

THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

VOLUME NUMBER 8

APRIL 16, 2023

ISSUE NUMBER 1

REPLACING HISTORY

by M. A. Brawner

As a young preacher, making an honest effort to learn the history of the work of the Lord, I found myself with an opportunity to attend a study on Baptist History. The leader of the study was a well-educated gentleman who was easy to hear. He offered five views of the history of what he called the Baptist Church. One of these views stated that the Lord organized His own Church during His personal ministry and it had continued in existence from that time until now. The study leader immediately followed this statement by saying this view was held among some Baptists in the past but more scientific, scholarly research had proved that view to be misleading. (I was alarmed to hear him say that because I sat there knowing a large number of people who are firmly convinced that position to line up with what the Bible teaches.) As an alternative, he presented the theory that the practice of baptism by burial in water started to be held as a requirement for Church membership in 1641 in England. The people who made this requirement became known as Baptists, according to his lesson. This position was presented as the truly researched, valid history of the people known today as Baptists. Needless to say, I was blown away that anyone who claimed to be a Baptist could be so convinced of a plain contradiction to what the scriptures teach. “Scientific” or not, let God be true and every man a liar! Rom 3:4.

The truly surprising part of this experience was that this gentleman and the Church he pastored claimed to be Independent Baptist. They were located in the state of Georgia near where I was stationed at that time. During my time in the military, I met a wide variety of Baptists and came to understand that the name on the sign meant very little about what was believed and practiced by the people. In this current day, I know a number of Independent Baptists who are as firmly grounded in the old time way as any of the Churches I was blessed to be

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

SO-CALLED KNOWLEDGE

by H. B. Little

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen. 1 Ti 6:20-21

The book of 1 Timothy is a letter from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, his son in the ministry. Paul and Timothy had been together on the mission field. And Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to pastor a young church that had been organized there. In the last two verses of the book, Paul charges the young preacher to keep the faith—the doctrines committed to his trust—despite oppositions of falsely called *science*.

The word *science* generally means knowledge. In the context of this scripture, it means a present and fragmentary knowledge. This is the nature of human knowledge on any subject. It is a fragmentary knowledge. Science is an imperfect knowledge. It is being pieced together by systematic study of evidence. Sometimes the evidence is misinterpreted. And this leads to false knowledge. This is what Paul meant by falsely called science.

Let's consider the nature of God's word. The Savior said of the heavenly Father, “Thy word is truth.” John 17:17. The word *truth* means reality. It is not what is perceived as reality. It is not what a study of evidence seems to indicate that is reality. It is reality itself. When we read the Holy Bible, we are reading the work of an infinite—limitless—mind. The Bible is authored by God. There is none like Him. He declared “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand.” Isa 46:10.

Let's consider Paul's charge to Timothy. Paul told the younger preacher to hold to and guard the doctrines of God's infallible word despite any opposition by the limited knowledge of man. When the word of an eternal, all-knowing God is disputed by finite men, Paul says trust

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

BAPTISMAL ADMINISTRATORS

by H. B. Little

I recently heard a lecture by a sincere Baptist brother regarding what constitutes valid baptism. The title of his lecture was “Church Authority Overshadows Imperfections of the Administrator.” In this lecture, the brother claimed that baptism by a Baptist church is valid regardless of the qualifications of the administrator. I was shocked to hear his claim that an unregenerate man (a lost sinner) could administer valid baptism as long as it was administered for a Baptist church.

The brother made several arguments for his claim. First, he said many of the priests of the Old Testament were unregenerate and administered the ordinances of the Old Testament. Then, he said Judas was unregenerate and administered baptisms during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus. Then, he said our Baptist forefathers accepted the baptisms of unregenerate and improper administrators. He gave a few specific examples from historical Baptist documents, including the writings of Bro. J. R. Graves and the history of Sandy Creek Association. Let's give consideration to these arguments made for his claim.

Let's consider the argument that unregenerate priests administering the Old Testament ordinances justify unregenerate baptismal administrators. This argument contains a logical fallacy called a false equivalency. It compares apples with oranges. Priests of the Old Testament had different qualifications than ministers of the New Testament. The priests obtained their work by inheritance. The qualifications for the priesthood were based on genealogy. The qualifications for the ministry include regeneration, church membership, and proper ordination. When the brother mentions unregenerate priests, he conflates their qualifications with that of a minister's qualifications. A fair comparison would be this: if God accepted the ordinances of non-Levitical priests, then He would accept an unregenerate, unordained baptismal administrator.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

REPLACING HISTORY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

raised among. Yet the experience I described above opened my eyes to a teaching on the history of the Church which I had yet to encounter at that point in my life. Needless to say, my curiosity on the subject was stirred a great deal. I set out to dig into the topic to learn how someone who seemed as sincere and well-educated as the gentleman who led that study could become convinced of a theory on so-called "Baptist History."

Study and research led me to something called the "1641 Discovery" by some authors such as D. B. Ray, John T. Christian, and I. K. Cross, *The "Discovery" was more of a "Controversy" among Baptists.* The situation stemmed from what men at a period of time in our history came to be taught while in college. Many of the schools of education in the South were destroyed during the Civil War. Men who sought an education in advanced subjects were required to go elsewhere to study. Many chose to go to the country of Germany. While there, they were taught topics like Higher Criticism along with a wide array of philosophical topics. Germany was a stronghold of Protestantism led by the Lutheran Religion. Men who received training in those schools returned to the U.S. with their new education and ideas in hand. Some of these men apparently succumbed to the teachings they received. Out of this sprang up ideas on how to conduct research, how to view historical documents, and even if truth itself could be found in written form passed down from one generation to the next. It would be truly astonishing for many to hear what some came to believe about the first chapters of the book of Genesis. The roots of such ideas stem from the philosophical teachings springing from sources as those described above. Men with this type of training have laid hands on Baptist History.

At the head of this issue regarding Baptist History, was a professor at the Southern Baptist Seminary after it was relocated to Louisville, Kentucky. His name was W. H. Whitsitt. He first wrote anonymous articles for a Protestant news source making the claim that Baptists are unable to trace their history back past 1641 in England. John T. Christian, and others with him, took up the case and went to

England to uncover any and all evidence he could find on the claims made in the articles. His work revealed the utter fabrication of the statements made in the articles. The results of his research can be found in a book under his name titled *Baptist History Vindicated* published in 1899. A copy of this book can be found on the internet by going to the Baptisthistoryhomepage.com site. Once that site is found, go to Baptist Biographies and find the link to William Whitsitt. On the links under his name, you will find the book written by John T. Christian. Be warned: this book is an in-depth, detailed written piece of material. Brother Christian obviously meant to pick apart the claims of Whitsitt down to the fine pieces. If you just read the introductory article written by T. T. Eaton, the key ideas could be learned. In short, the Whitsitt "Discovery" was rejected by the vast number of Baptists in that day. Whitsitt was forced to resign from the Seminary BUT the damage had been done. Whitsitt still held to his views after his forced resignation. Even in light of the research conducted by such men as Christian, he remained steadfast. A number of men among the Southern Baptist Convention Churches of that day adopted Whitsitt's views. It was as if he became a martyr for the cause to convince people that Baptists were really Protestants who took up burials for baptism in the 1600s.

Today the views of Whitsitt, though disproved in detail years ago, have replaced the accurate history of Baptists in the hearts of many. Men holding his views have worked into positions of influence over time. Seemingly tireless efforts have been made to explain away true Baptist History and replace it with the errors of Whitsitt. Those who hold the errors of Whitsitt are now in the places where books are printed and placed in stores all over the world. If the unaware reader takes up a book from a shelf today, they will read the views I first heard in that study of history years ago.

Many are now unaware that there was a time when Baptists by and large held to the view that their lineage goes all the way back to the Church the Lord organized nearly 2,000 years ago. But now, if we were to ask 100 people who called themselves Baptist what view of their history they hold to be true, they would likely state the Whitsitt error. It might be astonishing to find how many

who claim to be old time Baptists hold this view as well because it has replaced the true position out in public.

Serious efforts need to be made among sound Baptists of this day to teach the true history of the Church the Lord established. Sources such as the Baptist History Homepage, named above, needs to be shared. Good books such as D. B. Ray's *Baptist Succession*, J. R. Graves' *Old Landmarkism*, John T. Christian's *Baptist History*, and I. K. Cross's *The Battle for Baptist History* all need to be acquired and read. Unless such efforts are made, this history among sound Baptists could also be replaced with error.

It should be noted that the majority of Baptist associations rejected the erroneous ideology of Dr. Whitsitt in his day.

In 1896, the Enon Association of Middle Tennessee passed the following resolution upon the discovery of his views:

We denounce the course Dr. Wittsett [sic] has taken, and recommend our young brethren to keep out of the Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky., till he is replaced with one who is sound in the faith.

In 1897, the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky passed a resolution to "urge, insist upon and vote for the retirement of Doctor Whitsitt" and sent it to the trustees of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. When the trustees would not grant their request, they adopted the following resolution the next year:

Resolved, (1) That the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary shall not be allowed to make any report nor present any appeals of any sort whatever to this body so long as Doctor Whitsitt shall be in any manner connected with the institution. (2) That if Doctor Whitsitt's connection with the seminary has not ceased at the time of the next session of the Southern Baptist Convention, we urge that body to adopt, as the only means of preserving its unity, the resolutions proposed by Dr. B. H. Carroll, of Texas, whereby the convention shall dissolve the bond of connection between that body and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

-HBL

BAPTISMAL ADMINISTRATORS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Let's examine then if God accepted the ordinances of non-Levite priests. Consider 1 Ki 13:33-34. In this chapter we read that God had sent a prophet to speak against the ordinances offered by King Jeroboam I at Bethel. While part of his sin was the place that the ordinances were administered, he also sinned by appointing unqualified administrators. Consider the scripture:

After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

It is evident that God was concerned with the qualifications of the administrators of the Old Testament ordinances. Jeroboam's appointment of *the lowest people*—whosoever desired the office—was a sin unto his house. How serious was this sin? It was one that destroyed him and his entire family. Upon a fair consideration of the priesthood, the Lord required the Old Testament ordinances to be administered by qualified men.

Let's consider the argument that Judas Iscariot and his ministry justify unregenerate baptismal administrators. In the brother's lecture, he said Judas clearly administered baptisms. He cited Acts 1:17, where Peter says "[Judas] was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry." The brother said that if Judas obtained part of the ministry then he did everything that the other eleven apostles did. The brother argued that if Judas did not baptize then he would have been discovered as an imposter prior to his betrayal of the Lord. Here we find another logical fallacy. The brother's argument proves too much. If Judas is certain to have baptized because he obtained part of the ministry, then he is certain to have performed miracles. If Judas' failure to baptize would have shown himself to be an imposter, then his failure to perform miracles would have shown him to be an imposter. The question is this: is it possible for Judas to be unregenerate and to perform miracles? If he could not, the brother's

argument proves too much. If it proves too much, it proves nothing at all.

So, could Judas be both unregenerate and perform miracles? Consider Heb 2:4. Paul speaking of the apostles writes:

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

How were these miracles performed? Were they not performed by the Spirit of God? Consider 1 Co 12:9-10. Paul writes:

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

Paul clearly teaches that the miracles of the New Testament were performed by the Holy Ghost. Does the Spirit work through the unregenerate. Does the lost soul have power with God? What say the scriptures? Consider John 9:31:

Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

Judas either performed baptisms and miracles, or the brother's argument proves too much. If Judas performed miracles, he was not a lost sinner. If he was a lost sinner, he could not perform miracles—not according to scripture. Either way, the brother's argument fails to prove that the apostles accepted the baptisms of unregenerate administrators.

Let's consider the brother's appeal to our history as justification of accepting baptisms performed by improper administrators. He cites Bro. J. R. Graves and his *Old Landmarkism: What Is It?* written in 1880. The brother accurately represents Bro. Graves' sentiments. He quotes:

There are certain qualifications, personal and ceremonial, scripturally required to render a man eligible to ordinations, as personal regeneration...a valid baptism, etc... The church may, years after, be satisfied that her pastor is an unregenerate man...his baptism defective...still all his official acts, as marriages, baptisms, ordinations, are, de facto, valid.

Bro. Graves and the brother agree. While Bro. Graves was a scholar and a deep thinker, he gives no scriptural proof of his position. He writes:

The official acts of a minister of a church are held valid as to third parties, as the acts of an officer, de facto, though not, de jure, would be, should there be found to have been material defects as to his legal qualifications for the office. This is a settled question in all civil matters, and should be in ecclesiastical.

Bro. Graves appeals to civil law about acts performed "in fact" though not done properly. In civil law, he says, the acts would be accepted by a third party. And then he says the same law should govern church matters. In this matter, Bro. Graves errs. If scripture can be provided concerning this principle, we should accept it. If not, Bro. Graves is not the lawgiver. I do not disparage Bro. Graves. He did as much for the Baptist cause as any man on this continent, but his writings were not inspired by the Spirit and therefore are subject to error.

The brother also appealed to the Sandy Creek Baptist Association as proof that our forefathers accepted the baptisms of improper administrators. He cites part of a response to a question posed before the association in 1822. He quotes:

Query: "If a man, representing himself to be a legally ordained minister of the gospel, receives persons into the church and baptizes them, but is afterward found not to be in possession of proper credentials, are such persons, so baptized, to be considered regular members of the church, and entitled to the privileges thereof?"

Answered in the negative. If a minister acts without church authority, his ministerial acts are invalid. If he be clothed with valid church authority, his acts are valid, though he may be a bad man; that is, the validity of his official acts depends upon his being a member of the church, and clothed with ministerial authority. If he has no church membership, and is without ordination, his acts are invalid.

The brother quotes this passage as proof to support the claim that an unregenerate man may administer valid baptism. He focuses on "if he be clothed with valid

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

BAPTISMAL ADMINISTRATORS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

church authority, his acts are valid, though he be a bad man.” In other words, if the man has moral faults unknown to the church, his baptisms are valid, though he be immoral. With the sentiment of the association, I agree.

However, the brother misinterprets the conclusion drawn by our Baptist forefathers. The association was asked if a man is unordained, yet misleads the church about his ordination, and they baptize by him, are those baptized by him proper church members? In other words, are baptisms valid when performed by an unqualified administrator? The association answered in the negative! That means no! The association considered such baptisms invalid.

They wrote that one not regularly ordained was not clothed with ministerial authority. They said that if he has no church membership (this includes the unregenerate), and is without ordination (that is the very thing they were asking about), his acts are invalid. These were not the principles for accepting the baptisms of unqualified administrators. They were the arguments for rejecting them!

While I esteem the man who gave this lecture as a brother, I do not agree with his claim that a lost sinner may administer valid baptism, because his arguments will not withstand fair scrutiny. I do agree with the Sandy Creek Association’s 1822 position. Valid baptism must be administered by a qualified administrator. A qualified administrator is one who is regenerated (saved), has valid baptism, has been regularly ordained, and is in good standing with a Baptist church.

I write on this matter with brotherly kindness in my heart. I desire union among our churches. I believe we can have it if we walk according to scripture. When we err from the truth, we must make every effort to correct what can be corrected.

SO-CALLED KNOWLEDGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

what God has to say on every matter. What a simple, yet important, commandment from Paul, no doubt, inspired by the Spirit. We would do well to keep it. Paul tells Timothy that there is real danger in believing false knowledge

instead of the word of God. The danger is that “some professing have erred concerning the faith.”

Let’s consider a Bible truth that has been assailed by science falsely so called: the Bible’s account of the creation of man. The Bible plainly teaches that mankind is a special creation of God. Moses writes, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Gen 2:7. Jesus, the Creator, also tells us “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” Mat 19:4.

For the better part of two millennia, the Christian world has acknowledged Genesis 2 has the historical account of the origin of mankind. Recent “discoveries” in astronomy, geology, and biology have led many Christians to “reinterpret” the creation account. These new interpretations usually take one of the following forms. *The Bible isn’t a science textbook. Genesis isn’t to be taken literally. The Bible contains spiritual truth, not historical truth.* While this seems like a harmless compromise, it is yielding to oppositions of science falsely so called. And it absolutely undermines the *spiritual truths* of God’s word.

The Bible teaches us how sin, suffering, and death entered our world. It tells us that “God made man upright.” Ecc 7:29. It tells us that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Rom 5:12. By these verses, we understand that man was made righteous. And though he was righteous, he violated God’s law and introduced sin and thereby suffering and death to the human family. The question is this: which man did this? Obviously, Solomon and Paul are both referring to Adam, the first man. For this spiritual lesson regarding suffering and death to be true, the historical account of Adam and Eve must also be true.

If Genesis 2-3 contains spiritual lessons but not a historical account, then God has given us a fable to help us cope with suffer and death. If mankind is not the special creation of God, but rather the product of the evolutionary process, then suffering and death predate mankind. If this is the case, God has explained suffering and death by blaming mankind for something we did not do. To hold this view of God is downright heretical. How does one come to hold such a view? It begins with an acceptance of science

falsely so called that opposes God’s word.

Let’s consider another example of Bible truth assailed by science falsely so called: the Bible’s teaching on church perpetuity. The Bible plainly teaches that the Son of God established His church in this world during His earthly ministry. The Bible also describes the principles and practices of His church as a Baptist church. Of this church, the Lord Jesus said, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mat 16:18. The Lord’s church, a Baptist church, would never die. It would never cease to exist. The Lord said He would be with it alway—every day—even to the end of the world. Mat 28:20.

Paul foretold of church perpetuity. He said the wisdom and mysteries of the gospel are made known by the church. Eph 3:9-10. The work of the church is to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe the principles of the gospel. Paul said the church, by this work, would bring glory to God “by Christ Jesus throughout all ages.” Eph 3:21. When has the work stopped? It has not. When will it stop? It cannot. By this work, the Baptist church has glorified God in every age. The Bible plainly teaches church perpetuity.

Despite the plain Bible doctrine of perpetuity, some men have let science falsely so called turn them from it. Limited men with limited resources have concluded by their historical studies that Baptist churches and Baptist baptism did not exist before the seventeenth century. And their altered view of Baptist history has led to a host of errors pertaining to church authority, alien immersion, and pulpit affiliation (allowing non-Baptists to occupy Baptist pulpits and administer Baptist ordinances). The acceptance of science falsely so called that opposes the truth has led to these heretical practices.

Let’s remember Paul’s charge to Timothy and be confident in the teachings of the Bible despite oppositions of false knowledge, no matter how educated—or seemingly informed—the opposition is. The Bible will be vindicated. For it is the ultimate source of truth in this world.

Visit our website at thebaptistlandmark.com. You can find this and previous issues on our archives page. It is a great way to share these articles with others. You can also email us from the contacts page.
