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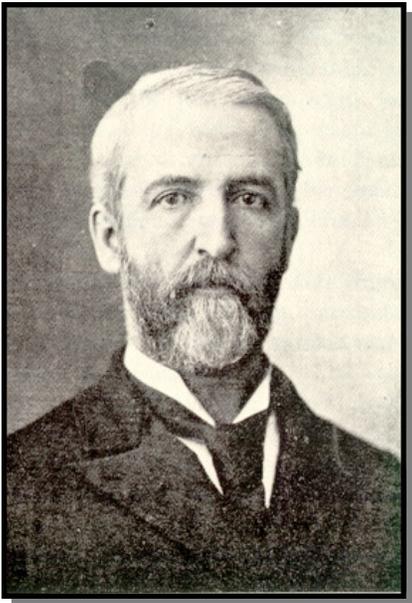
“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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Baptist Giants of Past Years Speak on the Nature of the Church

By Wayne Camp

T. T. EATON DEFENDED THE PHILADELPHIA CONFESSION OF FAITH WITH ITS TEACHING OF A UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Of the church, the first sub-division on the church in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith declares,

The catholic or universal church, which, with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace, may be called invisible, consists of the whole

number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Because of this declaration, there were those who were attacking the Confession and those who held to it claiming that it did not set forth the perpetuity of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. From Eaton's defense of the Confession, it is apparent that he endorsed the statement above concerning the "catholic or universal church" that "may be called invisible." He also apparently endorsed the claim of the Philadelphia Confession that his "catholic or universal church . . . consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ." He must, based on his strong defense of the Confession, have also held that this "catholic or universal" church that is also "invisible" is the spouse of Christ and is his body.

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith was not the first American Confession. The first known American confession of which one may read is

the widely used Keach's Confession of faith. The earliest known record of the mention of a confession by an **associational** body is a reference by the Philadelphia Associational minutes of 1724 wherein a reference is made to the London Confession. Whether the Association had accepted the London Confession officially or not, it was apparently their doctrinal stand until their almost identical Philadelphia Confession was officially adopted in 1742. Since most of our Landmark Baptist Churches trace their history through the Philadelphia Association, one wonders how some can say that one is neither Landmark nor Baptist if he holds to a universal invisible church concept. Baptists, zealous to defend their own position, sometimes cut their historical throat in their denunciations of those who may disagree with them on some points.

While skimming through a recently acquired Bound Edition of *The Baptist Examiner* for the year 1975, I found the following article by T. T. Eaton in which he clearly defends the "catholic or universal" concept of the church as held by

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the Philadelphia Association. As a matter of fact, the article appears two times in the papers from 1975. Once in the July 12 issue and again in the October 11 issue. The main thrust of Eaton's article is to show that their "catholic or universal" and "invisible" concept of the church did not negate their belief in the perpetuity of true local Baptist Churches from the time of Christ to his day. If one writes Bro. Eaton off as a non-Baptist, he must also write off the Philadelphia Baptist Associational churches as non-Baptist.

Then, he must write off the London Baptist Associational churches as non-Baptist. I repeat, such a person cuts his historical throat when he takes such a narrow position.

DEFENSE OF THE PHILADELPHIA CONFESSION OF FAITH

By J. J. Eaton

(Copied from *The Baptist Examiner* of July 12, 1975)

The Philadelphia Confession of Faith is not responsible for the wild interpretations put upon it, any more that the Bible is responsible for the same thing. That Confession is a venerable and, in many respects, a noble document, and we hope the wild interpretations some are seeking to put on it will not bring it into disrepute.

The attempt is made to make it appear that the Philadelphia Confession declares that Christ built "the universal invisible church" on the Rock, which "universal invisible church" should exist in all ages; and also that this Confession opposes the view that Baptists have existed in every age since the Apostles. This is a gross and a groundless misrepresentation of that, venerable document. It says:

"The Catholic or universal church which, with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace, may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Let this language be noted. The Romanists
(See EATON continued P. 7, Rt. Col.)

DOES LIKE ALWAYS BEGET LIKE?

By Wayne Camp

DO BAPTISTS MAKE BAPTISTS?

John 3:6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

In this passage Jesus is not comparing fleshly, physical things with spiritual things; rather, he is contrasting them; thus clearly showing the difference between the flesh and spirit. Some brethren, in their zeal to support a strict chain-link succession of churches—in every case one church must formally start another church—often appeal to the natural physical world to prove that which is spiritual. I have recently read an article by a brother who does this very thing to try to prove his idea about how Baptists are made.

As Jesus points out in our text, there is a difference between the natural and the spiritual. The difference between the physical and the spiritual is seen elsewhere in Scripture. **Ezekiel 11:19** *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.* There is a decided contrast between the stony heart of the natural man and the new heart that God gives in regeneration. **Ezekiel 36:26** *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* Again, the difference between the natural heart and the new heart is revealed.

Paul saw the difference between the natural and the spiritual and set it forth for his readers. **Romans 8:5** *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* And again, **Romans 8:9** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

In fact, Paul tells us that the natural and the spiritual are contrary to one another. **Galatians 5:17** *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye*

cannot do the things that ye would.

There are many other scriptures, which I could cite, that show the contrast of the natural to the spiritual. **Romans 7:5-6** *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

BEING A BAPTIST IS A SPIRITUAL MATTER A BAPTIST CHURCH IS A SPIRITUAL INSTITUTION

Being a Baptist is a spiritual matter. We have all met folks who wore the name Baptist and had their names on a Baptist Church role but who, in their hearts, were Pentecostal or something else. At heart they were certainly not Baptists. One may put on the outward appearance of being a Baptist but unless he is one in his heart, a Baptist spiritually, he only wears a Baptist façade. His being a Baptist is a pretense. His 'Baptisticalness' is merely a veneer. I insist, therefore, that being a real and true Baptist is a spiritual matter. Thus, I have contended, and continue to contend, that it is the Lord who makes real Baptists. They do not descend from one another as dogs from dogs, horses from horses, and men from men.

One brother makes the argument that **Baptists make Baptists, that's where they come from.** His Biblical proof for that is as follows,

It is a natural argument for those of us who believe that all the seed doctrine of the Bible is laid down for us in seed form in the fertile soil of the first few chapters of Genesis: that being 'that from the beginning God so created . . . that in the law of primogenitor of all species . . . like begets

like, everything reproduces after it's own kind, and something dead cannot give birth to something living; while, every living thing has, by the express will of God, been restrained to only reproducing, it's [sic] own kind. And that, not by accident. And that, **not without** purpose.

The brother admits that his argument is a "**natural**" argument. It is based on the "**law of primogenitor of all species . . . like begets like, everything reproduces after it's [sic] own kind.**" Based upon this law, he argues dogmatically that "**Baptists make Baptists, that is where they come from.**"

DOES THE LAW OF PRIMOGENITOR OF ALL SPECIES APPLY IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM?

According to this brother it does. Being a true Baptist is a spiritual matter and the brother argues that Baptists make Baptists. In fact, he argues that Baptists can only make Baptists. Note I did not say he argues "only Baptists can make Baptists." He argues that everything has "**been restrained to only reproducing, it's [sic] own kind.**"

Moreover, the brother argues that once a Baptist church has produced a Baptist Church it always remains a true Baptist church. Here are his words, "**True churches come from true churches; but that's not all: they remain true to their Lord.**"

Let me now return to my question. "**Does the law of primogenitor of all species apply in the spiritual realm?**" At the same time, let me ask the question as I did in the beginning, "**Does like always beget like?**"

Based on this brother's argument, we must answer, "**Yes!**" But, is his argument a valid argument? I suggest it is a flawed argument and will now apply it to other areas of the spiritual realm. He argued unequivocally from the **law of primogenitor** that like always begets like and therefore, **Baptists make Baptists**. Consider this applied to other areas of the spiritual.

1. The elect are the elect when they are born, therefore elect parents produce elect children. **Like begets like.**
2. Believers are justified before God, therefore they produce believing, justified children. **Like begets like.**
3. The elect are redeemed people, therefore, they produce redeemed children. **Like begets like.**
4. The elect are predestined to adoption as children of God, therefore, they produce children who are predestined to adoption as children of God. **Like begets like.**
5. Bro. Joe Doe is a Baptist preacher, therefore, all of his sons will be Baptist preachers. **Like begets like.**
6. Bro. John Jones is a Baptist deacon, therefore all of his sons will be Baptist deacons. **Like begets like.**
7. Bro. Jim Smith and his wife are very godly people, therefore, all of their children will be godly people. **Like begets like.**
8. Bro. Tom Turnipseed and his wife are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's son, therefore, all of their children will be predestined to be conformed to the image of God's son. **Like begets like.**

The folly of superimposing the laws of the natural onto the spiritual is thus illustrated.

Some will argue correctly that election is of God. He does the choosing. Amen! **Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:** But, I have read and heard where a number of brethren have written or said that the church is composed of some who are elect within the elect. It is God who determines who will be Baptists, therefore, I argue it is God who makes Baptists.

Another may argue that it is God who justifies. **Romans 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.** Amen! I also argue that it is God who makes Baptists. And one justified person can as quickly make another justified person as Baptists can make other Baptists.

Others may argue that only Christ can redeem. In fact, it is Christ who has redeemed.

Amen! And I argue that redeemed people can as easily make redeemed people as Baptists can make Baptists. Did not Christ purchase his church with his blood? **Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.** The same One who makes pastors the overseers of Baptist churches, is the same one who adds to Baptist churches. A church may vote for a man to be its overseer, but unless God makes him the overseer, his work will be in vain, and the church's actions will have been in vain.

Some will doubtless argue that it is God who predestines certain ones to the adoption of children. **Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,** Amen. Will you deny that God has also predetermined who will be true Baptists? It is God who makes Baptists.

Some will argue that the fact that Bro. Joe Doe is a Baptist preacher is because God chose him to be a preacher. Amen! **1 Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.** I suggest that one Baptist preacher or a group of Baptist preachers can as easily make other Baptist preachers as Baptists can make Baptists.

About 1962, while pastoring in Stuttgart, Arkansas, a Campbellite preacher, seeing me with my two sons (two others were born later), asked, "Are you going to make preachers out of those boys?"

My answer was, "No! If they are preachers God will have to make preachers out of them."

If he had asked me, "Are you going to make Baptists out of those boys?" my answer would have been essentially the same.

"No, I don't make Baptists. If they are Baptists, God will have to make Baptists out of them."

SUPERIMPOSING NATURAL LAWS UPON SPIRITUAL MATTERS WILL NOT WORK

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

If a saved person comes to see that he ought to be a Baptist, it will be the result of God showing him that need and it will be God who makes him a Baptist. **John 6:44-45 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.** This has its primary application in the matter of salvation. A person who is drawn to Christ comes through the drawing of God. May I suggest that a person who comes to a Baptist Church for membership, and becomes a true Baptist, does so because God teaches him and opens his heart to the truth about his churches?

Church truth, and the importance of being a member of one of the Lord's Baptist churches, is a spiritual matter and is spiritually discerned. We Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptists are quick to admit we can make no one believe in the doctrine of election. God must teach them that truth as he taught it to us. I maintain the same to be true of the truth about the Lord's churches. No one will be made a true Baptist unless God makes him one. Oh, we may raise every scriptural argument in the book, and we may persuade him to be baptized, and we may receive him into the fellowship of the church, and we may write his name in our rolebook in indelible ink, but he will not be a true Baptist until he is one in his heart. Only God can write these truths in a man's heart. Only God, the blessed Trinity, can really make him a Baptist. We have seen that it is folly to apply natural laws—**Like begets like, the law of primogenitor of all species**—in the spiritual realm.

The error of Nicodemus was that he tried to apply natural laws to spiritual matters. When told he must be born again he immediately sought to understand it in the natural realm. **John 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?** Jesus reminded him that there is a vast difference between the natural and the spiritual.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

He went on to show him that the spiritual is as mysterious as the blowing of the wind. **John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.** Human parents beget human children. Dogs beget dogs. Cats beget cats. Skunks beget skunks.

But when it comes to the things of God, spiritual matters, that law does not apply. God works where he will, how he will, and with whom he will. He does this in salvation. He does it in calling men to preach. And, he does it in making Baptists.

About eight years before I came to see the doctrines of grace, two brethren sat up most of the night trying to convince me of the doctrine of election to salvation. I was unconvinced when they left and I went to bed. I was unconvinced when I awakened the next morning and over 3,000 mornings after that. But, I started preaching expository through the epistles of Paul a few years later and I kept running into the doctrine of election. I would carefully slide over the verses that taught the doctrine when I was preaching but would study the doctrine privately. I began to be convicted that I was not giving a thorough exposition of those verses because I was avoiding their true teaching. I lost a lot of sleep over that sin of not preaching all the counsel of God. Finally, one night, God caused the truth to hit me like a ton of bricks. At that moment I was convinced of the doctrine of unconditional election, and no man made a Sovereign Gracer out of me, God did.

As to making Baptists, I used to have an outline study on the church to use in teaching about the church in folk's homes. On one occasion I went into the home of a Methodist preacher and after two hours of study, he looked at me and said, "When can you baptize me? I want to be a Baptist." We baptized him and his wife shortly thereafter. On another occasion I went into the home of a couple who were members of the "Christian" church. I had already spent a lot of time with these folks. On

this night we went through the lesson in about two hours. When we finished, they exclaimed almost together, "Why doesn't every one want to be a Baptist?" We baptized them shortly thereafter.

On the other hand, I went into a number of homes in that same area and taught those lessons and others to a number of families who never became Baptists. In fact, one gentleman specifically asked me to come and teach him about the church of the New Testament. But, that night, after teaching it in the same manner and spirit as I had taught it in the two homes I mentioned above, he informed me that his parents were Methodists and they were good folks and regardless of what I could show him from the Bible and history, he would die a Methodist. He became so enraged that he ordered me out of his house even though he had invited me there to do exactly what I was doing. Now, why did I fail to make a Baptist out of him when I had made the same arguments I had made before and cited the same Scripture I had cited before? If it were true that **Baptists make Baptists**, why did he not become a Baptist as did the others?

I will tell you, Dear Reader. God made a difference.

It was true in the case of Israel and the Egyptians. **Exodus 11:7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.**

It was true in the case of the Corinthians. **1 Corinthians 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?**

When the disciples of John informed him that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, the Baptist answered him and said, **"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven"**(Jn. 3:27). How wise John was.

When Jesus refused to answer Pontius Pilate, and Pilate rebuked him, that gentleman learned a true lesson. **John 19:10-11 Then**

saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.

WHO MAKES BAPTISTS?

Ask some, "*Who makes Baptists?*" and they boldly and unequivocally answer, "*Baptists make Baptists, that's where they come from!*"

This reminds me of a question once propounded by our Lord and Head. Of the baptism of John, Jesus asked, "*The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?*" (*Matthew 21:25*).

In the light of this question, let me pose some.

1. One must be saved to become a Baptist and this salvation, is it from heaven, or of men? *Jonah 2:9 Salvation is of the LORD.*
2. One must be scripturally baptized to become a Baptist, and Baptists trace their baptism back to the baptism of the first Baptist, and this baptism, is it from heaven or of men? *Matthew 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?*
3. One who becomes a Baptist and is baptized must be baptized by the proper authority, and this authority, is it from heaven or of men? *Matthew 28:19 Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*
4. One who becomes a Baptist must be added to a true Baptist Church, and who is it that adds him to said church? *Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*
5. One who becomes a Baptist must become a member of a true Baptist church, and who is it that builds true Baptist churches and perpetuates true Baptist churches? *Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

In the light of these five questions and their scriptural answers, I ask again, "*Who makes Baptists? Where do they come from?*" I answer unequivocally, "*God, the triune God makes Baptists! That is where they come from!*" It is he who saves them. Their baptism is from heaven. They are baptized in his name or by his authority. He adds them to Baptist churches. He has built those Baptist churches. He perpetuates those Baptist churches. How could I say anything else than, "*God makes Baptists, that's where they come from!*"?

Romans 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be

(EATON, Continued from Page 2)

claimed that their hierarchy was "the Catholic or universal church," and these Baptists in Philadelphia contradicted that claim by declaring that only "the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one" can rightly be called "the catholic or universal church." It takes *all* the elect of all ages to make "the catholic or universal church." Of course, then, the little fraction of them, alive at any given time cannot be called the church. Of course, then, this church cannot exist in every age, because its material, except a part of it, and perhaps a very small part, had not come into existence when our Baptist fathers adopted that language. If the world shall continue ten thousand years longer, the last man saved will be part of the "universal church," which this document declares to, be composed of "*the whole number of the elect that have, been, are* (A.D. 1742.—Ed.), *or shall be gathered into one,*" etc. To talk about all the elect as existing through all ages, is ridiculously grotesque. It is likely that only a small fraction of them have even yet (A.D. 1899) come into existence; and certainly

those born since 1742 could not have continued in existence before that date. What, pray, have men born in the 20th century to do with resisting the "gates of hell" in the 10th, century? Let it be remembered that, according to the Philadelphia Confession, it takes *all* the elect of all ages to make "the catholic or universal church"—not the part of them alive in one age.

Let it be noted also that this Confession makes not the slightest hint that Christ meant this "catholic or universal church" when He said: "On this rock I will build my church." Matt. 16:18, is not quoted at all.

This "universal church" is "invisible" only with respect to the internal work of the Spirit. It will be visible when it is "gathered into one." Of course, the internal work of the Spirit is invisible.

There is also in this entire Confession not the slightest suggestion that there has been a day since the Apostles when there were not Baptists in the world. On the contrary, all that is said on the subject assumes their continued existence. But since that was not then a matter of dispute the document is not very full on that point. Thomas Crosby had just issued his great history in which he distinctly claimed, and argued at length to maintain the claim, that Baptists had continued in the world from the Apostles to his day; and these Baptists in Philadelphia took for granted that this was generally admitted among their brethren, and needed not to be specially declared. Nevertheless, this confession does say:

"The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan;

nevertheless, Christ always hath had, and ever shall have, a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him and make profession of his name."

In spite of the fact that "the purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error," and some have gone so far astray as to become "synagogues of Satan," yet all of the churches have not thus gone astray, but "Christ always hath had and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, *of such as believe in him and MAKE PROFESSION OF HIS NAME,*" i.e., of pure churches which do not become "synagogues of Satan."

Again this Confession declares:

"A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ," "for the peculiar administration of the ordinances," etc., in all ages; since "according to the mind of Christ" they were to be continued to the end of the world." And yet we are asked to believe that the Philadelphia Confession is opposed to the idea of continuity of Baptists through the ages since the Apostles!!!! (End of Eaton's Article).

There can be no doubt that T. T. Eaton, a Baptist Giant of past years, held to a "catholic or universal" church which was also "invisible" like the Philadelphia Associational churches. In ***The Baptist Examiner*** of October 18, 1975, Eaton is quoted from an editorial (started in the October 11 issue and continued in the October 18 issue) he wrote while editor of ***The Western Recorder***. Bro. Eaton had been asked by a "Constant Reader" to answer the following question, "Will you not give, briefly and clearly, your reason for believing that the word ***ecclesia***, in Matt. 16:18, means the local assembly?"

After doing a masterful job of answering the question, Bro. Eaton adds a statement from a tract he had published. It said, "Turning to the New Testament we find the word church used in

two special senses, first, as a local body of baptized believers, and second, as including all the redeemed of all ages and lands." Eaton then adds in his editorial, "The 'two senses' are simply the literal and the figurative. 'all the redeemed of all ages and lands' are conceived figuratively as a church, when they become a local assembly in Heaven. We reaffirm both of these sentences."

It is evident that Bro. T. T. Eaton believed much as many other Baptists have on this matter. He was a decidedly strong local church man but believed that in one sense the word *ecclesia* is used to represent the entire body of the elect, all the saved of all the ages—a body that will be local and visible when it finally assembles in heaven.

While I do not agree with Bro. Eaton, far be it from me to denounce him as not even being a Baptist, and a Baptist Giant of past years. He, like many of our Baptist forefathers held to some concept of a universal invisible church.

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January 19-23, 2000

Eld. Wayne Camp Preaching

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Bouquets and Brickbats

GUAM: I greet you in the name of our LORD and SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. I hope this e-mail letter finds you well. I have just finished reading your newsletter concerning Dobson, Hicks and the PK movement. I must admit, some of what I read was most...disturbing (to say the least). Although I know many GODLY men who support the PK movement, I am not

sure that they are aware of some of what you had mentioned. Although I considered myself a supporter of PK, I assure you I am first and foremost of lover of JESUS CHRIST. I would like to thank you for your boldness and courage to stand up for the TRUTH of the BIBLE. I am now in the process of verifying the veracity of the statements that were made by you concerning Dr. Dobson and Robert Hicks.

You asked several times throughout your letter if it was hatred to do what you were doing. I venture to say it was just the opposite. If a man is preaching any kind of doctrine apart from BIBLICAL SCRIPTURE, then he truly has no GODLY basis for his doctrine. It would be hate if you were coming from a bias, personal viewpoint. You presented the views you have from the unbiased, uncompromising truth of scripture. I venture to say that if true men of GOD disagree on any issue, they would agree on the authority of the BIBLE as the inerrant WORD OF GOD.

Thank you again for this information. Be encouraged!

WEST VIRGINIA: I just read Part IV of Brother Wayne Camp's series of articles entitled "Baptist Giants of Past Years Speak on the Nature of the Church," and it is fantastic! It thrills my soul to read after a long-time Landmark Baptist pastor who is honest enough to face established historical facts and admit that most of the well-known Baptist pastors and writers of the past did not hold to the local church-only position, but believed in the existence of some kind of universal church. Among these Baptist forefathers were such men as John Bunyan, Benjamin Keach, John Spilsbury, Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, John Gill, Isaac Backus, Andrew Fuller, William Carey, John Gano, John L. Dagg, P. H. Mell, Richard Furman, J. P. Boyce, Charles Spurgeon, J. M. Pendleton, J. R. Graves, B. H. Carroll, Augustus H. Strong, and countless others.

Arminian Landmark Baptists have often dishonestly claimed that most all of our Baptist forefathers were Arminian in their soteriology, as they have attempted to read their own soteriology into what our Baptist forefathers

believed. The same mistake is committed by Landmark Baptists who read their own ecclesiology into what our Baptist forefathers believed.

We are perfectly free to disagree with what our Baptist forefathers preached and taught on salvation and the church, but let us at least be honest in presenting their true views. Brother Wayne Camp strongly disagrees with many of our Baptist forefathers on certain matters of ecclesiology, but he at least has enough integrity to present their views fairly and accurately instead of in a distorted manner. He also does not commit the serious error of writing these men off as non-Baptists, heretics, or apostates. May God raise up other Landmark Baptist pastors of his kind!

NEW MEXICO: Another great issue of The GP&P. I wonder if Brother _____ is now going to disown John Gill as a Baptist and proclaim him a heretic? When _____ speaks in haste, I do not believe it is ever with regret, remorse or retraction. After all there is the need to protect his infallibility.

WWW: I don't know if you're still there, since this article was modified in January of 1999, but if you are, keep up the good work.

TEXAS: Your November issue of *The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator* was another good one. Like you, I do not agree with Gill on his universal church. At the same time I consider him a great Baptist theologian.

ARKANSAS: Your articles on "*Baptists and the Nature of the Church*" have been eye openers. I was taught in Seminary that such men as Pendleton, Gill and others were local church only. I see now that some great brethren of the past were believers in some sense of a universal invisible church and others believed all the saved will compose the "glory" church. You may recall that Bro. A. J. Kirkland from Texas believed in a "glory" church composed of all the saved.

TEXAS: I want you to know that I really appreciate your paper. When it comes I try to

read it completely before I put it away for future reference. Though I have some different opinions from you on some matters, I have always found you to be a friend and brother and that you present your position in a kind and considerate manner. I cannot say that about all our Baptist brethren who write.

NEW YORK: I called a preacher in the south to ask him about some conservative, Sovereign Grace, local church papers and he highly recommended that I contact you and ask to be put on your mailing list. I am enclosing the names of several brethren that would also like to receive your paper.

A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

By Wayne Camp

2 Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

Does it thrill you when the Lord, through one means or another, opens up a passage of Scripture and shows you its correct teaching? Oh, I know there is that problem of pride and our sometimes thinking that we are infallible in our interpretation of Scripture. It is tough to admit that you may have been teaching something wrongly for a time.

Such as I have described was my experience recently. For most of the time that I have been preaching (42 years) I have preached that something about the verse I have used as our text that I recently realized I have been probably been wrong on. In fact, I am certain of it.

My previous understanding of the passage from which my text is taken is that Peter was contrasting the voice and vision the three brethren saw on the Mount of Transfiguration with the word of God and saying that the Word of God is more certain than a voice from heaven. And, while that is true, I now believe that is not the import of the passage.

I am convinced now that Peter is saying that the vision they saw and the voice they heard in the

mount actually confirmed the written word, making it surer in their minds. They had heard Christ open the Old Testament Scriptures concerning himself. They had believed the record God had given of his Son in the Old Testament prophecies. Now, having seen the vision and heard God speak from heaven and affirm that Christ was his Son and that he was well pleased with him simply made the veracity of those Old Testament prophecies more certain than they had been before.

The Englishman's Greek New Testament translates the verse, "And we have more sure the prophetic word, to which well ye do taking heed, as to a lamp shining in an obscure place . . ."

Valpy's Greek New Testament, and he says "We have the prophetic word more confirmed." Commenting on this Valpy writes,

St. Peter is not here drawing a comparison.

The principal object of the Apostle's observation is: "By the awful display of his glory, in the transfiguration, we have a sanction given, not only to the prophecy of his future coming, but to all other prophecy in general; that it is the word of God, and the effect of his power, of which I have been a witness." The prophetic word means in general every prophecy in the O. T. relating to Christ. This prophetic word was not so clear before the coming of Christ, because before his coming it was not known who the person was, of whom it was spoken; but which was fully *confirmed*, and applied to Christ by the *heavenly voice*: so that there was no room left to doubt of its application and accomplishment.

The voice, as Valpy declares, leaves no room for doubt about the person and work of Jesus Christ. He was the Son of God and the Father was well pleased with the work of his Son. This confirmed the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ.

In this same vein John Gill wrote,

Ver. 19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy, &c.] Though this word of prophecy is generally understood of the writings and prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ, yet different ways are taken to fix the comparison: some think the sense is, that they are more sure than the cunningly devised fables, #2Pe 1:16 but as these have no certainty nor authority in them, but are entirely to be

rejected, the apostle would never put the sacred writings in comparison with them: and it is most clear, that the comparison lies between this word of prophecy, and the testimony of the apostles, who were eye and ear witnesses of the majesty and glory of Christ; but how prophecy should be a surer evidence of Christ, and the Gospel, than such a testimony, is difficult to understand; and is a sense which all agree to reject, by different methods: some think that a comparative is used for a positive, and that the meaning is, that besides the testimony of the apostles, prophecy is a very sure evidence; and this is countenanced by the Syriac version, which renders it, "and we have also a firm", or "true word of prophecy"; to which the Arabic agrees, "and we have a word of prophecy very true": others choose to retain the comparison, and which indeed ought not to be thrown out; but these are divided about it; some are of opinion that it is to be understood of the Jews to whom the apostle writes, and he himself was one, and the sense to be this; not that prophecy in itself was surer than an apostolical testimony, but that it was surer to the Jews, and more valid with them, who had been trained up in, and long used to the prophetic writings; and who had a greater esteem for the prophets of the Old Testament than for the apostles of the New; but it is scarcely credible that the apostle, who had been an eye and ear witness in the holy mount, would put himself in among them, and say, "we have", &c. for whatever prophecy was to them, it could not be surer to him than what he had seen with his eyes, and heard with his ears. Others suppose that the meaning is, that prophecy was "now" surer to the Christians than it was "before", it being confirmed and established by facts and events, and also by miracles, and even by the attestation of this voice heard on the mount, and by the majesty of Christ seen there; but if this had been the sense of the apostle, he would have used these words, "now" and "before"; and besides, this puts the comparison quite out of its place, which

manifestly stands between former prophecy, and the present testimony of the apostles: but the truth of the matter is, that this word of prophecy is not to be understood of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; for though these are the word of God, and do testify of Christ, and are to be taken heed, and attended to, as proofs and evidence of Gospel truths, and are a light to direct and guide in matters both of faith and practice, yet they are not the only light, and are far from being the clearest, and what are only to be attended to; for the Gospel that came by Christ, and is preached by his apostles, and is contained in the writings of the New Testament, is a much clearer light, and at least equally to be attended to: nor are the prophecies of the Old Testament, which particularly relate to Christ, designed; there are many of this kind, which, put together, may very well be called the word of prophecy, and which were to the Jews a light in a

dark place, until Christ came in the flesh; and though they are to be attended to, and compared with facts, to show the truth of the divine revelation, yet they are not a surer evidence, nor so sure an evidence, as the evangelical testimony is, which is of facts, and these supported by miracles; for now the dayspring from on high hath visited us, and Christ, the bright and morning star, has appeared: but the word of prophecy, concerning Christ's second coming, is here intended, whether it lies in the words of the prophets of the Old Testament, as in #Ps 96:13 Da 7:9,10,13 or in the words of Christ, #Mt 16:27,28 24:3,30,44, which latter is most likely. The Ethiopic version understands this of some particular prophecy, and as if the words were a citation of some prophet, rendering the words thus, "and we have a voice more ancient than this of a prophet, saying, ye do well who take heed", &c. Sir Isaac Newton is of opinion, that the apostle refers to the book of the Revelation of St. John, which would not be unlikely, could it be proved that it was then written. Now this prophecy or prediction, concerning Christ's coming again with power and great glory, was a surer evidence of it than what the apostles saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears upon the mount; nothing was surer to them, nor could anything make it surer to them, that he was honoured and glorified, than what they saw and heard: but then this did not so certainly prove that he would hereafter be glorified, or come again in glory. What they saw and heard was a presumptive proof that it "might" be so, and was a confirming pledge and evidence to them that so it "would" be, and was a glorious representation of it; but Christ's prophecy or prediction, that so it "should" be, more strongly ascertained it, since he said it, to whom all things were known from the beginning, and whose counsel shall stand, and not one word of his shall ever fail.

I admit that I have almost certainly been wrong on this passage in the past. I will share more of my research on this passage with the readers some time soon. As Bro. Royce Smith says, "I remain a learner."

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