

Arguments presented by various writers for transfer of authority – succession & perpetuity of the church in the Scriptures.

“No Succession – No Perpetuity,” by Bro. Curtis Pugh, Berea Baptist Banner, Feb. 5, 1999

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According to one view, two or more Scripturally baptized believers can merely “covenant together” without benefit of connection with (“authority” from) a previously existing Church. Having thus “covenanted together,” they are, they say, a true Church - a “Baptist Church.” Now Paul never, never operated in this way! Nobody ever learned from Paul’s writings or from his behavior to operate in this fashion! To operate in this way is to fail to heed the inspired instruction: “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do....” They never, never, never saw Paul operate this way! He was (1) a man, (2) a baptized man, (3) an ordained-set-apart-man, (4) a member in good standing of a previously existing Church. He was sent out of a real Church to do the work the Holy Ghost had called him to do! (See Acts 13:1-4). He organized Churches, having this connection or “authority” from the Church of which he was a member.

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What about those Churches which were established when the Jerusalem Church was scattered due to persecution? (See Acts 8:1-4). Does not their existence prove the spiritual kinship theory? Not at all! Notice that we are not told how these Churches were established! This in itself is not in favor of the new position advocated by those who maintain that two or more can “covenant together” and form themselves into a Church. The argument

from silence is no argument at all! It is as much an argument in favor of succession as it is any other view. Secondly, we certainly do not have any indication that there was a deviation here from the established pattern of the New Testament!

Therefore we are not at liberty to abandon that pattern in favor of the newer views. More importantly, a careful study of the facts of the situation will provide insights which support the "chain linked" succession view. Acts 8:1 reads as follows: **"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."** The facts are that there was only one Church in existence and that all the members of that Church except the apostles were scattered! The spontaneous-combustion - theorist theorizes that true Churches just "sprang up" (a Protestant idea) where two or more of these baptized believers "covenanted together" (scripture for such a thing?) in various locations in Judea and Samaria. His logic goes something like this: he correctly points out that the apostles were not scattered (major premise). He wrongly postulates that there were no ordained men with authority (Church connection) who could have organized these scattered disciples into true Churches of Christ (minor premise). So, he wrongly concludes, these baptized disciples must have just gotten together and formed themselves into churches: therefore it is proper for two or more baptized believers to "covenant together" and thus form themselves into a Church. Because his second premise is wrong his conclusion is fatally flawed.

Although the "spontaneous combustion theorists" lack definite information and certainly have no pattern for baptized believers "covenanting together" and forming themselves into a Church, they conclude that this "must" have been the case and is therefore right. Hogwash! They have ignored the fact that the membership of the Jerusalem Church included sixty-nine or seventy men hand-picked by the Lord Jesus Christ and sent out

to preach by Him during His earthly ministry! (The numerical uncertainty depends on whether or not Mathias was one of the seventy.) You cannot ask for better ordination than being "set apart" by the Lord Himself! These "seventy" were (1) men, (2) baptized men, (3) ordained men, (4) men who were members in good standing with a previously existing Church! Most agree that these "seventy" were the "elders" mentioned in other places in Acts. There is nothing that requires us to conclude that the Churches formed by the scattered disciples were organized independently of ordained preachers who were members of a previously existing Church. Only someone with an axe to grind will insist that such was the case. The fact is, among these scattered disciples were preachers, ordained men - members in the Jerusalem Church - who were able to organize Churches consistent in every way with the "linked chain" view of succession. That "linked chain" view is, that organization of a true Church properly requires authority from a previously existing Church.