offerings to Him and these were used for the support of the Lord's work. Paul's next words are *even so*, which means *in the same manner*. So Paul says that the work of a New Testament church is to be supported in the same way that the temple was supported, that is by the tithes and offerings of the people. Even as all the people back there were to bring their tithes and offerings unto the Lord, so are we today.

Other passages which clearly teach that this is God's plan for each one of us, are as follows:

I. Tithing Before the Law of Moses.

Genesis 14:18-20 reads, “And he gave him tithes of all.” In this passage we have the record of Abraham paying the tithe unto Melchizedek, the priest of God. Some claim that tithing was just a part of the Mosaic Law, but in this passage, we see tithing being practiced some four hundred years before the Law. Abraham had been taught by the Lord to tithe, either directly or through others who had previously been taught by Him.

Genesis 28:22 reads, “Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tithe unto thee.” This is a promise to the Lord by Jacob that he would tithe and this too was long before the Law of Moses.

II. Tithing Under the Law.

1. The tithe was incorporated into the Law as seen in the following passages:

“The tithe is the Lord's. It is holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:30). Certainly if the tithe belonged to the Lord then, it belongs to the Lord now. Also, if it was holy unto Him then, it is holy unto Him now.

Numbers 18:24, 26, 28. These three verses teach us that the means of supporting the priests and the worship was to be by the tithe. The priests themselves were also required to tithe as were the Levites (Heb. 7:9).

2. Tithing was practiced under the law: 2 Chr. 31:5-6, 12; Neh. 10:37-38.

3. Tithing for the support of God's houses of worship. When the Tabernacle of the Lord was established, tithes were given to support it (Num. 18:23-24). When the temple replaced the tabernacle, tithes were given in support of it. It was called the storehouse. This is what is called storehouse tithing.

4. Those who failed to tithe were condemned by the Lord of being guilty of sin. Note the following Scriptures: In Amos 4:4 the people were charged with failing to tithe. In Malachi 3:8-9 those who failed to pay their tithe were called God-robbers. In the next two verses God challenged the people to try tithing and promised the Lord's blessings for it.

III. Tithing In the New Testament.

In the New Testament we no longer have the temple; it has been replaced by the church. Even though this has taken place, God's plan for financing His work has not changed. One tenth of the income of a Christian is to be given to the Lord by bringing it to the storehouse, the church, every Lord's Day.

Three passages of Scripture need to be noted. These are: Matthew 21:23 and 23:23 along with Malachi 3:1-4. The passage in Malachi contains a prophecy predicting

that the Lord would come and teach the people how to give righteously and acceptably. This prophecy is then followed by the charge that they have robbed God in failing to give their tithe. Matthew 21:23 and 23:23 is the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Lord teaches them in these passages that if their giving is to be acceptable they must tithe and also keep the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. In other words, just giving the tithe is not sufficient, there must be right living also.

In Matthew 23:23 the Scripture says “ye ought” to tithe. If the Lord says “ye ought” to tithe, who are we to say “ye ought not?”

Compare 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 with Numbers 18:24. Paul teaches us that the work of the church and the ministry should be supported in the same manner that worship was supported in the Old Testament, that is by tithes and offerings.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we find clearly taught proportionate giving, “as God hath prospered you.” The only proportion found in the Bible is the tenth or the tithe.

In Hebrews 7:1-8 we have another passage dealing with the subject. Verse 8 says, “And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” The “men that die” refers to the Levitical or Mosaic priests. The “he” refers to Christ as a fulfillment of the priesthood of Melchizedek. As the people paid tithes to the Levitical priests, so now they pay tithes to Christ as the greater priest. Tithes and offerings are paid to Him today through His church. Storehouse tithing is still to be practiced today.

The above passages show clearly that God’s plan of church finance is for His people to bring His tithes to His house for His work. Everyone who has an income, no matter how small it may be, is expected by God to tithe. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “Upon the first day of the week let *every one of you* lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.” With God it is everyone.

It needs also to be pointed out that the tithe must be brought to God’s storehouse. God’s storehouse today is His church. You have no right to use God’s tithe in any way you want or to send or give God’s tithe to anybody, no matter how worthy the work they may be doing.

It is not proper to give the tithe to a television or radio evangelist, a Bible college, magazine, newspaper, or even to a friend in need. You have no right to buy something and donate it to the church using your tithe. In the New Testament, everything that was done with money was done through the church. When a special offering was to be taken for needy Christians in Jerusalem

it was brought to the church and laid up in store until it could be taken to help those in trouble (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

Notice how the church is called the storehouse just like the temple before it. The money was to be brought to the church and laid up “in store.” This is God’s built-in plan for the support of His work both in the Old Testament and today.

The tithe properly belongs in the church (storehouse) where you are a member. If the church where you hold your membership is not worthy of your tithe, it is not worthy of your membership either, and there may be occasions when it is better to have your membership in a church in another city and to put your tithe there, than to have your membership in a church that supports liberalism or modernism. God holds every Christian responsible for what he supports, and your responsibility does not cease after it has been given to your church. If your church supports modernism or liberalism in any fashion, then God will hold you responsible for its support. Read our book “**The Unequal Yoke**” published by The Challenge Press which discusses Christians supporting modernism and liberalism with their money.

IV. Summary.

This plan of church finance would meet all of the financial needs of a church if every member would tithe. This would make possible the payments of our debts, a greater expansion of all phases of our local church work, and at the same time provide far more money for missions. If every Christian would join one of God’s New Testament churches and tithe to it, we would not see the financial difficulties that plague so many churches today. The great blessings on the members for their faithfulness as stewards of the Lord would be immeasurable.

We need the church if we are to tithe to it. It is wrong to hold back that which God says is His. He says that the tithe is His, and to keep it back is to rob *Him* (Mal. 3:8-10). It is wrong to be saved and not belong to a good church where you can bring your tithes into the storehouse as God desires. We need the church in order to be able to give correctly. From all this, one can see how God’s plan for a new Christian from the very first, involves the church. We need it to be baptized, to observe the Lord’s Supper, and to properly give to the Lord. God’s way is the best way. Let every member resolve now not only to live right, but also to give right.

A person from a foreign country visiting with a friend in this country noticed his friend placing an offering in the offering plate at church. He asked, “Do you have to pay to go to church?”

“No,” was the reply, “but I give 10% of my income

to the church for God's work.

Sometime later, after eating a meal at a restaurant, the visitor also saw his friend placing money at his plate and asked about it. He was told, "it is customary to leave a 15% tip for the waitress."

The visitor then said, "Oh, then you think more of her service than you do of God's!"

Do you tip the waitress more than you give to God?

