

Baptism:

Preacher of Church Ordinance?

Second Treatise

CHAPTER 4

PREACHER ORDINATION

IS IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH TO ORDAIN ITS MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES, OR DOES THE RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY OF ORDAINING MEN TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY BELONG TO A COUNCIL OF ORDAINED MINISTERS MADE UP FROM VARIOUS CHURCHES?

Brother Cockrell, the Editor of the *Berea Baptist Banner*, has clearly stated what he believes to be the answer to the above question. He says in his reply to my first Book on the question of baptismal authority: "It is my candid opinion that some men run away from appearing before an ordaining council because they fear they cannot meet the qualifications and hence be ordained. They may have problems with their double or triple marriage. They may have some moral problems, or even some doctrinal problems. I can think of but a few reasons for their shunning a council of good and godly men by which they are to be examined and ordained. It might be well to ask some men who downgrade being an ordained Baptist minister if they ever appeared before an ordaining council, or, in other words, were they ever ordained to the ministry." (*B.B.B.* Pg. 10, Oct. 15, 1984).

Why the esteemed Editor would inject this self defeating statement into the baptismal authority controversy is an enigma to me. However, he has made his position unmistakably clear as to where he believes the responsibility of ordaining ministers lies, and that is not with the local church, but with a council of preachers made up from various churches. Three times in the above quote the Editor plainly says, the formal setting apart a man to the gospel ministry is done by what he calls "an ordaining council." He goes as far to say, or at least he glaringly implies, if a preacher has not been ordained by a council as defined above, he is, just simply, not ordained. So as to show I am not reading more into his words than what is in the quote, I resubmit one of his misconstruable statements, i.e. "I can think of but a few other reasons for their shunning a council of good and godly men **BY WHICH THEY ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND ORDAINED**. It might be well to ask some men who downgrade being an ordained Baptist minister if they have ever appeared before **AN ORDAINING COUNCIL**, or, in other words, were they ever ordained." (Caps mine). Note: the last four words of the quote is not a question, but a subtle denial of the validity of minister ordination performed by a local church independently of the officialdom of an extra-church council. The local church does not need a Sanhedrin to direct its functions.

It is the 'candid opinion' of the *BBB* Editor, "that some men run away from appearing before an ordaining council because they fear they cannot meet the qualifications and hence be ordained." I ask, who is better qualified to judge of a ministerial candidate's qualifications, the church which holds his membership and with whom he has spent an extended part of his church life, and in most cases all of it, or a council of preachers; of whom some may have never seen the candidate before the date of ordination? We are **NOT OPPOSED** to a church asking other ministers to act as advisors in ordination procedure. We do not object to visiting ministers interrogating the candidate, but what we do object to is the usurpation of the authority of the ordaining church by a mock council.

We never ask a Baptist pastor, By which council were you ordained? But we ask him, By the authority of which church were you ordained? If we ask, By what council, he might think we were a

little popish, or tainted with Episcopalianism, and I would not blame him for thinking thusly. The custom of official councilorship as relates to the ordination of Baptist ministers comes from within the whited walls of pseudo associationalism, and is nothing more than traditional rubbish which should be tossed into the scrap heap of anti-scriptural innovations, along with everything else that encroaches on the autonomy and independence of the local church.

We readily and gladly admit that a council made up of pastors from other churches may advise and assist the ordaining church in many and varied ways, but the council CANNOT assert any authority or officiality in or over the ordaining church. As to the officialdom, it is strictly a local church function. To say otherwise, is to unlawfully take the prerogative and liberty which God has given and placed in His particular churches, and place it in the hands of a tribunal who is not amenable to any ecclesiastical authority. Where is the wisdom in the vote of a local church to ordain its ministerial candidate, and then subject itself to a council which has veto power and may abort the design and determination of the local church? Such veto power does not Biblically exist, and the council necessity doctrine suffers the same extreme bareness as that of the "MUST" doctrine of formal ordination of the administrator of baptism.

The errors of absolute essentiality of formal ordination of the baptismal administrator, and the imperative need of an authoritative council in order to ordain men to the gospel ministry, arrogates for the ministry that which belongs to the Lord's churches. While these errors are not injuriously equal to the sacerdotalism of Romanism and Protestantism, they are akin to it, and certainly not as innocent as their proponents would have us believe (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

A Baptist church has no judicatures, except that of the membership. The voting majority determines the polity of the church, and not the pastors or officers of the church. This being true with the officers of the immediate church, how much more is it true concerning officers who are not members of the particular church, even though they organize themselves into an impressive council. Which is the lesser of the two evils, to make too much of ordination or too little of it? I cannot say, nor do I need to say, for the Bible clearly reveals what the measure of respect, honor, and authority is to be accorded the bishopric. The church is to acknowledge and manifestly own the authority which God has vested in the pastoral office, but in so doing the church is to be careful not to compromise its own authority. What a glorious thing it is when both pastor and church see the demarcation lines which God has drawn to regulate their respective authority.

The pastor and all other officers are amenable to their membership church, and subservience does not deprecate the authority or bedim the unequaled honor inherent in the pastoral office. The amenability of the pastor to his church should not be grievous, but joyous, lest a rivalry between the church and the pastor be developed. The pastor and his church are not in competition as to who can exercise the most authority, but when their peculiar authority is held in proper perspective it will serve to stimulatize the church rather than schismatize it.

No God honoring pastor wants his people goose-stepping before him, because he knows heavens marching orders were not despotically given to him, but to the democratic power of the church. Nor will a God honoring church want to enervate their Holy Spirit given pastor, and have him cowering at their feet. Neither church nor pastoral authority can long endure abuse, for God will not allow His appointments to suffer prolonged impediment, and whatever is necessary to correct the abuse will be rapidly and efficiently meted out by the Head of the church.

It appears from the *B.B.B.* that Brother Cockrell subscribes to Brother J.M.C. Breaker's "general authority" theory, for he borrows the term from Brother Breaker, and uses it approvingly in the *E.B.B.* (Pg. 7-10/15/84). Whence cometh this supposed "general authority"? It must come from and by the arbitration of a spurious ordaining council, for it cannot be Scripturally given by a local church. Some generals are just too general, and the one under consideration is a case in point.

This supposed "general authority" is exceedingly wide. Sufficiently so as to allow pastors and ordained Baptist preachers to baptize for their respective churches, and other Baptist churches without specific authority from their membership church. The basis or justification for this unregulated practice is the inherent virtue or intrinsic merit claimed for preacher ordination by an official (?) council. The logical order contended for is, formal council ordination begets general authority, and general authority begets preacher liberty, so as he may baptize whenever and wherever he may find a candidate and a church that will receive the baptized person. Or as with Brother Breaker, a receiving church is not necessary in every case. This is the practice J.M.C. Breaker advances in his article. He contends in a

given situation as that of the Ethiopian eunuch a person may be baptized and not admitted to or added to any church (*Breaker's Article*, Pg. 251-Para. 2). Brethren, is not this a strange brand of Landmarkism? Such a practice cannot be supported by Scripture nor Baptist history, and it should be abrogated by or expurgated from every church afflicted with it.

The above statement correctly charged to Brother Breaker is but a sampling of the errors which are in his whole article on *The Administrator of Baptism*. And yet Brother Cockrell says: "My disagreement with Bro. Breaker was not of any serious nature. There were some weak statements in my opinion in the original article, and a few of these were omitted from the original article which appeared in the *BBB*" (Pg. 7-10/15/84). There were and are a lot of, not only weak statements in Bro. Breaker's original article, but a lot of glaring errors; some of which will be referred to later in this book.

The J.M.C. Breaker's ordination credential authority is seen in the embryonic state in the first century, but it did not gain any great strength until the churches of various provinces began to do away with church separation and independence. This resulted in the coming together of various churches in official union, out of which was born the prelacy, and out of the prelacy came Rome's hierarchy. There is historical unanimity attesting to the veracity of the contention that the greater part of the churches of the second, third, and fourth centuries apostatized by sacrificing their independence upon the altar of God defying synergism.

The error of arbitrary class distinction between pastor and people survived the dark ages, but so did the Lord's churches. The error has survived Protestantism, Southern Baptist Conventionism, multifarious Baptist associationalism, and is now trying to penetrate New Testament Landmark Sovereign Grace Baptist churches. But it is with these Landmark churches the error meets its Waterloo, for it cannot survive the hell defying fiat of their Sovereign Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18; Eph. 1:20-23).

Mosheim, a Lutheran historian says: "The people were undoubtedly, the first in authority: for the apostles showed by their own examples, that nothing of the moment was to be carried on or determined without the consent of the assembly; and such a method of proceeding was both prudent and necessary in those critical times" (*Mosheim's Church History*, Pg. 21). In this statement Mosheim refers to the apostolic and first century churches, and it is not coincidental, but providential that there are a people by the name Baptist in the twentieth century contending for the same faith. That is, democracy and not clergy rule.

The *BBB* Editor says: "Since my uniting with Sovereign Grace, Independent, Landmark Baptists, I have gleaned here and there a weakness upon the importance of the ordination of Baptist preachers" (Pg. 10-10/15/84). I cannot affirm or deny what the Editor claims to be his experience since uniting with Scriptural Land-markers, but I can speak for myself. I have been with Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptist churches for thirty three years, and have taken part in more Preacher and Deacon ordination services than I can remember. In all this time I have never heard one of our kind of churches or pastors speak lightly of the practice of ordination. It is gladly admitted, the churches with whom I have had the blessing of fellowshiping have discouraged pomp, and unnecessary ceremony; but I know not one church amongst them all who would not rejoice to have a ministerial candidate in their membership, and take special delight in broadcasting the date of his public ordination to the gospel ministry.

The Editor also speaks of "some men who downgrade being an ordained Baptist minister (Pg. 10-10/15/84). Again I do not know who the Editor refers to in this statement, but I have not met one pastor or preacher in any of the Lord's churches who have not highly esteemed the ministry to which God had called them. If the Editor's reference to some men who downgrade being an ordained Baptist minister is meant to include me, it is an unjust reference, for he in person; along with Elder Doyal Thomas, and myself attended a preacher ordination service less than two years ago. In my preaching assignment in this ordination service, I said: "NO MATTER HOW NEGATIVE AND UNATTRACTIVE THE OFFICE MAY APPEAR ITO THE WORLD, THE SPIRITUAL COMPENSATION HERE, AND THE ETERNAL REWARD HEREAFTER IS SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE FOR FAITHFULNESS IN THE OFFICE. SATAN'S EXPERTISE IN BELITTLEING AND DEGRADING THE OFFICE HAS NOT IMPAIRED GOD'S ABILITY TO CALL MEN UNTO THE OFFICE. THERE ARE SOME MEN, EVEN IN THIS ERA WHEN SOVEREIGN GRACE BAPTISTS ARE RELIGIOUSLY OBNOXIOUS TO SO-CALLED CHRISTENDOM, IN WHOM GOD CREATES A DESIRE FOR THE OFFICE OF BISHOP.

FOR THE TRUE BAPTIST PASTOR TO TRADE OFFICES WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, WOULD BE A SHAMEFUL DEMOTION FOR THE BAPTIST PASTOR. THERE IS NO GREATER INSTITUTION IN THE WORLD THAN A LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT BAPTIST CHURCH. BE ITS MEMBERSHIP THREE OR THREE THOUSAND, AND WHILE THE WORLD LOOKS UPON ITS PASTORAL OFFICE AS IGNOBLE, IT IS BY DIVINE RECKONING THE HIGHEST OFFICE A MORTAL CAN HOLD. AND AFTER ALL, IT IS HOW GOD SEES THINGS THAT REALLY COUNT.

THE PASTOR'S OFFICE IS A CHURCH OFFICE. HIS SPHERE OF AUTHORITATIVE SERVICE IS RESTRICTED TO THE CHURCH WHICH HE PASTORS. 1 Timothy 3:5 TELLS HIM HE HAS BEEN CALLED TO "Take care of the church of God." THIS DOES NOT MEAN HE CANNOT HELP SISTER CHURCHES. IN FACT PASTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO ASSIST AND PROMOTE OTHER TRUE CHURCHES WHENEVER THEY CAN, BUT NEVER IS THE PASTOR TO FORSAKE HIS OWN FLOCK. HE HAS BEEN SET OVER A PARTICULAR FLOCK TO TAKE CARE OF IT, AND THAT FLOCK IS EVER TO BE HIS PRIMARY CONCERN."

In another ordination sermon I said: "1 Timothy 5:17 tells us the Pastor is to receive 'double honor' from the church. Scripture commands honor be paid to father and mother, but it commands 'double honor' be paid to the God fearing Pastor. To give 'double honor' to the Pastor as commanded by the Lord means: (a.) That a church member should be twice as reluctant to disagree with the Pastor, as with any other man on earth. On the other hand it means, the members should be twice as ready to defend the Pastor as he would his dearest brother or sister. (b.) Simply stated, it means in all things where honor is due the Scriptural Pastor is worthy of double honor." I have for more than three decades consistently contended for the paying of due honor to the ministry, and stand ready to rebuke any man who would dare to malign this blessed office. I am only interested in the vindication of truth, so leave it with my unbiased Baptist brethren to judge whether or not my position on preacher authority lessens the importance of the pastoral office, or in truth magnifies it.

"WHO ARE TO ORDAIN? Ordination is the act of the church, not the act of a privileged class in the church, as the eldership has been sometimes wrongly regarded, nor yet the act of other churches, assembled by their representatives in council. No ecclesiastical authority higher than that of the local church is recognized in the New Testament, This authority, however, has its limits; and since the church has no authority outside of its own body, the candidate for ordination should be a member of the ordaining church" (A.H. Strong - *SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY* Pg. 920).

"It makes no difference that a man already holds the office of Pastor, he is said to be unordained if he has not gone through the ceremony of being questioned and recommended by a council of preachers. I ask, where do we find such mandatory thing in God's Book?

"What is the truth? This: A man is properly ordained to the work of a preacher when he is approved and appointed to that position by the Baptist church of which he is a member. That church is the only organization in the world that has the authority to ordain or appoint him to that work. I don't say it is wrong for him to submit to the questioning of a council of preachers or brethren, but I do say it is surely not required. So if there were only one remaining true church in the world, the ordaining of God called preachers could still continue. That church, regardless of size could issue a certificate of ordination if the preacher desired one. The man would be as scripturally ordained as if he sat under a thousand councils" (*THE BAPTIST PREACHER*, James F. Crace, Editor).

Now I will present a quote of a professed Baptist, who is very highly esteemed by the ministerial elite of the Baptist Bible Fellowship group, the offices of which are in Springfield, Mo. The man says: "I do not believe a local church (If it is Biblical) can be a pawn in the hands of a denominational hierarchy, nor is it a 'spiritual democracy'. Biblically the local church is an autonomous THEOCRACY—God ruling the local assembly through the pastor" (*GOD GIVEN PASTORAL AUTHORITY*, Pg. 25- Dr. Kenny McComas).

Every New Testament church is to be theocentric, but their God given form of government is democratic or congregational, if you please. The church is not a theocracy, nor is the pastor a theocrat. Israel was a theocracy, and had their God given priests and judges through whom God ruled the nation. If the church was a theocracy as contended by Elder McComas, then the church would have no recourse whatsoever from the pronouncements of the pastor. Such a doctrine and practice cannot help but lead to Diotrephism (3 John 9-11), and reduce the membership of the church to governmental passiveness.

While the church is to make SURE it accords the pastor all the honor which the Scriptures claim for the office, and set in place every defense necessary to keep out Korahism (Num. 16:1-3; Jude 11), it is not to equate the pastoral office with that of the High Priest of Israel. A pastoral executive order is as much out of place in a New Testament Baptist church, as that of a Deacon Board with its supposed decretal power. The all wise God vested his governmental power in the membership of each local church, and in so doing He protects His churches against any and all who aspire to arbitrary authority within His churches.

The framework of church government is quite simple. Actually all official decisions belong to the membership of the church, and the judgement of the voting majority is final. There are no higher powers, such as Associational President, State Missionary, cliques, committees, Deacon Boards, Board of Elders, etc., which the church must go through for ratification of its majority action. To adhere to this simple rule is to own the governmental Headship of Christ, and any divergence therefrom is to contravene the law of Christ and diminish His preeminence in the church. The pastor may disagree with the majority rule, but he is as much bound by it as the most feeble member. This does not mean the church is infallible and never errs in its conclusions, but what it does mean is, they who take variance with the majority decision of the church are to humbly submit to it while awaiting an opportunity to courteously reintroduce his variance to the official church.

There can be no central government in a New Testament church, for the whole church is the executive body. Christ is the conceptualist of this form of church government, and every member should be satisfied with it.

An honest and thorough etymological study of the word "democracy" will discover that it has its roots in the Greek word "ekklesia". It was in the ancient government of the Greek city-states that democracy was first practiced, and this government was administered by the free citizens duly assembled for the purpose. This assembly was called "the ekklesia," and in those early times there was no misunderstanding as to what the term meant. The word in its Greek verb form "ekkaleo" means to "call out," or "summon." "Ekkaleo" is a compound verb formed from two Greek words, "ek" and "kaleo". These two words in their composite being meant to "call out." The purpose of this calling out or calling forth was to convene an assembly to transact official city business. In view of the foregoing and correct definition of the term "ekklesia," it would be tautological nonsense to say, "This ekklesia was the official assembly." It would be tantamount to saying, "Water is wet."

How the Lord's Ekklesia (church) can be confused, and made to mean a theocracy, ruled over by the pastor; is not only beyond me, but out-curves the universal invisible church theory. Let us be reminded the people who originally practiced ekklesia form of government were already Greek citizens, they were not called out in order to make them what they already were by birth and citizenship. The universal invisible church theory confuses soteriology with ecclesiology, and thereby leaves no room for any complete ekklesia of God on earth. Ekklesia has not so much to do with the inward call of the Holy Spirit in regeneration of God's People, as with the calling out unto baptism those who are already saved. Notwithstanding, evangelism and witness are the first duties of the Lord's churches.

The theocracy theory confuses the church with Israel and its ancient priesthood. The invisible theory of the church confuses it with the unrealistic notion of a body utterly dismembered, invisible, scattered over all the earth, whose parts are diverse and antagonistic to one another. Both theories are outrageous, absurd, and steals the attention which belongs to the true churches of Christ.

One church historian says: "In the matter of church polity, Baptists also attempt to take the New Testament as their guide, and to follow the simplicity of apostolic times. In the apostolic period, the believers of any locality formed an assembly or church. There were no officers in these churches, except elders or bishops, and deacons. Each church enjoyed an ABSOLUTE AUTONOMY, AND NO EXTERNAL AUTHORITY EXISTED. In cases of need, a church called on others for help, and the other churches recognized their obligation to render aid. In doubt and difficulty a church asked advice, and other churches acknowledged their duty to give counsel" (Henry C. Vedder - *THE BAPTISTS* .Pages 15 & 16). Caps in the above quote are mine. I call your attention to the spelling of the last word in the quote, it is "counsel," not "council. Loving and humble counsel, yes, a thousand times yes! But official and dictatorial council, no, a thousand times no! The autonomous church needs no governmental auxiliary from without, but heartily welcomes the hand of sister churches which is empty of officiality.

E.H. Bancroft, speaking of the apostolic churches says: "There were positive relations of churches to

each other involving noteworthy points of contact and cooperation. It appears from the preceding discussion that the mutual relation of the apostolic churches was that of independence and equality, and this view is confirmed by the general tenor of Scripture teaching, and by the way in which the churches are mentioned. Yet there was a certain union and interdependence of these local bodies. It was not organic nor governmental, but rather that of a community of life and interests."

Speaking of apostolic authority the same author says: "Of course, all churches were under the supreme headship of Christ and under the superintendence delegated by Him to the apostles, but this authority was moral and advisory rather than controlling and mandatory, and was exercised with marked moderation" (*CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY*, By: Bancroft - Page 276).

The churches of the apostolic era enjoyed a relationship that was most intimate, but "was not organic or governmental," nor did the apostles exercise any controlling or mandatory power over the churches. So it is, churches which claim they can through their ordained ministry form a council in which is vested the authority to ordain or reject ministerial candidates, claim more for themselves than did the apostles of Christ.

"In Acts 12:23 it is said that "they ordained them elders in every church," having reference to Paul and Barnabas; this does not mean that Paul and Barnabas did as modern bishops, etc., do now, but it means that the churches, by a show of hands, elected elders as is proven by the original Greek" (J.E. Cobb - *A NEW MANUAL FOR BAPTIST CHURCHES*, Pg. 148).

Every person who is a member of one of the Lord's churches has been made to drink of "the one Spirit," and was admitted to the "one body" by the "one baptism" which the Lord gave to everyone of His churches (Eph. 4:4-5). The above mentioned experiences makes one a member of the "body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:27). This being so, they will have the "same care one for another" (1 Cor. 12:25) which is demonstrated in and by the members of a living organism. Pastoral aloofness or failure to fellowship with all the members can never be reconciled with the spirit of the New Testament, nor with the history of Baptist churches. The camaraderie of members in the body of Christ can and should infinitely surpass all carnal organizations, even the most fraternal.

Inasmuch as the church is likened to a human body, each part being necessary for the proper functioning of the whole; there can therefore be no independent members in the body. The spiritual health of the church is unalterably connected to harmonious interdependence of all its members. For the limbs, eyes, ears, etc. of Christ's body to lose the desire for power of mutual edification will have the ill effect of spiritual stagnation or arrested development.

The Lord's churches are distinct entities and autonomous bodies, yet they need and desire the fellowship of other churches. Persecution has often forced reclusion or abstention of fellowship upon and between the flocks of God, but Baptist history reveals that with each interval or respite from persecution the churches would once again seek and cultivate sweet intercourse with their ecclesiastical equals. However, (and it is a vitally important however) the corporate life of each church was restricted to its own membership. The term *ecclesia* fitly expresses the authoritative extent or limit of a New Testament church. The called out and assembled church are members one of another, but they can never Scripturally be members of any ecclesiastical organization external to their own church, even though it be an ordaining council formed out of or from beloved sister churches. And it is certain a New Testament church cannot Scripturally be a part of the ultra, mundane, and powerful organizations who falsely claim to be Baptists, while denying in doctrine and practice the things which give vitality to the church. Cooperation with sister churches, yes. Coercion from without, no. Paul, knowing that the cause of Christ could be best served in and by the immediate church, and that officiality of service was restricted to the local church, exultingly says: "Unto Him be glory in the church . . ." (Eph. 3:21).

Let mutual love and loyalty exist and be fervently cultivated by all of the Lord's churches. But it is vain to talk about loyalty to Christ unless our official service is restricted to one particular church, for it is in the local church the ecclesiastical Headship of Christ is exercised, and all other ecclesiastical organizations are bereft of that blessed Headship and have in place of it set up human authorities.

There is a Spanish proverb which says that a bird may fly to the ends of the earth, but only in a nest can it raise a family. A church may representatively go to the ends of the earth, but only and by the exclusive authority of the home church can members be added to its family or ministers ordained in it. Devotion to sister churches, YES! Dictatorship from sister churches, CERTAINLY NOT!

Official (?) ordination councils are breeders and incubators for other ultra church organizations with

power to subvert the independence and autonomy of the Lord's churches.

As we said before and repeat for the sake of clarity. We approve of asking the elders of sister churches to unofficially assist in the ordaining of preachers to the Gospel ministry, Their advice and counsel is oft times most helpful, and their encouragement of the candidate is of inestimable value. We have no objection whatsoever to the visiting preachers questioning the candidate concerning doctrine and deportment. And we appreciate it when they accept the invitation of the ordaining church to lay loving hands upon the head of the God called and church ordained preacher. But what we do object to is hierarchical like council, even if it goes by the name Baptist, which wrests from the local church the power to ordain its own ministerial candidates.

The church at Antioch ordained Paul and Barnabas to the Gospel ministry without the aid-of a multi-church council (Acts 13:1-3). The notion that only men who have been formally ordained may lay hands on the ordination candidate is without basis in Scripture. In the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, Symeon, Lucius, and Manaen; laid hands on them, and these three men were not apostles and far as Scripture information extends, not even ordained ministers of the Gospel. Nor are we to suppose they acted in private, but in the presence of the congregation whom they represented.

Timothy was ordained to the Gospel ministry by the church in which he was a member (1 Tim. 4:14). It is evident that the church which ordained Timothy had a plurality of elders at the time who represented the whole church in laying hands on Timothy. The fanciful notion that Paul ordained Timothy on the recommendation of two or more churches, is read into the text by those who assume it to be there. The Scripture which Brother Cockrell refers to as proof that Paul laid hands on Timothy in ordaining him to the ministry (2 Tim. 1:6), has nothing to do whatsoever with ordaining him to the ministry, but has reference to a spiritual gift which Paul had at sometime imparted to Timothy by the laying on of his hands.

Brother Cockrell says: "Paul and Barnabas officiated for the churches in ordaining elders or pastors in Asia Minor (Acts 14:23)." The word "ordained" in Acts 14:23 is a translation of the Greek word "cheirotoneo," and is in some versions translated by the word "appointed." The word means to appoint by a show of the hands. For further study of the word see any good Greek lexicon, but for now I refer the reader to *WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT*, by AT. Robertson—from whom I quote in regard to Acts 14:23 and the word "ordained" as used in the text,

"Cheirotoneo is an old verb that originally meant to vote by a show of the hands, finally to appoint with the approval of an assembly that chooses as 2 Chronicles 8:19." No doubt Paul and Barnabas influenced the churches to follow the example of the Antioch church in the ordaining of men called of God to the ministry, and that they along with other men of the church laid hands on them. It is in this sense only can it be correctly said that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders or pastors for the churches. To say Paul and Barnabas ordained men by their own power is to say far too much, for it would mean that they had no respect for the authority of the local church. The authority of and respect for the local church is honored by the apostles throughout the New Testament era of the church.

"The second divine prerogative of a church of Christ is—to elect and commission—i.e., ordain—her own officers . . . and that she is absolutely independent of all other bodies, she must be authorized to elect and to commission her officers without being required to call upon some outside party" (JR. Graves-*OLD LANDMARKISM*, Pages 36-37).



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CHAPTER 6

YOUR BAPTISM IS IMPORTANT

Baptism is vitally important. Every believer or regenerate person is commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Therefore, it is incumbent upon all who would be baptized to make absolutely sure they are baptized by the proper authority. Baptism is either of man or of God's appointed agency, which agency resides exclusively in the Lord's churches.

"The ordinances of baptism and the Supper were not entrusted to the ministry to administer to whomsoever they deem qualified, but to the churches, to be observed by them "as they were delivered unto them" (1 Cor. 11:2). (J.R. Graves - *PILLARS OF ORTHODOXY* Pg. 217 - Pub, by B.M. Bogard).

Brother J.M.C. Breaker and the venerated J.R. Graves are often poles apart on the doctrine of Landmarkism, and never more apparent than on the question of authority in baptism. Bro. Breaker says: "The intimation is plain, that the practice of baptizing belonged exclusively to the ministry" (Pg. 249, *ADMINISTRATOR OF BAPTISM*). Note the word "exclusively" as used by Bro. Breaker in the above quote, it is a strong term, and as used in the quote makes the authority of the ministry superior to that of the church. Brother Graves says; "To each local church is committed the sole administration and guardianship of the ordinances. This will not be questioned, save by a few who hold that baptism, at last was committed to the ministry as such; that they alone are responsible for its proper administration" (*THE LORD'S SUPPER A CHURCH ORDINANCE*, Pg. 11).

Baptist perpetuity does not mean there has never been a day since John the Baptist wherein there was not a Baptist preacher (although I doubt there has been such a day), but that there has not been a day since Christ established His church in Jerusalem while on earth, wherein there has not been the same kind of a church somewhere in the earth. When Christ said, "I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18), He plainly meant that His church would triumph against all the forces of evil which would assail it, and would be found faithful unto the end of the age. It is the perpetuity of the church which is divinely mandated, and this mandate includes baptism, for without baptism a church cannot come into being, nor exist indefinitely. But it is not so with the ministry, for many a church has been organized without even a prospect of a pastor, and churches may endure an extended hiatus without a pastor, but they cannot long survive without administering the ordinance of baptism.

Let us pray that God will give all of His churches pastors, for a God given pastor greatly enhances the maturity of the church (Eph. 4:11-12). But let us not deny nor negate the baptismal authority of a pastorless church, and thereby consign the already handicapped church to a slow, but sure death.

Again I quote J.M.C. Breaker, whom Brother Cockrell contends is a staunch Landmarker, and whom he commends to readers of the *B.B.B.* Breaker says: "The law of baptism, thus far considered, and which we have seen requires the administrator to be the accredited agent of a gospel church, IS INTENDED TO APPLY WHERE SUCH A CHURCH IS TO BE FOUND, or where access can be had to such a church, and to such an administrator; BUT WE MAY SUPPOSE A CASE (as that of Roger Williams and his friends) where persons desire to receive the rite, and WHERE THERE IS NO QUALIFIED ADMINISTRATOR to perform it. CAN IT BE LAWFULLY ADMINISTERED UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES? I THINK IT CAN, and for the following reasons; John the Baptist was not baptized, and yet the rite was lawfully administered by him . . . under certain circumstances, then, I THINK BAPTISM BY AN UNBAPTIZED AND UNACCREDITED PERSON WOULD BE VALID; that is, (1,) where there is no true church or minister; (2,) where it is impossible for the parties desiring it

to obtain the services of a qualified administrator from abroad, or where there is no knowledge, on their part of such an administrator; (3,) where the intention of those receiving the rite is thereby to form themselves into a gospel church; and (4,) where the person thus administering the ordinance does so in good faith, and in practical submission to the teaching of Christ, that is, he must be one of the number forming the church, and as such must himself receive the rite in turn which John the Baptist would have done, had not his peculiar mission, prevented" (*ADMINISTRATOR OF BAPTISM*, Pages 261-263 - Caps mine).

Beloved Baptists, can we say the above statement by Bro. Breaker is merely a "weak statement," and yet be honest with our churches, and what we have taught them concerning Landmarkism? Is Breaker's Landmarkism, your brand? Do you consider Breaker's statement quoted above to be of no serious nature, or do you consider it to be heresy? One of the best ways to teach is to ask questions which contain the answer or part of the answer. To ask the questions posed in this paragraph of an informed Landmarker is to imply the absence of ignorance in the matter on the part of the Landmarker. The questions are asked to further highlight the grievous error Brother Breaker glaringly propagates in the statement. Re-read the statement, and rejoice that God has delivered you from deep water Protestantism.

Bro. Breaker says on page 245 of his article referred to above, "It is certain that the commission to baptize was addressed exclusively to the eleven." If so then, the commission to baptize was co-terminus with the lives of the "eleven," and the Quakers are correct in contending baptism ceased with the death of the apostles. Or the Roman Catholic church is right in contending for apostolic succession. But it is not so, Baptists have never been faced with such an unreasonable dilemma, for the simple reason, the commission was not given "exclusively to the eleven," but to the whole church at Jerusalem. The commission was not given to the "eleven" as apostles whereby general authority was granted them to act independently of the church. The "eleven" at the time the commission was given were meeting in official church capacity, or they were official representatives of the church. Either way, the commission with its ordinance of baptism belongs to the local independent landmark church, and the importance of this truth cannot be overemphasized.

Baptism is not a nose of wax, which can be modified to fit every circumstance. Baptism, as respects regeneration has no merit, but it is yet a high and lofty ordinance, and is crucial to holy living, or proper dedication unto God. So it is, we should give serious attention to the doctrine of baptism, and make sure our baptism is the "one baptism" which God honors.

"The practical evil that is cropping out of the theory, in some quarters, to the great disturbance of the churches, is that ministers claiming to be officers of the kingdom are assuming control of baptism, and baptizing whom they please, whether in a Baptist Church as was the immersion of Dr. Weaver, of Louisville, Ky., by Prof. Jas. P. Boyce, without consulting the church,—or fifty miles away. But the unscripturalness of this is evident from the fact that the ordinances, both, or all, were delivered to the churches and not to the ministry; and ministers, therefore, have no more authority to administer baptism, to whom they please, and where they please, than to administer the Supper to whom and where they please. It is presumptuous and unscriptural assumption of power that does not belong to them. Our churches should be admonished that "Eternal vigilance is the price of their safety," in this regard, as well as others" (J.R. Graves, *PILLARS OF ORTHODOXY* Pg. 223 - Pub. By Ben M. Bogard).

Graves says in referring to the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, "There were more than twelve administrators, for it is written that in that upper chamber at Jerusalem there were "an hundred and twenty" present, and on the day of Pentecost "they were all with one accord and in one place" (Same Work as quoted from above, Pg. 191). It is plain to see, Bro. Graves did not believe baptism was shut up to the ministry, and his position is amply supported by the scriptures and Baptist history.

"There are a number of questions which may be asked in relation to the two ordinances, such as these: What is the proper method of observing baptism and the Lord's supper? Who is qualified to administer them? Who are fit subjects or recipients of them? And to whom does the responsibility for their proper observance or administration belong? These questions will be answered variously according to the different interpretations of the passages upon which the answers are based. Suffice it for us to say in general that these are church ordinances and are therefore not to be administered or observed in promiscuous assemblies, and according to the pattern furnished by the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is the custodian of the two ordinances, and is responsible for their administration" (*ELEMENTAL THEOLOGY* By E.H. Bancroft - Pg. 243).

"We believe that all Christian converts under regular process were baptized. But, it seems under Christ and the apostles, the underlings did the baptizing in the main. Christ did not baptize personally. The apostle Paul baptized only a few . . . Peter commanded the household of Cornelius to be baptized, but did not do it himself. The Eunuch was baptized by Phillip, one of the seven deacons on an Evangelistic tour. In the remainder of the instances of baptisms, it is not stated who did the baptizing. It seems to me, in view of the above facts, to confine the right to baptize to the bishops or elders and such as they may deputize, is a reversal of the apostolic order. Are not apostolic practices safe?" (*CHRISTIAN BAPTISM*, by W.O. Baker -Pg. 18 - 1893).

As to Brother J.M.C. Breaker's article — *Administrator of Baptism*. It cannot with any degree of certainty be determined where he is coming from in his treatise, or to where he is going, but contradictions galore arise in the process. At one point and then another it appears as if he is pro-Landmarkism, and it is "full steam ahead," but then as you read on, there is discovered in his arguments a gaping hole like that in the side of the Titanic, and he proceeds to sink his own ship. He quotes Scripture, and then later on out argues them a hundred fold. In the over-all article Brother Breaker renders a grave disservice to Landmarkism and the Lord's churches, for the heaven given authority regulating baptism is left in utter disarray. The quotations taken from the article as given in this book should suffice in convincing the reader that Brother Breaker is not a dependable guide in the matter of baptism. Nevertheless, Brother Cockrell promotes the article, and says that his variances with Bro. Breaker were not "serious".

Baptism is an extremely serious matter, so much so that omniscience sent a vanguard in the person of John the Baptist to prepare by baptism the people whom Christ would later form His church from. The same absolute or unalterable prerequisites divinely fixed to safeguard John's baptism are in place today, only the authority has changed from John to the Lord's churches. The Lord's churches by undeviating adherence to the baptismal pattern given them by their Head through the Scriptures, has provided heaven with more martyrs than all else combined.

Can Baptists of today, who have so great an history and heritage, say as Bro. Breaker does without dangerously diminishing the importance of baptism; that Philip did not baptize the Eunuch into a church, but baptized him with the hope he would whenever the opportunity presented itself join a church? I THINK NOT! Or in circumstances like those faced by Roger Williams, who knowingly had an unbaptized man (Ezekiel Holliman) to administer immersion to him, and he in turn immersed Holliman and ten others? I THINK NOT! This is Breaker's kind of Landmarkism, but it is most certainly not Baptistic. It is the kind of practice which Bro. Cockrell says, is of no "serious" consequence. (Ibid). Baptism is important, for hinged on it is intimate fellowship with Christ, His church, bride-ship, and the coveted "well done" at the mercy seat of Christ.

