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“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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“CHAIN LINK” ECCLESIOLOGY: IS IT BIBLICAL? IS IT HISTORICALLY DEMONSTRATABLE

By Wayne Camp

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Before beginning to explore this question, let this editor set forth a positive declaration of his personal convictions on the matter of church perpetuity.

1. This editor believes that during his personal ministry our Lord established a local, visible church.

2. This editor believes 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).***

3. This editor holds that the promise of Jesus has not failed and that the gates of hell have not prevailed. Therefore, he 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.

4. It is also the conviction of this editor that it may be wise, expedient, and well, in the present circumstances, for new churches to be formed through arms that are extended by other Scriptural churches wherever possible and practical.

SOME PERTINENT QUESTIONS

It would be well to define how the terms ***chain-link succession, link-chain***

succession, and linked-chain succession are used in this article and in the neo-Landmark doctrine. It is the position of a number of brethren and churches of the Landmark Baptist persuasion that no church is a true church unless there was the vote of a “mother” church to establish it. Some go so far as to charge that any church started without the vote of a “mother” church is born out of “spiritual adultery” committed by any who had a part in the constitution of such a church.

A NOTE TO THE READER

I did not receive Bro. Joe Wilson's response to my last article ***CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURAL REQUIRMENTS FOR STARTING A TRUE CHURCH*** until it was too late to write a considered response to it and publish it in this issue. His reponse and my reply to it will be

I will show in this treatise that this is not the ***historic*** Landmark or Baptist position. It is a doctrine that cannot be sustained by Baptist History. Nor can it be sustained by Scripture. It requires the interjection and interpolation of one's own ideas upon and into Scripture to ***"find"*** the idea in Scripture. It is extra-biblical. It is yper-Landmarkism. It is neo-Landmarkism.

It would be well to consider some pertinent questions on the subject before us.

1. Can the ***"chain-link, arm to arm,"*** ecclesiology that is so strongly affirmed by some brethren be unequivocally established by Scripture? After all, the Word of God is our only, and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice!

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2. Can any prove that the churches of the New Testament voted to extend arms, establish and operate missions, and later, by a formal vote of the church, establish that mission into a church?
3. Did Paul ever serve as "Missionary pastor" of a mission whose prospective members held membership back at Antioch?
4. Did Paul, or any other missionary, ever write back to the "mother church" to get permission to baptize any candidate?

5. Is there any pastor and church in this world who can shake their chain, rattle and identify every link, church by church by church, from Jerusalem to your church, and prove irrefutably that every link was Scriptural and that in every instance there was a Scriptural "mother" church which extended an arm and granted letters and authority for the establishment of every link in your chain?
6. If you cannot establish, prove and demonstrate that every link was established properly, can you claim to be Scriptural if you hold to "chain-link" successionism. Some tell me they cannot prove these things but they accept them by faith. If you have no historical proof to support that faith, and, if you have no scripture which establishes the necessity of "chain-link" successionism, your faith is blind being based on no proof.

BAPTIST HISTORIANS AND CHAIN-LINK SUCCESSIONISM

This editor has searched through his library of church histories and was amazed at how recent the "chain-link" tradition originated. Baptist historians and ecclesiologists are, for the most part, silent on the matter. Those who deal with the subject usually admit that "chain-link" successionism cannot be proven. Not one author after whom the editor read, when defining what a Scriptural church was, gave "chain-link" succession as a requirement for a Scriptural church. Baptist historians have never tried to prove "chain-link" successionism. When Jesus promised his church that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it" he was not promising that one local congregation a perpetual existence (Mat. 16:18). Nor can one read into that promise a "chain-link" succession of Baptist churches. He was promising that there would, in every age be churches of the kind that he established. That historians can accept and prove. More than that none can prove!

Dr. I. K. Cross

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. Cross clearly declares that REPUTABLE students of Baptist history do not claim "chain-link" successionism. If "chain-link" succession is necessary for a church to be Scriptural he doubts that any could validate themselves. This editor recently heard of one strong adherent of this type of perpetuity who has a problem on his hands. He has discovered a missing link in his chain.

C. D. COLE

Bro. C. D. Cole was a strong and sound Baptist. He was an excellent writer and his books will be helpful to any student of the Word of God. Of the matter of organizing a church Bro. Cole wrote:

"Baptist churches come into being today somewhat after this manner. A group of believers in a community wish to become a church. The members in conference will make this wish known to other churches, and these churches send messengers to counsel them in accomplishing their desire. For the sake of order and recognition these messengers will inquire into their beliefs, and if it is thought wise the visitors endorse their articles of faith and recommend their constitution as an independent church. These visiting brethren do not organize the church. Since the church is to be self-governing it must of necessity and logically be self-constituted. And so those wishing to become a church enter into covenant to that

effect; and another church is born. The help from the outside is for the sake of order and fellowship and is **not absolutely essential**" (Definitions of Doctrine, Vol. III, C. D. Cole).

According to Bro. Cole the involvement of others than those going into the organization of a church "is not absolutely essential." The others are called in for the sake of "order and fellowship."

BUEL H. KAZEE

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."

"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).

Bro. Kazee declares that ***"NO ONE"*** (Emphasis mine, RWC) can prove that his baptism is successive all the way back to Christ. He also says that history does not make out an iron-clad case for successive baptism. The more one studies, the more he realizes that those who insist on "chain-link" or "arm to arm" succession are helpless when it comes to providing proof. One wonders why they continue to unchurch and disfranchise others who admit the same truth that Bro. Kazee here confesses. If there is

broken or uncertain links in your chain it makes no difference if it was 25 years ago or 1500 years ago.

In another book, *Why Baptists Cannot Unionize With Others*, Bro. Kazez wrote, "To be honest, then, and consistent with our claims, we originated with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, or we arose along with modern denominations. If the latter, then we cannot claim to be Scriptural, for the Lord had New Testament churches long before that. I do not mean that there has to be Apostolic succession. But I do insist that there must be Apostolic identity in experience, doctrine and practice. No religious group has any right to call itself a Scriptural church if it cannot identify itself with the apostles in experience, doctrine and practice."

E. T. Hiscox

In his New Directory of Baptist Churches, Dr. 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."

Again Hiscox discussed the method for constituting a New Testament Church. In his *Baptist Church Directory* he has a section on page 17 that is titled, "**Churches Constituted.**" He wrote, "When a number of Christians, members of the same or different churches, believe that their own spiritual improvement, or the religious welfare of the community so requires, they organize a new church."

"This is done by uniting in mutual covenant, to sustain the relations and obligations prescribed by the Gospel, to be governed by the laws of Christ's house, and to maintain public worship and the preaching of the Gospel. Articles of faith are usually adopted, as also a name by which

the church shall be known, and its officers elected."

Several examples of this may be found in various Baptist histories. Consider this account of the establishment of one such church. J. Davis was writing about the Rehoboth Baptist Church of Wales which was formed in AD 1668. He wrote, "Several of the members of this church went to America, and formed themselves into a church, at a place called Montgomery, Pennsylvania." He then tells of its pastors and some of its members. This is taken from *History of The Welsh Baptists*, J. Davis, AD 1835, P. 114. This book was republished by Brethren R. L. Crawford and R. E. Pound II and *The Baptist*, in 1976.). There is, in this history, the accounts of the forming of several new churches in Wales and in America. A pastor would come to an area and bring with him some other Baptists or find some already there and would gather them and they would form themselves into a Baptist Church.

This same method is set forth by William Cathcart. *The Baptist Encyclopedia* by William Cathcart, on page 1042, gives the following account of the constitution of the Sandy Creek Baptist Church, Guilford County, NC. This is a church through which a number of Sovereign Grace Baptist churches trace their history. Some of these are The Lord's Baptist Church of Tacoma, Washington, The South Park Missionary Baptist Church of Seattle, Washington, and The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky. According to some, the Sandy Creek Church had some connection with the Opeckon Baptist Church of Virginia which was formed by "certain ministers of the Philadelphia Association. The Opeckon Church was received into the Philadelphia Association with a vague connection back to the Welsh Tract Church—Elder Abel Morgan from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church of Delaware was present at the associational meeting in which the Opeckon church was received. I apologize to these churches in advance if those who consider it their commission to unchurch churches descend on you as a result of this.

Concerning the constitution of the Sandy Creek church Cathcart says, "Mr. Stearns was

ordained among the Separates; and after he had been immersed and ordained as a Baptist minister, impressed with what seemed to him the call of God to remove far to the West to perform a great work for his Master, he and a few of his members, in 1754, departed from Connecticut. He stopped on the way before he reached the home selected for him by the providence of God, Sandy Creek, Guilford Co., N. C., when, on Nov. 22, 1755, he and his companions formed a church of sixteen members" (P. 1042). If a linked-chain succession is essential to being a true church, Sandy Creek was not a true church, nor are any churches who trace their lineage through Sandy Creek.

Of the Kentucky Baptists, Cathcart wrote, "The Baptists were the pioneers of Kentucky. The first explorers of its territory were the brothers Daniel and Squire Boone. The latter was a Baptist preacher." After recounting the visits and settlement by several Baptist preachers, Cathcart says, "The first Baptist church formed in Kentucky, or in the great Mississippi Valley, was constituted of 18 members by Joseph Barnett and John Garrard, on the present site of Elizabethtown, forty miles south of Louisville, June 18, 1781. It still bears its ancient name, Severn's Valley. The second church was constituted by the same ministers, July 4, 1781. It is called Cedar Creek, and is located forty miles southeast from Louisville."

BENJAMIN MARCUS BOGARD LL.D.

Dr. Ben Bogard was recognized among his brethren as an outstanding scholar and an authority on Baptist doctrine, practice, and history. His book *The Baptist Way-book* is second only to the Bible with many older Baptists and with many Baptist churches. One chapter in the above mentioned book is titled "The Way to Organize Churches." He wrote: "The first step necessary in the organization of a new congregation or church is for as many as three baptized disciples to agree to meet 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

statedly for worship, for mutual edification and united effort for the evangelism of the world . . . The agreement to meet regularly for worship and work is commonly called a church covenant: The word 'covenant' means agreement. This covenant should be in writing, lest some misunderstand the terms. When this covenant has been entered into the church is fully organized. This covenant is the organization."

"After the organization has been perfected by the members entering into covenant with each other, the church (which is just as much a church now as it will ever be) may elect officers . . . It is not necessary, but it is customary, for a council of brethren from neighboring churches to be called to assist in the organization of new churches (pp. 69-70, 1945 ed.).

Bro. Bogard, astute Baptist scholar that he was, made no mention of the necessity of an extended arm, a chain-link connection, or a search of historical records to make sure there is no missing link. He did not even hold that a council or presbytery was necessary though he felt it might to be helpful.

W. A. JARREL, D. D.

Dr. W. A. Jarrel was a very respected writer of church history. His book, *Baptist Church Perpetuity or History* is almost a necessity for any student of Baptist History. On page one of his book Jarrel quotes J. R. Graves, LL.D., and S. H. Ford, LL.D., on the matter of church organization and the linked-chain succession idea. He writes: "The late and lamented scholar, J. R. Graves, LL.D., wrote: Wherever there are three or more baptized members of a regular Baptist church or churches covenanted together to hold and teach, and are governed by the New Testament,' etc. there is a Church of Christ, even though there was not a presbytery of ministers in a thousand miles of them to organize them into a church. There is not the slightest need of a council of presbyters to organize a Baptist church.'

"And 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 Ford, all believers in Baptist 'Church Succession' fully agree."

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."

JOHN T. CHRISTIAN, A.M., D.D., LL.D.

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).

THOMAS ARMITAGE, D.D.

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,

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) (Emp. Mine, RWC).

DAVID BENEDICT

Another eminent Baptist historian is David Benedict. In his book, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, 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 succession. Yet, today, there are those who are so adamant about succession that they charge with spiritual adultery any who do hold not 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.

W. R. DOWNING

"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'."

KENNETH GOOD

"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

"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

"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."

ROY MASON

"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."

J. W. PORTER

"It would be impossible to establish the uninterrupted succession of any given church through the years, even should such a church have a continuous succession."

W. B. JOHNSON

"Now, as far as I can understand the New Testament, I see no authority given to a church of Christ to transfer its power or authority to any other church or body of men on earth."

A. H. STRONG

"Any number of believers, therefore, may constitute themselves into a Christian Church, by adopting for their rule of faith and practice Christ's law as laid down in the New Testament, and by associating themselves together, in accordance with it, for His worship and service . . . We have no need to prove a Baptist apostolical succession. If we can derive our doctrine and practice from the New Testament, it is all we require."

J. L. WALLER

"We are no successionists. Our churches, ordinances, and ministry are all derived directly from the Scriptures and, hence, had there been no Baptist churches previous to those now in being, it would not at all affect our notions of ecclesiastical existence."

EDWARD OVERBEY

"We believe all who will pattern their church after the New Testament will be New Testament churches and we urge others to do this. Nothing stops them but themselves."

OTHERS COULD BE QUOTED

Other reputable Baptist historians could be quoted such as W. P. Harvey, D. D., who wrote, "We do not regard it necessary to prove an unbroken visible and historical continuity of New Testament churches from Christ and his apostles until now" (*Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Ben M. Bogard, p. 423). We could quote Bro. J. M. Holliday 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). From those whom the writer has quoted it is evident that the majority of Baptist writers have not held to chain-link successionism. Most, in fact, condemn the idea

as being born of popery, not New Testament teaching. Everyone of the writers quoted held to Baptist church perpetuity but denied chain-link successionism and held it to be unprovable from history or Scripture. Those who are trying to blow brethren out of the saddle of orthodoxy by their insistence on chain-link successionism need to read these historians **and their Bibles**. They need also to produce evidence that what they insist upon in others **THEY CAN PROVE IRREFUTABLY** from Scripture and history for their own baptism and their congregation. Will your church bear an investigation of its historical links? Can you prove link-chain succession for your church for at least 400 years? 1,000 years? 1,500 years? To what church in the New Testament can you trace your lineage? Can you show which church, if it is not the Jerusalem congregation, voted to start the church named in the New Testament to which you trace your church?

THE CHURCHES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

This portion of this article must not be construed by any reader to indicate that this editor has any questions about the validity of any aspect of those churches to be discussed. The questions suggested will be for those who insist on a traceable chain-link succession.

PAUL'S BAPTISM

When Paul was saved one came to him and baptized him. We know that Paul got his baptism from "a man named Ananias." (Acts 9:12). We do not know, however, where Ananias received his baptism. Was he baptized at Jerusalem? Was he baptized by the disciples which were at Damascus"? Was he baptized by some of those preachers who were scattered abroad under the persecution that followed the death of Stephen. If so, was this a Scriptural church? Who extended the arm for this work?

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

Under persecution "they that were scattered abroad" went everywhere preaching the gospel. Some went to Antioch and there established the great missionary church. **Acts 11:19-26 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but**

unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. There is no record of the Church at Jerusalem voting to extend the arm and establish the work at Antioch. Was an arm extended? How long was a mission operated before brethren at Antioch joined the church at Jerusalem so as to then be lettered out and organized into a church? If it is absolutely essential that such an order be followed, why is no instance of this order ever found in the all-sufficient Word of God?

If a linked-chain succession is absolutely essential to constitute a true church, surely God would have inspired one writer of the New Testament to record such. Surely we would be able to read where the church at Jerusalem voted to extend an arm and where it voted to establish the great missionary church at Antioch. The complete silence of Scripture on this matter is enough to satisfy any person who is not bound by tradition that a linked-chain succession is not essential. God spells out the essentials. He carefully showed Moses the pattern by which he was to erect the tabernacle. **Exodus 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.** It is my conviction that the pattern for mission work and the constitution of churches is found in the book of Acts. There is not the

slightest suggestion in all that book that a vote of a so-called "mother" is essential to establishing a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH AT COLOSSE

How did the church at Colosse get its start? Where did Epaphras, its pastor, come from? Who baptized him? Did the church have an arm from a "mother" church? Which "mother" church?

THE CHURCH AT ROME

There is not one bit of evidence that the church at Rome had an arm extended for its organization. The Catholics claim that Peter went to Rome and established the church there. ***They have as much evidence to support their claim as anyone else has who might venture a theory as to its origin.*** If chain-link succession is essential for valid baptism and valid church organization, one would be at a terrible disadvantage if his chain rattled back to Rome! Who started the church at Rome? Even if you could trace your history to the church at Rome, could you prove irrefutably which specific church voted to start that specific church?

CONCLUSION

This editor believes in the perpetuity of the Lord's churches. He believes that the promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" has been kept and that there has not been a day from the origin of that first church until now that there was not a church, or churches that were contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

On the other hand there is not one whit of evidence that this promise of Jesus included and required for its veracity a chain-link successionism that some now insist upon. ***The burden of proof is upon those who require chain-link successionism.*** When they go back into the history of one church, find what they consider to be a missing link or a faulty link, and unchurch those folk because of that link, they must be ready, willing, and able to prove that they can rattle a chain of pure churches linked together through the extension of arms all the way back to the church at Jerusalem. ***"Let him that is without a missing or faulty link among you cast the first stone"*** at those who do have

troublesome links on the way back to Jerusalem.

It is abundantly evident that true church perpetuity can be defended from both Scripture and history. It is equally evident that link-chain succession cannot be defended from either Scripture or Baptist History. I have studied church history extensively in past years. I have taught church history. Before they burned, I had a good collection of the works of reputable Baptist historians in my library. I can tell you, Dear Readers, those historians were not the proponents of the link-chain doctrine held by many today. Link-chain succession has two insurmountable problems: First, church history will not sustain the doctrine. Two, it cannot be demonstrated in Scripture. It's proponents cannot demonstrate it in their own church's historical heritage. Therefore, I repeat an offer I made ten years ago.

If there is one church out there somewhere that can show a chain-link succession that goes through churches that were scriptural in doctrine and practice that goes all the way back to Jerusalem I will be most happy to examine the evidence and if every link is validated church-to-church, arm-to-arm, and chain-link to chain-link then it will be printed in the pages of this paper regardless of how many issues it takes. Links that are four hundred years long and name no specific church don't count. Neither do links that are associational rather than local church. I am asking for church-link to church-link to church-link, church-vote to church-vote to church-vote. I am sure that all our readers will be waiting expectantly for your chain to rattle across these pages. What a glorious document that will make for your church history libraries!)

I made the offer to publish the chain-links of any church who could produce same several years ago but the offer goes unaccepted. At that time we were only mailing to a little over 200. Now, we are mailing to over 2,000 plus publishing this paper on the World Wide Web. The offer still stands. I would sincerely love to publish such a valuable document. I have seen some alleged chains published which have

associations as links. That does not establish chain-link succession as many claim must exist. I want a church-to-church, vote-to-vote, link. I have waited patiently for ten years; how much longer must I wait? Will someone be forthcoming? If not, I must conclude that such an unbroken chain cannot be proven **BIBLICALLY** or **HISTORICALLY**.

I am willing to make another offer also. If there is a church out there that holds to the link-chain succession doctrine, and believes that any church established without the vote of a "mother" church is born out of spiritual adultery, and you will send me your chain of succession, I will be happy to help you research your history to see if your lineage is pure, or if there might be an "adulteress" in your church lineage. Are you willing to let me help you research your links? Needless to say, this research will take some time, if any desire it be done. I venture to say that most linked-chain successionists don't want their linkage checked too closely. I dare say, such a research would "unchurch" every church in America, if link-chain succession is essential to being a true New Testament Church.

—Wayne Camp—

Bouquets and Brickbats

MISSOURI: I appreciate you raising the level of ecclesiastical dialogue from the "dog in heat" to the Scriptures and our faith and practice. I laughed as I read the parallel Bro Wilson was trying to make; but, saddened that the Lord's churches were equated with such a scene. I had hoped that somebody who would take on such a sacred issue as this would have had a better argument. I am sure he has learned how to be a better debater.

ILLINOIS: I've been reading my friends paper from you. I would like to receive it myself.

OKLAHOMA: I have been watching your Controversy with Brother Joe Wilson on the Church Authority issue. I have been very pleased and impressed with what you had to say. I think we are in basic agreement on the

whole issue.

TENNESSEE: I received a copy of you **GP&P** from a friend and was impressed with your article on The Promise Keepers movement. Could you please send me copies of the articles beginning from October 1, 1996.

Illinois: I have been getting your paper and I want you to know I fully agree with you on the matter of church organization. Eld. Wilson admits he has no scripture to back up his position. One wonders why he does not give up the position or claim authority to add to the Holy Scriptures. That is what he is doing when he insists something is essential while admitting he has no Scripture for that thing.

TENNESSEE: I have studied the history of Landmarkism and have always considered myself to be a True Landmark Baptist. But, what Bro. Wilson is arguing is not Old Landmarkism; it is Neo-Landmarkism. Scripture does not support him, he himself being witness of that. History does not support him either. I hope you will deal with the history of some of the key churches, such as the Sandy Creek church in North Carolina which was constituted by a group of Baptists who had settled there, according to Mr. Cathcart and others.

EDITOR'S NOTE: C. H. Spurgeon said, *"I became a Baptist through reading the New Testament ... especially in the Greek ... If I thought it wrong to be a Baptist, I should give it up, and become what I believed to be right. The particular doctrine adhered to by Baptists is that they acknowledge no authority unless it comes from the Word of God."* Bro. Joe has admitted that he has no Scripture to back up his position that one church must, in all cases, vote to start another church. Yet, he insists it must be that way. Spurgeon was right. ***"The particular doctrine adhered to by Baptists is that they acknowledge no authority unless it comes from the Word of God."*** Since Bro. Joe admits he has no Scripture for his position, Baptists must not accept his self-authenticated ("I feel," "I think," "It just seems to me,") position as authoritative.

VIRGINIA: . I am an Old Landmarker in the

sense that J. R. Graves was; I am not a Hyper-Landmarker. Graves did not strongly advocate linked-chain successionism, nor did he look upon other Baptist churches as spurious churches. He looked upon Protestant and Catholic churches as being spurious, and so do I. When we begin to demand that other Baptist churches prove their genealogy and unchurch them if they will not or cannot, we are going way beyond Scripture and Old Landmarkism as it was originally taught.

FLORIDA: I have been intending to drop you a note for some time, but have obviously failed to do so.

I have truly appreciated your "conversation" with Joe Wilson. You have far more forbearance than I could ever muster.

It is astonishing to me that a man . . . has the gall to accuse those who don't carefully adhere to his self-invented rituals of committing "spiritual adultery." While I have enjoyed your debate, I don't think that I would waste my breath on such a man . . . Brother, you and I don't agree on all points, but I do appreciate your integrity.

Keep in the fight, Brother.

OKLAHOMA: Keep up the good work on the paper. We enjoy it as always.

FLORIDA: Please send my your paper. I will enjoy reading it very much from what I have heard about it.

VIRGINIA: I have read with great interest your discussion with Brother Joe Wilson about linked-chain successionism. In _____, I issued a challenge to the doctrine of linked-chain successionism through a typewritten newsletter that I published at that time called, "_____". For this, I was nearly crucified by men who hold to Joe Wilson's position. I am going to send you some of what I wrote back then.

VIRGINIA: Keep up the good work, Brother. God richly bless.

WEST VIRGINIA: I do appreciate the paper and hope you can still send it to me. May God bless you.

ALASKA: I really am enjoying the work that you are doing concerning Bro. Wilson. I think that it is so very important that we tell the truth no matter what the cost. I can see very clearly that

he is like a lot of ABA people that I know. He has a lot to say but cannot seem to find the scripture that fits with what he is saying.

FLORIDA: I really like your pages on the internet, do you have other places of interest that might help me, and since we are communicating do you have any material on Angels?

FLORIDA: Good to come across your site. I am a sovereign Grace Baptist. I look for like minded God-centered sites on the net. I will note your address and look you up from time to time. I too find "It is well with my soul" one of my favorites.

AUSTRALIA: I checked out your page. Keep up the sermons on the blood of Christ. The message of the gospel, which is the power unto salvation, is what we need to be preaching more than ever in these days of false prophets and teachers.

PHILIPPINES: I've read in the BBB-forum, March 97, about the Promise Keepers Movement. Elder Smith recommended your materials you published in *The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator*.

If it is possible, please send me your published materials, and if you have any available articles of interest and other materials you have printed like tracts and booklets, I would deeply appreciate your sending.

OREGON: We have been receiving *The GP&P* for a little while now and have enjoyed it immensely. It is always a pleasure to read a paper that is Sovereign Grace. The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to give the paper to some brethren whom I know will be blessed by reading it.

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 7:00 P.M. BAPTIST HISTORY I
 Elder Milburn Cockrell
 8:00 P.M. KEYNOTE ADDRESS
 Elder Bill James

FRIDAY
 9:00 A.M. DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE
 Elder Curtis Taylor
 10:00 A.M. THE BIBLE - A BAPTIST BOOK
 Elder George Sledd
 11:00 A.M. THE ORIGIN AND ORGANIZATION
 OF BAPTIST CHURCHES
 Elder Wayne Camp
 7:00 P.M. BAPTIST HISTORY II
 Elder Milburn Cockrell
 8:00 P.M. THE AUTHORITY OF A BAPTIST
 CHURCH
 Elder Herbert Wilson

SATURDAY
 10:00 A.M. BAPTIST HISTORY III
 Elder Milburn Cockrell
 11:00 A.M. BAPTIST ORDINANCES
 Elder Earnie Lucas

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