

THE PERPETUITY OF TRUE CHURCHES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

by Wayne Camp

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In this message I will confine myself to the last clause of this text that I have read. **"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** Of course, any who take the time to analyze this verse will know that "it" refers to the church which Jesus would and will continue to come up as this age continues.

I assume now would be as good a time as any to make some disclaimers about the matter of chain-link succession and my position. I have declared the perpetuity of true Baptist churches throughout the 44 years that I have been preaching. I have never wavered from that glorious biblical doctrine.

I believe that during his personal ministry our Lord established a local, visible church. I believe that Christ gave to that church and its successors the infallible promise of a perpetual existence. "*Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Mat. 16:18).! hold with firm conviction that the promise of Jesus has not failed and that the gates of hell have not prevailed. Therefore, I can firmly declare that there has never been a time in history since the origin of that first local, visible congregation when there has not been a true New Testament Church in existence.

In this message I want to consider first ***What The Scriptures Teach On Church Perpetuity***. I then want to consider ***What the Prominent Baptist Historians Say on Church Perpetuity Versus Chain-Link Succession***. Finally,

I want to show ***What Our Forefathers and Their Enemies Declared That Proves the Perpetuity of True Baptist Churches.***

Before I begin to deal with these three points let me say emphatically that if I could not produce one historical statement that supported our claim to the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches, I would still believe in that perpetuity because it is taught in God's word. That is not blind faith. That is established in the word of God. That is where we will begin. Baptists are a people of the Book and first and foremost we want to know what it says on this subject.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ON CHURCH PERPETUITY

The promise of Jesus assures the perpetuity of his churches. Let us consider the promise found in our text. Matthew 16:18 *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The builder of the church assures that it will be perpetuated. All his counsels shall stand and they will stand forever. Psalm 33:11 *The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

He will do all his pleasure. Isaiah 46:10 *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* That which he has purposed cannot be altered by men or angels in any way. Ecclesiastes 3:14 *I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.* The builder of the church is the God-man, Christ Jesus and he has built the church to endure through all ages world without end, as we will see in a moment.

The foundation upon which the church is being domed up assures its perpetuity. That foundation stone is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4 *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.* Jesus is the chief cornerstone of his churches. Ephesians 2:20-21

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

There are those who claim that their church is built on the Apostle Peter and of their foundation I can safely say, Deuteronomy 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

There are some who look to Martin Luther as their founder and foundation and I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

There are others who look to John Wesley as their founder and foundation and I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

Let men start their churches and name their founders and set forth their foundations and whatever they may be, I say of them, For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

The promise that the gates of hell will never prevail assures perpetuity of the Lord's true churches. Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, has promised, rather, has unequivocally declared that the gates of hell cannot prevail against his churches. They may assail but they cannot prevail. Matthew 16:18 *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The instructions concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper assures perpetuity. It is evident from the instructions concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper that it is to be observed until Christ comes again. 1 Corinthians 11:26 *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* If you believe the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance then, in the light of the verse just read, you should have no trouble believing in church perpetuity.

It seems obvious that the institution to which the supper was delivered is a perpetual institution and there are only two God-established institutions that have persevered since their origin—the family and the church—unless you want to call the nation of Israel an institution.

The Lord's Supper was not given to the *nation of Israel* to observe. That is certain for that nation was in unbelief for the most part when the Supper was instituted.

The Lord's Supper was not given to *the family* to observe. If the Supper had been given to the family you would have the Lord's Supper being observed by many ungodly families.

The obvious conclusion is that the Lord's Supper was given to his churches to observe and show his death until he comes again. 1 Corinthians 11:26 *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Commenting on this expression "*till he come*" John Gill wrote, "... 'till he come'; which shows the continuance of this ordinance, which is to last till Christ's second coming, where the carnal ordinances of the former dispensation were shaken and removed; and also the continuance of Gospel ministers to the end of the world, to administer it, and of churches to whom it is to be administered: this assures of the certainty of Christ's second coming; as it leads back to his coming in the flesh, suffering and dying in our stead, and thereby obtaining redemption for us; it leads forward to expect and believe he will come again, to put us into the full possession of the salvation he is the author of; when there will be no more occasion for this ordinance, nor any other, but all will cease."

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be composed of born-again, baptized believers and the whole analogy of faith set forth in the New Testament points to the church as the institution to which the keeping of the supper could be entrusted till Jesus comes again. His true churches have been showing forth his death in this supper for

nigh on to 2000 years and will be preserved to do so until he comes in the clouds of glory to receive his saints unto himself.

Consider also the great commission with its promise of age-long duration of the organization to which it was given. To whomever, and to whatever institution the great commission was given there was with it the assurance of endurance to the end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Most, but not all Baptists, hold that the great commission was given to the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. I plead guilty to holding that position myself. In this commission Jesus Christ made a promise. Matthew 28:20 *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Commenting on Mat. 28:20 John Gill wrote, "... not that the apostles should live to the end of it; but that whereas Christ would have a church and people to the end of the world, and the Gospel and the ordinances of it should be administered so long, and there should be Gospel ministers till that time; Christ's sense is, that he would grant his presence to them, his immediate disciples, and to all that should succeed them in future generations, to the end of time."

Commenting on Mat. 28:20 Matthew Henry wrote, "There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, that day, that hour, they were undone." Henry says again, "They shall have his perpetual presence, even to *the end of the world.*"

The plan that the Lord has for his church assures its perpetuity. The Lord does have a plan for his church and his plan and purpose will be fulfilled. Ephesians 5:23,27 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Christ is the head of his church and will not allow it to perish from the earth. Christ is the Saviour of the church and it would be a reflection on his *saviourship* if the church were to perish from the earth. Christ plans to present the church to himself one day without spot, wrinkle or any such thing and he can only do that if he perpetuates his churches on earth.

That God is to be glorified in his churches throughout all ages, even eternally proves the perpetuity of his churches. Christ established his church for an eternal existence. It is to bring him glory now and throughout all eternity. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

As I said before, if I could produce no historical statements that prove perpetuity, I would believe it on the grounds of these Scriptures. But, we shall see later that history does verify that what the Scriptures assured would happen, did happen, and is happening.

WHAT PROMINENT BAPTIST HISTORIANS SAY ON CHURCH PERPETUITY VERSUS CHAIN-LINK SUCCESSION

In his book, *Baptist Succession*, D. B. Ray has a chapter called "*The Nature of Succession*". In that chapter he clearly shows that when Baptists of his day spoke of succession of churches, they did not have in mind a linked-chain succession such as many hold today. They believed in what I call *Perpetuity*.

Of Succession, Ray wrote, "But while some agree that the Baptist succession does exist, or that a succession of Baptists has continued from the time of Christ to the present, yet they, at the same time deny that the succession can be proved. This is wholly inconsistent: for no one has the right to believe that which can not be proved. There can be no intelligent faith without evidence. If we have no evidence to prove a succession, it is out of the question to affirm that we believe in the existence of such succession." (Baptist Succession, D. B. Ray, P. 85).

It is not my purpose to try to prove a linked-chain succession in this message. Those who claim to believe in a linked-chain succession perpetuated by church vote by church vote, admit they cannot prove their linked-chain all the way back to Christ. Does anyone have a right to believe what he cannot prove? Since the bible is silent on a linked-chain succession, and a linked-chain succession such as is proclaimed and promulgated by many cannot be proved from history, it must be accepted upon *blind* faith.

The Bible assures perpetuity of the Lord's churches and history proves the perpetuity of the Lord's churches but the Bible does not promise a linked-chain succession of churches and history does not prove it.

Dr. I. K. Cross is a student and teacher of church history. He wrote a booklet called *Spotlight on Landmarkism* in which he writes, "Opponents of Landmarkism speak much of a 'Linked-chain' succession of churches and propose to pin it on 'Landmark' Baptist churches. This is defined as meaning that every church, in order to establish its validity, must be able to trace its individual history back to the first church in Jerusalem. Let me say at once that I do not know of a reputable "Landmark" Baptist student of church history who claims that every congregation must trace its individual history link by link back to Christ and the apostles. If this were true there would be few, if any, churches that could validate themselves. This is not the claim of true Baptist church perpetuity" (pp. 18,19).

Bro. Buel H. Kazee is well known to Sovereign Grace Baptists. His book, *The Church and The Ordinances* is widely read and recommended. In this book, Bro.

Kazee writes, "To some of us, the course of history clear back to the apostles reveals groups of people all along the way who contended 'for the faith once delivered to the saints:' *whether or not our baptism is successive all the way back, no one can prove* " (p. 98). He adds: "On the other hand, no one can prove that such succession does not exist." A little later he writes: "One thing we can be sure of, there has been made available enough reliable historical proof about the people called Baptists to identify them in their beliefs with some religious groups in every age back to the apostles." Again he wrote, "*While history does not make out an ironclad case for successive Baptism, it does give a good case for the perpetuity of churches which can be identified with the kind of church specifically recognized as a church in the New Testament*" (P. 99). (Emp. in these two statements mine, RWC).

Let us consider this statement of J. W. Porter, recorded in *The Baptist Examiner*. "Our contention is not for apostolic succession, or church succession, but for the perpetuity of Baptist churches, from the organization of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem to the present time, and to the end of all time." (J. W. Porter *The Baptist Examiner*, March 9, 1957, P. 1).

In his New Directory of Baptist Churches, Dr. E. T. Hiscox discusses and defines what Baptists have historically held on the matter of church perpetuity. Of perpetuity, he wrote, "This has reference, not to a continuance of official administration... but to visible and corporate church life. And strange to say, some Baptists have been courageous enough, and indiscrete enough to assert that an unbroken succession of visible, organized congregations of believers similar to their own, and therefore substantially like the primitive churches, can be proven to have existed from the apostles until now."

Bro. Jarrel Huffman, writing on the perpetuity of Baptist churches wrote, "John T. Christian, in his two-volume set entitled, *The History of the Baptists*, ably defends church perpetuity. He says, 'The first church was organized by Jesus and the apostles; and after the form of this one all other churches should be modeled. The churches so organized are to continue in the world until the

kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdom of our Lord, even Christ. Prophecy was full of the enduring character of the kingdom of Christ (Daniel 2:44,45). Jesus maintained a like view of his church and extended the promise to all the ages. He said, *'Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'* (Matt. 16:18)."

Bro. Huffman writes again, "J. B. Moody, writing in his masterful book, *My Church*, defends Baptist Church Perpetuity. In his address, Moody categorizes the subject under these headings: '(1) Church Perpetuity is Scriptural; (2) Church Perpetuity is Reasonable; (3) Church Perpetuity is Credible; (4) Church Perpetuity is Historical.' See pp. 132-325." Ford, all believers in Baptist 'Church Succession' fully agree."

That many historians, when discussing the succession and perpetuity of Baptist churches did not have in mind a formal, church vote by church vote linked-chain succession is evident by reading their books. The following statement by Bro. Huffman reinforces that position. He wrote, "In summation, let the following be said about CHURCH PERPETUITY:

(1) Perpetuity is guaranteed by Jesus Himself (Matthew 16:18). If no historical records were available, the promise of Jesus would be sufficient; however, volumes are in print which support this forceful declaration by Jesus. Books both by Baptists and non-Baptists prove a definite SUCCESSION OF CHURCHES from the time of Christ to the present;

(2) Perpetuity regards the ORGANIZATION THAT JESUS BUILT; individual churches can and do apostatize, but some, in all ages, have remained true to the pattern that Jesus established; (3) Chain-link succession on paper cannot be proved, but this fact does not discount SCRIPTURAL SUCCESSION. Enemies of truth destroyed many of the books of Baptists, but enough information, given by the enemies themselves, proves that a PEOPLE DID EXIST IN ALL AGES SINCE CHRIST, under various names, who perpetuated truth; (4) True succession and perpetuity are valid because God has

seen fit to perpetuate truth in all ages since Christ. This has been done in spite of the attempts of enemies to destroy truth; (5) The KIND OF CHURCH that Jesus built is found in all ages, even to the present. This is not proved by "name" alone, but by DOCTRINE. That TRUE BAPTIST CHURCHES, under a variety of names, have existed in every age since Christ is an undeniable fact to the unbiased historian. Statements are etched in stone which support this allegation—by Campbell, Luther, Hosius, and a host of other non-Baptist historians."

W. A. Jarrel, another renowned Baptist historian wrote, "The scholarly S. H. Ford, LL.D., says: 'Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day... The true and defensible doctrine is, that baptized believers have existed in every age since John baptized in Jordan, and have met as a baptized congregation in covenant, and fellowship where an opportunity permitted.' To this explanation of Church Succession by Drs. Graves and On page two Dr. Jarrel adds: "Every Baptist Church being, in organization, a church complete in itself and in no way organically connected with any other church, such a thing as one church succeeding another, as the second link of a chain is added to and succeeds the first, or, as one Romish or Episcopal Church succeeds another, is utterly foreign to and incompatible with Baptist Church polity. Therefore, the talk about every link jingling in the succession chain from the banks of the Jordan to the present,' is ignorance or dust-throwing."

Bro. Forrest Keener, in an article on church perpetuity had this to say about a linked-chain succession. "Secondly, there is the approach of Neo-Landmarkism, which seeks to prove the perpetuity of the Lord's church by a pedigree, preserved through human history. While history will surely give witness to the perpetuity of the Lord's church, the pedigree route tends to discredit it rather than to corroborate it. While there are good records, which point in the direction of church lineage, it is likely, if not certain, that no one today has a church by church, step by step, pedigree. I have never seen one, even set fourth, at this point in my ministry, though some mistakenly assume that is what they have. Even if such a record could be offered, and if it were

accurate, it could not be proved. Thus, this approach to the teaching of perpetuity harms the cause rather than to help it."

Dr. John T. Christian was professor of Christian History in Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana, and is another well-known scholar on Baptist history. Of the matter of chain-link succession Bro. Christian wrote, "The footsteps of the Baptists of the ages can more easily be traced by blood than by baptism. It is a lineage of suffering rather than a succession of bishops; a martyrdom for principle, rather than a dogmatic decree of councils; a golden chord of love, rather than an iron chain of succession, which, while attempting to rattle its links back to the apostles, has been of more service in chaining some protesting Baptists to the stake than in proclaiming the truth of the New Testament" (*A History of The Baptists, Vol. I, p. 22*).

Dr. Thomas Armitage, another well-known recorder of Baptist history, wrote, "The very attempt to trace an unbroken line of persons duly baptized upon their personal trust in Christ, or of ministers ordained by lineal descent from the apostles, or of churches organized upon these principles, and adhering to the New Testament in all things, is in itself an attempt to erect a bulwark of error" (*History of The Baptists, p. 2*).

Robert Robinson is quoted by Dr. Armitage as having written, "Uninterrupted succession is a specious lure, a snare set by sophistry, into which all parties have fallen and it has happened to spiritual genealogists as it has to others who have traced natural descents, both have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms. The doctrine is necessary only to such churches as regulate their faith and practice by traditions, and for their use it was first invented" (*Ibid, p.2*)

Let me take just a moment to prove the validity of Robinson's charge. Consider this quote from an alleged chain-link succession of Baptist Churches that is used to show their heritage by several Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches. "From 1751 on, the Opekon Baptist Church was connected with the Philadelphia Baptist Association of churches and was officially received into the association October 8, 1754. (Minutes of

the Philadelphia Baptist Association From 1707 to 1807 p. 71) Elder Abel Morgan was one of the messengers at the annual meeting when Opekon was received into the Association. Morgan came from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Newcastle county, Delaware (p. 15) which was organized with 16 members at Pembrokehire, South Wales in June of 1701 and sailed together to Philadelphia arriving September 8,1701."

In paragraph eight, the paragraph just quoted, we are told that Elder Abel Morgan was one of the messengers at the annual meeting when the Opekon Baptist Church was officially received into the Philadelphia Association. Note that *not one shred of evidence* is given that Elder Abel Morgan had any connection with the Opekon church other than he was present and a messenger when she was received. Morgan, we are told, came from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Newcastle County, Delaware, which was organized in Pembrokehire, South Wales. Is chain-link succession established here? Can chain-link succession be maintained by some messenger being present when a church is received into the Association because the messenger was a member of a church that came to the US from South Wales? There is absolutely no chain-link succession maintained or proven here. And, by the way, since when do independent Landmark Baptist Churches appeal to messenger meetings of associations to establish links in their chain of succession?

Those who use this to rattle the links of their chains all the way back to Christ and the Apostles have done exactly what Robinson said. They "have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms."

This alleged chain that goes all the way to the apostles and Christ might be of some help in establishing church perpetuity but it is a witness against chain-link succession. If time permitted, I would like to take this entire "chain" and show the counterfeit links in it, some covering 400 years.

Another eminent Baptist historian is David Benedict. His great work, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, is a standard for any good church

history library. In that book he makes the following statement concerning church succession, "I shall not attempt to trace a continuous line of churches, as we can for a few centuries past in Europe and America. This is a kind of succession to which we have never laid claim; and, of course, we make no effort to prove it. We place no kind of reliance on this sort of testimony to establish the soundness of our faith or the validity of our administrations" (*A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, David Benedict, P. 51).

It is interesting that when this book was written in 1848, Baptists, according to Benedict, placed no reliance on church succession in the sense of a chain-link succession. Benedict did go on to show church perpetuity but said Baptists placed no kind of reliance on a linked-chain succession. Yet, today, there are those who are so adamant about succession that they charge with spiritual adultery any who do not hold linked-chain succession. Here is the problem for these people. They can in no way prove their claims from Scripture or history. They are a law unto themselves. They try to do that which is right in their own eyes because they are without inspired prophet or apostle to back up their claims.

Bro. W. R. Downing has done intensive research into church history. In his book on the church he makes the following statement, "It is one thing to prove historically that New Testament churches have existed in every age since the apostles; it is altogether different to seek to prove a linked succession of such churches! This is what distinguishes historic Baptists from those who are ardent 'Landmarkers'."

I like what Kenneth Good says on this matter of church perpetuity. "The authenticity of a Baptist church depends, not upon its ability to trace an unbroken line of connection to the apostles, but rather in its ability to demonstrate that it presently possesses the doctrines, principles, and practices which the apostles had and which are evident on the pages of the New Testament. If a church were forced to demonstrate its 'kosher' pedigree in order to be recognized, this would require that organized assembly to rely upon the word of man rather than the Word of God, since the inspired genealogical

tables came to the object of their existence with the birth of Christ and were not continued beyond that."

Harley Schrock wrote, "A true church is a church which is true to the teachings of the Word of God. No pedigree or succession of ancestors can make a church a true church."

Wendell Holmes Rone wrote the following very forceful and helpful statement. "No amount of rattling of historical chains, worshipping of tradition, or loud and long claims to apostolicity can take the place of a real identity with and conformity to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament... It is only as Baptists remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word that they can honestly claim apostolicity."

Bro. Roy Mason was a long-time writer for the Baptist examiner. He wrote, "Baptists do not claim perpetuity upon the basis of a successive and unbroken chain of baptisms. I do not believe that it is necessary to have a linked succession of baptisms in order to have valid baptism. If such were the case, any of us would be hard pressed to establish that link, unbroken, back to apostolic times."

Many others could be quoted but I close this point with a quote from Bro. J. M. Holiday who declared, "We are not particularly interested in tracing an unbroken church succession from Christ to the present day, but rather in identifying the church to which Christ promised an eternal existence through the centuries to the present time, by what ever name it may have been identified" (*The Baptist Heritage*, p. 22).

It is evident from these quotes and others that I have not introduced that Baptists historically have **not held** to a formal linked-chain succession of churches; they have held to the perpetuity of Baptist Churches from the time of our origin during the ministry of Jesus Christ to the present day and world without end. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE DECLARED THAT PROVES THE PERPETUITY OF TRUE BAPTIST CHURCHES

There is no testimony of men that is more forceful or weighty than the testimony of an enemy. Deuteronomy 32:31 *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.*

Professor Bannerman, a Presbyterian scholar and no friend of Baptists, affirms the perpetuity of the church, though he did not have in mind True Baptist churches. He wrote, "There are statements in Scripture that seem distinctly to intimate that the Christian Church shall always continue to exist in the world, notwithstanding that all is earthly and hostile around her. He has founded it upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'... That Christ will be with His church alway, even unto the end of the world, ministering the needful support and grace for its permanent existence on earth, we cannot doubt. . . He has left us a promise that the powers of evil shall never finally prevail against or sweep it entirely away; and as belonging essentially to the due administration of that kingdom, and forming a part of it, the outward dispensation of the ordinances and worship in the church shall never fail... The ministry, embracing an order of men to discharge its duties, is a standing institution in the Christian Church since its first establishment until now, and Leslie, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, has fairly and justly appealed to the uninterrupted existence of the office as the standing and permanent monument of the great primary facts of Christianity, and, therefore, as demonstrative evidence of its truth" (Quoted in *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, by W. A. Jarrel, P. 23, taken from *The Church of Christ*, by Bannerman, Vol. 1, Pp. 51, 333, 439).

I call to testify to the perpetuity of true Baptist churches Drs. Ypeij and Dermout. Dr. A. Ypeij was Professor of Theology at Graningen. Along with Dr. J.J. Dermout, Chaplain to the king of Holland, he received a royal commission to prepare a history of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1819. This history, prepared with the sanction of the king of Holland, gives good testimony to the ancient origin and perpetual existence of true Baptist Churches.

These learned men of Holland wrote, "We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times, Mennonites, were the original Waldenses... *On this account, the Baptists may be considered as the only religious community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages.* (Emp. Mine, RWC) The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their denomination is the most ancient." (*A History of the Baptists*, by John T. Christian, Vol. 1, Pp. 95-96).

As a result of this declaration by these prominent men, the Baptists were offered the patronage of the State of Holland, but, in keeping with their principle of the separation of church and state, they declined this offer. An outstanding secular historian in his day, Dr. John Clarke Ridpath of Du Paw University, wrote to Dr. W. A. Jarrel, saying, "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist *church* as far back as A. D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists" (*Baptist Church Perpetuity*, by W. A. Jarrel, P. 59).

Alexander Campbell, founder of the groups now variously known as "The Churches of Christ," "The Disciples," "The Christian Churches," etc., in his debate with MacCalla, a Presbyterian, made this statement in support of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. He declared, "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 has had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced." (*MacCalla-Campbell Debate on Christian Baptism*, Pp. 378-379).

In his book called *Christian Baptism*, Alexander Campbell made another statement that proves the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. He wrote, "The Baptist

denomination in all ages and in all countries has been, as a body, the constant asserters of the rights of man and the liberty of conscience. They have often been persecuted by Pedobaptists; but they never politically persecuted, though they have had it in their power" (A. Campbell, *Christian Baptism*, p. 409, editions of 1851 and 1953). Campbell, though he had been run out of Baptist ranks for his heresy of baptismal regeneration, still dedicated *Christian Baptism* to the Baptists because they, according to him, have kept the ordinances of the gospel pure through the ages. It was my privilege to handle and read some of one of the first editions of this book and to see the dedication of the book.

In 1883, *A History of All Religions of the World* was published by Gay Brothers and Company, New York. It bore the seal of the Randolph Macon College at Ashland, Virginia. Concerning the antiquity of the Welsh Baptists I quote from this history as quoted by Bro. J. M. Holiday in *The Baptist Heritage*, P. 18. Here is what the writer had to say of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. "From England we pass to Wales. Baptists here lay claim to great antiquity, affirming that they date back to the first century, and holding a tradition that the Apostle Paul visited their mountains, preached among them two years, founding churches which Claudia, a Welsh princess, being at Rome, was converted under the ministry of Paul, and returning in the year 68 brought many of her people to the knowledge of Jesus, inducing them to abandon idolatry. Mosheim, the learned German Church Historian, says of the early Welsh Churches, that 'No persons were admitted to baptism but such as had been previously instructed in the principle points of Christianity and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions and upright intentions.' It is conceded that during the dark ages the Welsh churches remained pure and never bowed the knee in submission to the Papal power. The writer has been informed by an eminent Welsh clergyman that there is one Baptist Church in Glamorganshire claiming to have evidence of its existence for 800 years."

Stanislaus Hosius was an official historian for the Roman Catholic Church. He was a Catholic Cardinal and the presiding officer at the Council of Trent. Concerning our forefathers, the Anabaptists, he wrote, "If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, the opinions and

persuasions of no sect can be truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists, whence there have been none for these twelve hundred years past that have been more grievously punished, or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people. (A *History of the Baptists*, John T. Christian, Pp. 85-86).

The most forceful statement made by Hosius is one in which he dates the Baptists back to 354-356 AD. He wrote, "Were it not that the Anabaptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years they would swarm in greater numbers than all the reformers." (*Hosius, Letters, Apud Opera*, Pp. 112-113, quoted by Clarence Walker in the Introduction, *The Trail of Blood*, P. 3).

MOSHEIM, the well-known Lutheran historian, said in 1755, "Before the rise of Luther and Calvin there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the Dutch Baptists" (Cent. 16, Part 2, Sec. 2, Chap. 3).

In the *Edinburg Cyclopedia* that was published by the Presbyterians, it is said concerning the Baptists, "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 born just fifty years after the death of the Apostle John. [RWC]).

This Presbyterian publication does three things worthy of note. (1) It identifies the Baptists with the Anabaptists. (2) It dates our origin back at least to the days of Tertullian who lived in the earliest of times in the church age. (3) It supports the contention that Baptists have enjoyed a perpetual existence from the time of our origin to the present day.

The sometimes-prejudiced Robert Barclay, a Quaker, testified to the legitimacy of our claim of the perpetuity of the Baptists. He wrote, "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." (*The Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth*, Pp. 11-12, Quoted in *The Baptist Faith and Roman Catholicism*, Wendell Holmes Rone, P. 55).

It is evident that many of our enemies and non-friends have substantiated our claim of perpetuity of the Lords churches from their origin during the earthly ministry of Christ to this present day.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude this message I am reminded of the words of the queen of Sheba after she came to visit Solomon and investigate the things she had heard of him and his great wisdom. She remarked, / *Kings 10:6-7 It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.*

I assure you, I have not told half the story of the perpetuity of true Baptist Churches. Jesus promised and assured the perpetuity of his true churches. We have seen the testimony of non-Baptists in which they have affirmed our perpetual existence from the time of Christ to the days in which they wrote. Brethren and Sisters, you can believe in this doctrine of perpetuity of True Baptist Churches because you have the evidence.

1. The Bible teaches it.

2. Jesus promised it.
3. True Baptists have proclaimed it.
4. Non-Baptists have affirmed it.
5. Satan has opposed it but everywhere a Baptist has been slain by persecutors two or more have risen up in his place to carry on the fight for truth.
6. Liberal Baptists have compromised it.
7. Extremists have injured and embarrassed it by proclaiming that which cannot be proven from Scripture or history.

But, I assure you,

1. The promise of Jesus has not failed.
2. The gates of hell have not prevailed against true Baptist Churches but they have been assailed in every century since the time of Christ.
3. Let us rejoice in Christ's kept promise and not be ashamed of it.

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