



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

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

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ANSWER TO "AN OPEN LETTER"

By Elder Joe Wilson

WITH EDITOR'S RESPONSE

By Wayne Camp

[Editor's Note: Bro. Joe Wilson has asked that I identify him as the one to whom I addressed the open letter. That is why his name appears in this article.

This is a very important issue that Bro. Joe and I are discussing and one about which we both feel strongly. In this day of new-evangelicalism, get-along-ism and ecumenism, it is not popular to call on another to give Biblical proof for what he teaches. I would remind you that we are admonished to “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” While I have always been hesitant to get into an open debate with a brother with whom I fellowship from time to time, there is Biblical ground for what we are doing here. Paul openly and to his face charged Peter with error on one occasion. **Galatians 2:11** *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.* When *certain men who taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,* Paul and Barnabas *had no small dissension and disputation with them. (Acts 15:1-2).*

If Bro. Joe is right, there are few, if any, true Baptist Churches in this world today. As will be seen in this issue, there was a time when the common and accepted way for a church to be formed was for a group of baptized believers to **constitute themselves into a church.** You will see that the first Baptist Church established on the shores of this country was “gathered” by Dr. John Clarke and organized into a church—no arm, no mother church, and no mission operated for a time, and apparently no formal organizational service.

If Bro. Joe and those who agree with him are wrong, their doctrine has destroyed churches, divided churches,

and impugned the baptisms of hundreds. It is a serious business to disband one of the Lord's churches, declare every baptism it has every administered invalid, and then organize another church. And, that is what has been done in many places. If Bro. Joe is wrong and has no Scripture for what he teaches and practices on this matter of link-chain succession, he and others who declare that any church started without the vote of a “mother church” to be unscriptural and born out of “spiritual adultery,” they will have to give an account when they stand at the judgement seat of Christ.

If I am wrong, I desire to be corrected. That is why I will be pressing Bro. Joe for Scripture that teaches what he teaches. The reader will have to judge who backs up what he teaches by Scripture and who does not. We will all do well to heed the words of John Bunyan. “. . . keep thy eye upon the word; take heed of going contrary to that under any pretence whatever; for without the word, there is nothing to God's glory, nor thy brother's edification.”

The question under consideration is **“The Scriptural Requirements For Starting A True Church.”** The question must be settled with Scripture. —Wayne Camp]

Bro. Wilson Wrote:

Dear Brother Camp,

I appreciate the seeming spirit in which you wrote. I shall certainly try to do the same. I think it good that this subject be discussed. I hope the discussion will be of spiritual profit to many.

1. I will say a few things relative to the article “Chain Link Ecclesiology” which you sent me.

It seems to me that you ridicule the subject, and feel you have disproved it. Why then do you say at

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the beginning that, "it might be wise, expedient, and well, in the present circumstances, for new churches to be formed through arms that are extended by Scriptural churches wherever possible and practical? Why do you spend a whole article seeking to prove that such action is unscriptural and not according to Baptist historians, then say it may be wise to do it in this way. Please explain this. I would think that if a practice is unScriptural and unBaptistic, it would be unwise to do it.

Brother Camp's Response:

Bro. Joe asked that I send him a copy of the

article "**Chain Link Ecclesiology**" and I complied with his request not knowing that he would try to answer it and refrain from answering several of my questions in the open letter "**Concerning The Scriptural Requirements For Starting A True Church.**" He spent a little over a page answering something with which most readers are not familiar—an article published several years ago. I have this article ready for re-publication and will soon. I will answer him even though it would have been better to wait until I republished the article.

Bro. Joe, you question my statement "**It might be wise, expedient, and well, in the present circumstances, for new churches to be formed through arms that are extended by Scriptural churches wherever possible and practical.**" When I made that statement I had in mind an occasion found in the Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. He advised men to remain single if they could live without lusting. **1 Corinthians 7:25-26 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.** Christians, especially in Corinth, were experiencing great persecution. During "**the present distress**" Paul advised that they remain unmarried and virgins. This was not for all time; it was for "**the present distress**" through which they were going.

My advice that "**it might be wise, expedient, and well, in the present circumstances, for new churches to be formed through arms that are extended by Scriptural churches wherever possible and practical**" was because I knew then, and I know now, that there are those among us who make it their business to seek out **broken or missing links** and seek to unchurch people who have been organized into a New Testament church for many years. This is divisive and destructive. Therefore, in the light of this "**present distress**" I believe "**it might be wise, expedient, and well, in the present circumstances, for new churches to be formed through arms that are**

extended by Scriptural churches wherever possible and practical.” On the other hand, if anyone tries to force that as church law upon others, “Let him produce Scripture that demands it.” Something that is apparently impossible for I am sure that if you had a Scripture to support the idea, you would have given it in your five typewritten pages. But you cited not one verse of Scripture to support the notion.

Bro. Joe Wrote:

2. You say you believe in the perpetuity of true churches. Please explain what you mean by perpetuity, and how you believe it is accomplished. I can see only two ways to accomplish perpetuity of any thing. 1. The perpetual existence of the thing itself. Neither you or I believe this as to the Lord's promise of church perpetuity. 2. Through link-chain succession.

Bro. Camp's Response:

Bro. Joe, the fact that you cannot see more than the two ways you suggested for perpetuity to be accomplished means nothing. In no way does it mean that there are only two ways to accomplish perpetuity.

According to my dictionary, “**perpetuity**” is “the state or character of being perpetual.” And, “**perpetual**” means “continuing or enduring forever; lasting an indefinitely long time: *perpetual* snows; continuing or continued without intermission or interruption.” Jesus said, **Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** Jesus uses the word **church** here in the institutional sense. “**Marriage is God's first institution for the welfare of the race**” and the institution of marriage has had a perpetual existence since the first marriage. But, that in no way suggests that the first marriage has lasted till now. Nor does it mean that marriages have a chain-link succession back to the time of Adam. But, it does mean that in all ages of human history the institution of marriage has always existed. Jesus promised his institution of the church would have a perpetual existence meaning that from the time of its origin to the present day there have always been churches like that first church.

Many of our Baptist forefathers could see **perpetuity** without either of the only two ways you can see. On page one of his book on Baptist Church Perpetuity, W. A. 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.”

Bro. Joe, in this one quote we have the testimony of three great Baptist men—Ford, Graves, and Jarrel—that deny the necessity of your kind of linked-chain succession, yet they all believed in the perpetuity of Baptist churches. I could add to that the names of I. K. Cross, C. D.

Cole, Buel H. Kazee, E. T. Hiscox, Benjamin Bogard, John T. Christian and several others who boldly proclaimed church perpetuity but did not hold to your doctrine of chain-link succession being essential to perpetuity. I will quote these men before finishing this.

Bro. Joe, you may see only two ways for succession to be accomplished, but many reputable Baptists of the past saw a doctrinal succession as establishing perpetuity without espousing your kind of link-chain successionism.

Bro. Joe Wrote:

It seems to me that God has always accomplished perpetuity through link chain succession. The apple I eat has thus descended from the first apple trees created by God. The dog that is a special pet to me descended by link chain succession from two of the first dogs created by God. You and I descended by link chain succession from Adam and Eve. All this is true even though we cannot trace this succession link by link. God has just brought about perpetuity by link chain succession.

Bro. Camp's Response:

I notice you often use terms such as, "**It seems to me,**" "**I believe,**" and "**I think.**" That is a dangerous basis for anyone's theology. It is building on sand. It matters not a whit what I think or you think if we cannot back it up with God's word. You said, "It seems to me that God has always accomplished perpetuity through link chain succession." Bro. Joe, what makes it seem that way to you? Surely you do not believe that we should accept as law what "**seems**" to you to be true. I asked you repeatedly in my open letter for Scripture for what you believe. You did not give me a single verse. In five typewritten pages you gave me not one verse. Yet, you expect me and others to accept your position because "**it seems**" to you it is that way. **If you have no Scripture for your position your faith is blind faith.** We must assume that you have no Scripture since you wrote five pages without giving us any.

Your effort to prove chain-link succession by an apple, a dog, and you and me is somewhat misleading. You say, "The apple I eat has thus descended from the first apple trees created by God." You have an apple descending from the first

apple trees. Prove that an apple descends directly from another apple all the way back to the first apple and you **may** have something. It appears to me that in your apple illustration you have three kinds of links in that chain. You have a tree that God made (link one) from which came an apple (link two) from which came a seed (link three) from which came a tree, etc. ad infinitum. That hardly illustrates one church coming out of another church, etc. It probably **seems** to you it does but I am sure others have problems with it.

You use link-chain dogs to illustrate chain-link succession of churches. There are problems with that illustration also. You have two dogs, a male and a female, producing one dog that is a special pet to you. Does it take two churches, a male church and a female church, to produce a new church? Now, if you could show that a mother dog can independently produce a daughter dog which can then can independently produce another daughter dog, etc., you **may** have a case.

You then try to illustrate the chain-link succession of churches by saying that you and I descended by chain-link succession from Adam and Eve. Again you have the same problem as with the dogs. You have two people producing one, a male and a female who produce a child. It takes a male link **plus** a female link to produce another link.

Now, Bro. Joe, before you accuse me of being unfairly abusive, remember it was you who introduced the tree and apple chain (you left out the seed which is essential), the two dogs and one dog chain, and the two people and one person chain. I have only shown that they fail to illustrate the chain-link succession of churches. Since you gave no Scripture proving chain-link succession I understand your resorting to such illustrations. But, frankly, I am disappointed that you have chosen to answer my letter "**Concerning The Scriptural Requirements For Starting A True Church**" with such dissimilar illustrations. If I understand your position, you believe a "mother" church must, **in every instance and without exception**, vote to start a "daughter" church. Pray tell us how that is illustrated by a tree

producing an apple in which there is a seed, which, if planted will produce a tree. Or show us how the mating of a male dog and a female dog which results in that special pet of yours illustrates one church voting to start another church. They just do not do it! They are entirely too dissimilar and disparate to prove your point.

Bro. Joe Wrote:

Now, if church perpetuity is not thus brought about, please tell us what you believe perpetuity as to churches means and how it is accomplished.

Bro. Camp's Response: I believe that perpetuity is accomplished just as Jesus taught. The Lord promised perpetuity. **Matthew 16:18** *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The Lord sent out his people to accomplish perpetuity. **Matthew 28:18-19** *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* For forty days Jesus companied with the apostles. **Acts 1:2-3** *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* After that forty days he commanded them saying, *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* That would help him to keep his promise of perpetuity. There is also the sending of Philip by the Holy Spirit to preach at Samaria. Right in the midst of a great ingathering there, the Spirit sent him to the Ethiopian eunuch. **Acts 8:26-27** *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her*

treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. Again perpetuity is being accomplished when the Spirit of the Lord told Peter to go to the Gentile family of Cornelius and preach the gospel to them. **Acts 10:19-20** *While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.*

And how about those preachers who were scattered abroad when Saul was making havoc of the churches? **Acts 11:19-21** *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.* And, of course, there is Acts 13 where Saul and Barnabas are sent forth by the Holy Ghost. **Acts 13:4** *So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.* Thus began the "missionary work" of Paul and Barnabas which continued the "doming up" of the church institution and the assurance that in every age until the return of Christ there would be churches of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

I could go on. I could show you how the church at Thessalonica was such a church that their faith was spoken of throughout the world. I could show you how, during the time that Paul was at Ephesus that all Asia heard the gospel. **Acts 19:10** *And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.* There was also a church at Philadelphia before whom Christ had set an open door. Ah, Bro. Joe, you asked me how I believe church perpetuity is accomplished. I have shown you from the word of God how perpetuity was and is accomplished. Isn't that a lot better than apples and dogs and *"It seems*

to me”

Bro. Joe Wrote:

3. You quote with seeming approval, Ben Bogard from his Baptist Way book on The Way to Organize Churches, "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 statedly for worship... The agreement to meet regularly for worship and work is commonly called a church covenant...When this covenant has been entered into the church is fully organized. This covenant is the organization."

You seemed to approve of this statement. Do you believe this is the proper way to organize a church? Do you believe that such an organization would be a true church? Please show us where "Church Authority" enters into this way of organizing a church. You say you believe a church must be organized by church authority. You seemingly approve of the statement by Bogard. Please put these two things together for us. I insist that Bogard's way of organizing a church totally leaves out church authority and results in an organization that is not a true church. What do you say?

Bro. Camp's Response:

You mention Bro. Bogard's statement concerning the constitution of a church. I give it here again along with statements of some other prominent Baptists.

Ben Bogard

"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 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 (*The Baptist Way-book*, Pp. 69-70, 1945 ed.).

I. K. CROSS

Dr. Cross is an outstanding student and scholar of Baptist History. He does not believe that a church must have a "mother church" and establish a chain-link succession to be one of the Lord's churches. He wrote, "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" (*Spotlight on Landmarkism*, Pp. 18, 19).

C. D. Cole

Bro. C. D. Cole was a strong and sound Baptist. Concerning the organizing of churches he 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). Bro. Joe, I have emphasized a part of Bro. Cole's statement to show that he held that a church constitutes itself with a group of baptized believers coming together and agreeing to work together in church capacity. While others, out of tradition, are called in to help, Bro. Cole said that outside help is ***not absolutely essential***.

E. T. HISCOX

Dr. Hiscox was author of the widely used *New Directory of Baptist Churches*. Forty years ago, when I first started preaching, these manuals on church order were widely used and accepted as Baptist and Scriptural. Hiscox believed in Baptist Church perpetuity. However, he believed that those who held that a succession of churches without broken links existed back to the time of Christ were wrong. He said, “. . . strange to say, some Baptists have been courageous enough, and *indiscreet* 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.”

J. R. GRAVES

Dr. J. R. Graves is considered by all true Landmark Baptists to have been sound in the faith. Yet, of organizing churches he 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.”

W. A. JARREL

One of the best books I have ever read on Baptist Church Perpetuity is Jarrel's. It is almost a necessity for any who would research the history of Baptists. Dr. Jarrel, though believing in Perpetuity, quoted favorably Graves' statement on the organizing of churches. Jarrel himself wrote, "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.”

Dr. Jarrel continued, “The only senses in which one Baptist church can succeed another are that the church leads men and women to Christ, then through its missionaries or ministers baptizes them, after which *the baptized organize themselves into a Baptist church*; or, in lettering off some of its members to organize a new church; or, in case the old church has fallen to pieces, for *its members to reorganize themselves into a church.*”

This astute Baptist Historian then set forth what he understood Baptists to mean by church perpetuity or succession. “All that Baptists mean by church ‘Succession,’ or Church Perpetuity, is: *There has never been a day since the organization of the first New Testament church in which there was no genuine church of the bow Testament existing on earth.*” Bro. Jarrel could see a way of perpetuity that you cannot see, Bro. Joe. What's more, his research into Baptist History showed him that other Baptists could see another way, also.

DR. S. H. FORD

Dr. Jarrel considered Ford to be a very scholarly man. He quotes Ford as saying, “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.” Dr. Ford could see church perpetuity without a chain linked succession, Bro. Joe, even though you cannot.

DR. JOHN CLARKE

Dr. John Clarke was the founder of the first Baptist Church in America. He apparently followed the method suggested by Bogard and Graves in establishing the first church in this great nation. On the gravestone of Dr. Clarke appears this simple account of the constitution of that first church. “*He, with his associates, came to this Island from Mass., in March, 1638, O. S., and on the 24th of the same month obtained a deed thereof from the Indians. He shortly after gathered the church aforesaid and became its pastor.*” There is no mention

of a "mother church" and no mention of him operating a mission for a time. **He gathered the church and became its pastor.** Bro. Joe, will you unchurch Dr. Clarke and the first Baptist Church ever planted on the soil of this country?

Yes, Bro. Joe, I concur with these men. I believe a group of Scripturally baptized believers can constitute themselves into a Scriptural Baptist Church. It was the **common way in which churches were organized** in the days of Ford, Bogard, Graves, Jarrel, Hiscox, Cole, and others. And, until you produce **Scripture** showing where a specific church, such as the one at Antioch, ever voted to start a specific church at a specific place, I insist that you are without **biblical grounds** for accusing them or me of error in this.

You keep mentioning "**church authority.**" You also say, as will be seen later, that you cite chapter and verse for church authority. Yet, Dear Bro. Joe, you never cited **one single verse** supporting church authority. You have said that the only way church authority can be exercised is by voting. And, you have said that church authority is clearly taught in Scripture. Why do you claim that church authority in the organization of churches is so clearly taught in Scripture, yet you never cite one verse. So that our readers may know, in your response to this, please cite some verses which clearly and irrefutably set forth church authority. That is all we ask. Give us "Thus saith the Lord."

Bro. Joe Wrote:

If you will reprint this article or one similar to it, I will be glad to write concerning such. Now to The Open Letter.

Dear brother, let me say that if we are going to discuss this subject, we must state plainly and clearly (so our readers will know) exactly what we believe. We must not cover or color our beliefs by tons of words and irrelevant and sometimes ridiculous questions. I will try to state plainly what I believe. I ask you to do the same.

1. First as to your diatribe on "mother church." I consider all of your questions on this to be immaterial and irrelevant, and often absurd, and sometimes unfairly abusive. You know what I mean by a mother church. You knew it when you wrote your letter. We both know that we use words relative

to spiritual subjects when all that enters into the physical and natural uses of those words does not enter into our usage relative to spiritual subjects. We certainly do not believe that all that enters into the husband-wife relationship does not apply to the Bride of Christ.

By "mother" I (and those like me) simply refer to a church authorizing the organization of another church. I would have used "birthing," but did not want to set you off on a long discourse on "birth." Of course, I do not mean that the daughter church is to have the same obedient relationship to the mother church as in the physical realm. Brother Camp, I think you knew all this. Again, All I mean by "mother church" is that one church authorizes the organization of another church.

You used the word "sister" as related to churches. I understood you to approve of such word. I certainly believe all true churches are sister churches. Now I am not going to go off into a long discourse, asking loads of irrelevant and absurd questions. We both know that there are matters that relate to earthly, human sisters that do not relate to sister churches. Please, let us discuss the subject under discussion without such tactics. You could have just plainly and clearly answered my question. You did not need to go to such length on "mother church" and other matters. My question was a simple and very plain one. It could (and should) have been simply, plainly, and clearly answered. Let me show you how I would have answered it. Yes, I do believe that in order for a church to be a true church, it must be started by another true church. See how simple that is. It is a plain and clear answer. If I did not believe that I would just say, no, I don't believe that. Frankly, though you may think you answered my question, I will show later why I do not think you did answer it -at least not plainly and clearly.

Bro. Camp's Response:

I am glad we finally got to the open letter "**Concerning The Scriptural Requirements For Starting A True Church.**" My first question was **Where in Scripture is the term "mother church" authorized or used?** Bro. Joe, you responded, "First as to your diatribe on "mother church." I consider all of your questions on this to be immaterial and irrelevant, and often absurd, and sometimes unfairly abusive." I was shocked at this response, to say the least. Since when are

questions asking for Scripture for what another advocates *immaterial, irrelevant, absurd, and unfairly abusive?*

You called my discussion a *diatribe*. According to my dictionary a diatribe is a "bitter and abusive speech or writing." I went back and reread my discussion of the "mother church" idea. I could not see any bitterness in it. I asked four other brethren to read it and see if it struck them as bitter and abusive. They assured me that it was not. I received several letters commending it. In fact, some who may disagree with my stand otherwise, felt the term "*mother church*" is unbiblical and should be left to the Roman Catholics. Not one reader, except you, Bro. Joe, has indicated my discussion on that was a diatribe. I am sorry it *seems* that way to you.

I assure you, Bro. Joe, I will not refer to what you write as a *diatribe*. Nor will I characterize your questions as *immaterial, irrelevant, absurd, or unfairly abusive*. By God's grace, I plan to keep my response on a higher plain than that. It is extremely difficult for me, however, to understand a Baptist preacher who is supposed to hold the Bible to be his *only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice*, characterizing a question which asks for Scripture on something as *immaterial, irrelevant, absurd, or unfairly abusive*. Bro. Joe, such attacks on what I have written will not cover the fact that you gave no Scripture whatever for the term "*mother church*" Our readers can see that. Is it possible that you consider Scripture *immaterial, irrelevant, absurd, or unfairly abusive* in this discussion? I asked for Scripture for the term "*mother church*." You gave none and characterized the question, as well as my other questions as *immaterial, irrelevant, absurd, or unfairly abusive*. I can only conclude what that suggests.

(To be continued next issue)

Bouquets and Brickbats

FLORIDA: Please send all your articles on the Promise Keepers.

OHIO: Please send me a couple of sample copies of the paper you publish.

MISSOURI: Thank you for the paper and the work and effort put into it by you and the church.

OKLAHOMA: I enjoy your paper very much.

LOUISIANA: I have been reading some excellent writings of A.W. Pink. I found His doctrine on the Sovereignty of God in salvation very logical and most importantly very biblical. I am a subscriber to your Grace Proclamator publication and believe you have written some articles on election and salvation. My question to you is "How do you present the gospel to people if they are either elected or not." Please take a moment to respond.

ARKANSAS: I totally agree with your article on this subject. You raised some questions that I hope will provoke some "thinking" among our King Jimmy brethren. My dad comes over to my house to check things out in the WWW. We especially enjoy your articles and the ones from Ronoake Virginia. Hope to see you soon.

OKLAHOMA: Well, as usual, you've not only hit the nail on the head, but you've countersunk it about an inch and a half! I refer, of course, to your recent article on establishing churches. For some reason, Baptists have developed a set of traditions about establishing churches that exceeds the Pharisees' traditions about washing pots and pans. I suspect that these things are done because the pastors (and to some degree the churches) cannot stand the idea of sending forth a missionary whose every move is not totally under their control. I really appreciate your article!

Of course, I imagine the brethren will weep and gnash their teeth, but that is to be expected. In fact, just about two months ago, in the course of an e-mail discussion with a dear brother about another topic, I mentioned that we have neither command nor example in the Scripture for establishing missions as "protochurches." I was making a point that we don't hold too closely to the examples we find in Acts, since he had been quoting examples in Acts to support his side of the discussion.

This brother is in charge of a "mission," and I suspect that he took my point very ill, since he has not replied to me though we used to correspond at least weekly. I have the greatest respect for his work, and appreciate him very much, but the fact is that we have no Scriptural basis for establishing missions instead of

churches, baptizing converts into the "mother church" instead of the local church, getting the "mother church" to hold organizing services, and so on.

Anyway, as always, keep up the good work. I appreciate your methodical approach to questions, even when I don't agree with you on all points.

ARKANSAS: Enjoyed your article separating New Testament practice from evolved tradition regarding church perpetuity. To be honest, I had hoped to glean some insight into what a Sovereign Grace Baptist does when he finds himself "orphaned" geographically from his "mother" church. Among those familiar with our situation, the immediate response is likely to be that we should never have left, but the reality is that God in His providence has placed us in a locale that is apparently devoid of a doctrinally sound assembly. There are churches within driving distance, but I am not convinced that I can be part of a local assembly if separated the majority of the time by 30 miles or 300. Do you have information on how Baptists historically dealt with migrations that left remnants of His flocks without a shepherd? For the record, we are still "members" (albeit non-attending) in good standing with our "mother" church.

PENNSYLVANIA: I have always enjoyed receiving and reading your paper. I started receiving it when I was called as pastor of _____, in 1985. Since 1994 I have moved to Pennsylvania and started _____. While at _____, we sent several missionaries out to start churches. At that time I formulated a policy stating basically the position you espoused in the April edition of the GP&P. That position was adopted as church policy, but a few members began to "sow seeds of discord" that we had left the biblical position of the "mother" church and had given the missionaries unscriptural liberty in baptizing converts into the "mission church" and letting them observe the Lord's Supper before they were "formally" pronounced a church. The policy even stated that the missionary was responsible for church discipline and not the "mother" church. Therefore, I found April's edition very interesting.

Let me ask you to ponder the question of what constitutes a true church. What are the biblical requirements that define a "true"

church? Does scripture teach that a church MUST have been started by another true church? If so, please exegete that passage(s) for me. What are the scriptural marks of a "true" church? I certainly would not want to start a church without "authority" from another church, but where does the Bible mandate that concept? What if (and some do) a church exists today and has biblical doctrine and sound polity, does the fact that it was started by a group or an individual that didn't have "authority" from another particular true church make it less than "true" church? I am not advocating the non-authority position. I am just re-thinking the landmark position and would like to hear your comments.

MISSOURI: Thank you very much for your two excellent articles on the subject of Gambling in the recent issues of "The Grace Proclamator And Promulgator." I do hope you will put these in booklet form for wide distribution.

Such articles are especially needed in Kansas City which has in recent years become "Little Vegas" because of the proliferation of Casinos and other gambling dens. Thank you also for promoting our annual Sovereign Grace Conference in your paper. We already have received a large number of inquiries about it.

Have you heard about the recent controversy over the New International Version of the Bible? Zondervan which publishes it has decided to "de-sex" the NIV and they are not even planning to notify the public. They are just going to do it. The only person in the whole theological world who has dared to oppose them is Dr. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and he has really taken the grief over it. There is an outstanding article on the subject in the March 29, 1997 edition of "World" magazine if you have access to that publication. If not I will be glad to send you a copy of the article if you desire it.

OKLAHOMA: I especially enjoyed the latest issue of TGP&P. There has been a Spanish KJV for a few years. They went through the Spanish 1609 version making their improvements. All other Spanish versions are consistent in calling the Spirit the Holy Spirit. But the SKJV now often calls Him the Holy Ghost--WHICH MAKES NO SENSE IN SPANISH! There is no word for Easter in the Spanish language, only Passover. Therefore

Acts 12:4 has a footnote explaining that this is a "heathen festival" not to be confused with the Jewish passover. The ears of corn that the disciples plucked are no longer heads of grain, but now corn on the cob—which is a grain from the American continent, unknown in Bible lands. These are just a few examples of their improvements to the good old Spanish version.

The open letter concerning Scriptural requirements for starting a church is right on target. How far have you thought the issue through? Will there be follow-up articles? Probably so, because you'll probably get a ton of brickbats over this one.

WASHINGTON: I saw your response to Bro. _____ question in an E-mail that he sent out, I am glad to see that I am not alone in my dis-like for the term "Mother" church, I saw Bro. _____ at a Bible conference recently, and some other brothers who use that terminology. I cringe inside when I hear Mother church used, like I do when I hear or read of one of our brother preachers using the plural form of the word doctrine when referring to God's word (this could be said to be my pet peeve) when doctrines always refers to doctrines of men, devils etc.

How can a church be betrothed to Christ as a virgin, and yet bear a daughter? Mary is the only woman in the history of the world who bore a child while yet a virgin. It troubles me when Baptist's adopt Catholic terminology on the one hand, and give up ground to the Pentecostal without a fight on the other. We are so afraid that we will sound like them, we suppress the desire to express joy in the Lord to the extent that we barely can squeak out a weak amen, never a PRAISE THE LORD, or a HALLELUJAH.

ILLINOIS: Christian greetings. I received your GP&P today and enjoyed reading it all already. I believe that in a theoretical sense, the two "missionaries" sent out by the church themselves constituted a church based upon Matthew 18:20, "Where two . . . are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus, when they baptized such disciples as Lydia, her household, and the jailer and his house at Philippi, those saints were added to them, the church, and when they departed to another town, they left a church of the Lord Jesus in Philippi.

LOUISIANA: I have just read, in the April edition, *"An Open Letter To A Brother In Christ And In The Ministry Concerning The Scriptural Requirements For Starting A True Church"*, and *"A New Twist To The Translation Controversy"*. Brother you struck the nail right on the head. And from my own experience you made no new friends among The Brothers, probably loosing some.

I have been teaching the same message nigh onto fifty years and have found myself on the outside, especially on the **teaching of a Mother Church**. When I ask the same questions you ask I receive cold stares as if speaking heresy.

Concerning The Translation Controversy, again you are right. I wonder if any of those who hold that the 1611 authorized version is the only acceptable translation have ever read any part in the English spoken in 1611. I always ask, "What about the words 'Easter' and 'Baptize', both not in the Greek?". Again I receive cold stares.

What has happened to The Plain Teachings of The Word of God, and where did all these others teachings come from? I have never found out. When I ask all I get are more cold stares and no answers.

Brother Camp please keep telling the truth, it needs to be told!

COLORADO: After receiving your latest **GP&P**, I wanted to send you correspondence which I had with Focus (Focus on The Family) regarding their evolution. Read especially pages 18-19. Thanks for your magazine.

ALABAMA: We enjoy your paper very much and would hate to miss an issue. Please note our change of address. We are sending a small donation for use as you see fit. God bless you and your work.

TENNESSEE: I hope this small amount will help with the **GP&P** publications. We're looking forward to receiving them each month.

FLORIDA: I would appreciate being added to your subscription listing for *The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator* which is published by the authority of Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church. I would like to receive any back issues that you have, especially concerning Promise Keepers and James Dobson.

ARKANSAS: Please send me the **GP&P**

paper. I enjoy it very much. Thank your very much and may God richly bless you.

CANADA: I have appreciated your site on numerous counts. First of all I read numerous articles and unlike many sites I go to I was pleased to not have to duck the deeper into the site I went. I just finished reading your article on the "KJV" question. I wish this debate could be carried to deal with the change in the way manuscripts have been determined to be reliable. I think that would perhaps get this debate onto a footing that would deal with the real issues and not be a religious merry-go-round. I find it interesting that the early settlers to the United States would not have owned a KJV for all the tea that was later dumped in

Boston Harbour. They were readers of the Geneva Bible. I have been fortunate to be able to find a reprint of Tyndale's New Testament and to be honest if you wanted to know what is my favourite that's it. But I love the Geneva Bible notes and am absolutely confused by what is called the Geneva King James Bible! Why can't Christians cut to the chase and debate the real issues instead of playing games with the smokescreens?

Carry on! I for one appreciate your stuff.

VIRGINIA: It was sure a blessing to be able to meet you and talk with you while you were at Singingwood Baptist Church with Bro. Horton. I have added a link from my web page to yours. Your page is certainly full of articles and sermons that are inspiring.

BRAZIL: Sure have enjoyed seeing a stand for truth on the net! It is most welcome to this missionary in Brazil. For sure some of the articles will find their way into the ministry of the Lord here.

VIRGINIA: I don't send e-mail too often but I like to read your web page and I am glad that you are of a mind to put these things on the "net". Some preachers bah humbug the web, but it is a great way to potentially witness to untold numbers of people.

I really enjoy your page and I think that it is great that we can spread the gospel to anyone and everyone with a computer. Keep doing the good work for your labor in the Lord is not in vain. I expect the Lord will come back very soon. Thanks for your stand for the truth. Not many these days are willing to take a stand for the things of God. I'll see you up there.

FLORIDA: I wanted to congratulate you on the Open Letter in the last issue. It expresses what I have been contending for a long time.

OKLAHOMA: Your open letter in the last issue of *The GP&P* was superb. Keep up the strong insistence that men back up what they believe with the Word of God. I eagerly look forward to your correspondents reply. I wonder what Scriptures, if any, he will use.

FLORIDA: I read with great interest your open letter to a Brother on the *Scriptural Way to Start a True Church*. I am glad you are dealing with this. Brethren of that persuasion have caused a lot of confusion in this area, even to stopping the organization of a church on one occasion by dividing the body over the matter.

You have asked for Scripture, but, I predict you will not get a single verse in the Brother's reply that support his position. How do I know? I have asked these same questions and they always go unanswered.

Bro. Camp, keep contending for the faith that is set forth in the Word of God.

PLANNING TO MOVE? If at all possible, please notify us three weeks in advance of your change of address so that we may keep your paper coming. It costs us 70 cents to get your new address from the Postal Service and that may take long enough that two papers are returned at a cost of \$1.40 before we get the correction. This will mean you miss one or two papers. Your help in saving us this expense will be appreciated.

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