

PASTORAL SUCCESSION

Through the last seventeen centuries, Christendom has witnessed multiple schismatic arguments, manifold heresies, a myriad of cults, and many apostates. Please recognize that I used the word Christendom and not Christianity. Christendom [defined as “the part of the world where Christianity prevails”] begins in the early 300’s with the commingling of a form of Christianity and the Roman Empire. Christendom began with a **separation from** Biblical Christianity by those who accepted the false doctrine of apostolic succession. The teaching of Scripture regarding separation is two-edged. In the sixth chapter of Luke, verse 22 [only five verses after I see the beginning of the New Testament church], within The Sermon On The Mount, the LORD Jesus states the principle most plainly:

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. The LORD Jesus further expounded the same truth.

John 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. The creatures of darkness flee from the light. Those who are opposed to truth will separate themselves from those who maintain the truth. I use the word “maintain,” because the haters of truth will constantly propose that the truth compromise with the error. Only truth can compromise; error cannot compromise—no matter how error alters the wording, error remains error.

On this topic, the “apostle of love” wrote in a most blunt fashion.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Therefore, I stand by my statement: “Christendom began with a **separation from** Biblical Christianity by those who accepted the false doctrine of apostolic succession.”

The other side of the sword of separation is set out with straightforward language in 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:1.

Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The command “come out from among them, and be ye separate” should be understood as a directive not to accept the invitation to enter into relationships of compromise with any form of false doctrine. A command that obviously has not been obeyed by many claiming to be followers

of Christ.

The apostle Paul recorded the solemn warning of the Holy Spirit that “some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” and Jude was moved to write that “there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Secular historians document the dimensions of the sectarian warfare—literal warfare with the shedding of blood of all who dared oppose the powerful proponents of each new deviation, particularly was this slaughter directed against those defending Biblical truth. Apostates, heretics, cultists, and errorists thrived in the first generation of believers and are abounding in this present era of Christendom where it remains true and will be so until the LORD Jesus returns that many claiming to be Christians “shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” This attraction for doctrinal deviancy is so comprehensive that the LORD Jesus Christ focused a parable on the apparent ultimate victory of false worship.

Luke 18:1-8

1 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

The scholars of the Greek language advise us that the closing sentence of this parable is a linguistic challenge. For instance, A. T. Robertson wrote:

It is not clear whether this sentence is also a question or a positive statement. There is no way to decide. Either will make sense though not quite the same sense. The use of *ara* before *eurhsei* seems to indicate a question expecting a negative answer as in Ac(ts) 8:30; Ro(mans) 14:19. But here *ara* comes in the middle of the sentence instead of near the beginning, an unusual position for either inferential *ara* or interrogative *ara*. On the whole the interrogative *ara* is probably correct, meaning to question if the Son will find a persistence of faith like that of the widow.

While most commentators (including this writer) disagree with the narrowness of Robertson’s understanding of the intent of the word “faith,” his observation that the sentence may be understood as either “a question or a positive statement” is most intriguing. Scripture has a definite, observable, designed ambiguity [“capable of being understood in two or more possible senses or ways”] in certain passages. Whether it is a question or a statement, the sentence is a straightforward assertion that “faith” will never be popular, will never be viewed by the majority as credible, and will never “sweep” the world. The LORD Jesus reminded His disciples that He “came not to send peace, but a sword” [Matthew 10:34]. The LORD described His ministry as [Luke 12:51] “division.” He certainly did not lead His followers to think that they could usher in the Kingdom by preaching. Clearly, one might understand Luke 18:8 to suggest that the followers of “faith” will be a decreasing percentage and not an increasing plurality. It is incredible that any serious Biblical student could ever so misunderstand the Scriptures as to assert that Christianity would overcome all evil and “usher in the kingdom of God”; but some did

and others still do. The preaching of the Gospel was never designed or destined to conquer the world, subdue nature, and chain Satan.

By the day of the Rapture, the number of believers will be shrinking and not expanding. Consider the United States as a measuring stick. Though some eighty-five percent of the present population are alleged to respond to polls as considering themselves 'Christians,' no intelligent person can accept that number as having any relation to the truth of the matter. It is surely obvious to anyone of the senior citizen persuasion that the proportion of the followers of Biblical Christianity in 2006 to the whole population is but a small fraction of what it was in 1956. Though many would be angered by the suggestion, it may well be that in America today there is a lower actual number of true believers than there was fifty years ago. None dispute that England has fewer Christians today than she did five decades ago—why challenge the decline in America? I am not speaking of percentage, but the total number. Were the Trumpet to sound recall this afternoon, the city of Pensacola would be able to function quite well tomorrow. There would be few vacancies in the political and entertainment arenas. The newspaper would be published and delivered and the television news crews would be active. Businesses would manage to stay open, with only a few scattered exceptions. I doubt that the traffic flow would improve greatly.

When the Rapture occurs, most of the world will take little notice. There will not be many crashes involving unpiloted aircraft, driverless trucks, buses, or cars. Panic will not rule the multitudes seeking missing loved ones. I know that thought flies in the face of a lot of preaching that I have heard; but I wonder if China might not have more Rapture-impact than America. I do not expect that the United Nations will have an urgent Security Council Meeting to deal with the Rapture-crisis. It is certain that Congress could remain in session as the Rapture takes place and not have business interrupted.

I remember hearing a sermon over fifty years ago in which the preacher described the horror of the shock of the empty wombs, the empty nurseries, the empty kindergartens, and the missing children—I do believe those who have not reached an age of accountability are covered by the blood of the LORD Jesus and I, as did he, assume that they will be raptured. If so, then a world with no babies would, it would seem, cause a spreading panic—but *America causes the "disappearance" of several million babies from the womb every year and it is accepted by the majority of Americans as a natural, normal choice for a woman to make.* With the restraint of the Holy Spirit removed, one can only wonder even if there will be remorse over the inclusion of infants in the Rapture? The conscience of America was once guided by Christian doctrine, but no longer; today, a pluralistic pagan philosophy rules the ethics and morals of this land. Christianity has lost its influence on the society—primarily because we are living in a post-Christian America. Christianity is in decline.

There are fewer believers in America today [at least in percentage, in not in numbers] than fifty years ago. The decline will continue—that is the teaching of Luke 18:8. Many factors contribute to this depreciation. Chief among them, however, is the actual decline in the number of faithful churches and the increase in the number of cults and false churches. Heresy is flourishing in America in 2006. Churches and preachers are moving into apostasy at an astonishing rate. In the 1960's and 1970's, the largest churches in the United States were mostly independent Baptist churches where the Gospel was faithfully preached—that is a matter of record. It is equally a matter of record that the largest churches in this country today are not faithfully preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is also true that many formerly faithful churches have moved their landmarks and are no longer contending for the faith.

Time and again, through the entire span of my Christian life, I have observed certain untoward events repeated in church after church across the United States. While the particulars vary, the essential elements are always strikingly familiar, almost as if they were scripted. Good men and women devote years to the assembling of a biblically sound church under the leadership of a godly pastor and deacons. That pastor accepts a call to become the pastor of a different church in a distant city, surrenders for a mission field or a new ministry, retires, or dies; the successor is chosen, arrives, and within a few months succeeds. His achievement, however, is much like that of the surgeon whose skillful surgery is technically successful, marred only by the unfortunate failure of the patient to survive. The new pastor progressively institutes changes that increasingly compel many of the “old-timers” to resign offices, withdraw participation, or move their membership. Very often the innovative pastor produces at least two churches out of the one and the one that he retains bears faint resemblance to the one he ‘inherited.’

The multi-decade labor of the former pastor(s) and dedicated laymen—co-laborers for Christ—disintegrates, disappears, or is, shall we say, diversified to such an extent that it is no longer of the same nature. Churches that paid expensive costs to withdraw from agencies, associations, fellowships, conventions, and activities because of doctrinal conviction are reunited with those same agencies, which, after the passage of so many years, are even more unworthy of affiliation. Where once the name Baptist was the “middle name,” the word is casually and caustically discarded as encumbering baggage. Standards for activities, music, and attire are repudiated and replaced with those deemed more appropriate contemporary alternatives. Increasingly, one finds the governmental structure of churches radically revised from the historical Baptist congregational pattern to be reconstituted after the Presbyterian eldership. Where evangelistic fervor once sat enthroned, Calvinistic fanaticism now rules. Where separatists contended for the faith, ecumenicists contend against separatists. Where the tract rack once held *The Trail Of Blood*, the ticket table now sells admission for Contemporary Christian Music concerts. The hymnbooks are gone along with the pew Bibles—the multimedia lighting makes reading uncomfortable. Repetitious choruses are romanticized for ease of viewing and the preacher uses so many versions that no one could follow the references. The choir has become a dance and drama chorus who assist the worship pastor and his worship team as they perform worship for the congregation to watch. Where the organ once resided, the only permanent instruments that remain on the stage—the drums—now fill the void. Even the pulpit has vanished. The only similarity with the old order of service is the offering.

All of these multifaceted transformations were accomplished by the change of the man in the pulpit. No church is farther than one pastor from the discarding of her heritage, testimony, and doctrine and the acceptance of compromise, heresy, or apostasy. I believe this from Scriptural precept and from almost five decades of observation. The transition of the leaving of one pastor and the arrival of the new man can alter the church beyond recognition. That is a sobering thought. Consider the implications. A man may be a deacon in a Baptist church for forty years and watch the prayers, sweat, and tears of those forty years be undone in a few months. A woman may give forty years to the loving instruction of generations of Sunday School children and live to see her entire effort discounted and destroyed. A pastor may endure the battles, sacrifice his health, lose friends, suffer slander and ridicule, and put his wife and family through privations to keep the faith only to be followed by another, who sells it all for worldly success. The acquirements of the sacrifices of generations of believers in time, talents, tithes, and giving are removed from the intended work of the LORD and perverted to the use of forces that had been opposed by that church for all those years. This is not metaphorical rhetoric; this transition

happens on a sadly regular basis all across this nation. Some church is stolen in just such a manner nearly every week of the year—and every church is in danger of being the next victim.

It would serve little purpose—except, perhaps, to provide a momentary release of emotions—for me to list the churches where I know that this devious *heart transplant* operation has taken place. It is also unnecessary, because I am convinced that nearly every reader will know a Baptist church that has departed from the faith and practice of her founders. I would also venture the observation that the first church that comes to mine will very often be the reader's home church.

The fortified walls, which generations of marauders and pirates could not breach, and the stalwart doors, which bands of imposters and intruders could not break, were torn down and thrown open *from the inside* by a fifth columnist that surreptitiously occupied the pulpit. In the business world, this conduct would be deemed unethical, illegal, and would produce strong reactions. [It is impossible to imagine a manager of X-Mart, changing the marquee to read Tal-Mart, putting up Tal-Mart price signs throughout the store, and selling Tal-Mart products and being allowed by X-Mart to maintain his position after such disloyalty and duplicity.] I labeled such actions as akin to the claim-jumpers of the gold fields of the Old West in the last article. That nomenclature may be too mild. Frankly, the conduct of claim-jumping pastors is as treacherous and as traitorous in action as is seeing foreign flags flying on the streets that were produced and preserved by the Stars and Stripes. It is a “high crime” and not a “misdemeanor.” There is a spiritual force involved in these larcenies, but that force is not a righteous spiritual force; it is not encouraged by agents of light, but instigated by agents of darkness—or by those who are duped by such agents.

Not all of those individuals participating in the moving of landmarks [see [The Baptist Heritage](#) for February 2006] are of the same width of stripe. I realize that many individuals identifying with Baptist churches have no understanding of the Baptist heritage and, therefore, see no reason to defend those identifying distinctives for which uncountable numbers of Baptists have endured imprisonment, persecution, physical punishments, and death. Many, perhaps the majority, of this generation's participants are not grounded in the foundational truths of Scripture and are first enticed and then entangled in the lust for success, which is only measured on their scales in buildings and attendance. Far more than a few, however, are intentional infiltrators who arrive with the plan and purpose to steal the property and as many bodies as possible.

Now, I freely confess that I am not an expert on much, if anything, even while I have ideas about nearly everything. I acknowledge that I have not yet finishing learning all of the questions and so my offering of answers is perhaps presumptuous. However, I am convinced that this purloining [“to appropriate wrongfully and often by a breach of trust”] is a plague and that deliberate and definite actions must be undertaken before it reaches the epidemic stage. I will offer my suggestions hoping that these ideas might prompt better minds than mine to serious thought and so I submit it to my readership. [The Baptist Heritage](#) began as a ministry of this church to inform the membership of the activities and the doctrine of the church. After several years, individuals began asking to receive the publication and others wrote or called asking that it be sent to a friend. Presently, over 1200 preachers, almost all independent Baptist—but not all—are sent this monthly mailing as a gift from this church. The responses are generally encouraging, even from those who disagree about a particular statement. [Of course, I have

offended a goodly number; otherwise, the mailings would be a few hundred higher.] Above all else, I have striven to provoke my readers to thinking and to reasoning, challenging them to consider why they believe what they believe. Some of the correspondence that I have received has done exactly that for me and I appreciate the challenge. The issue approached in the article for last month and in this article must be squarely faced or we will witness the continued destruction of Baptist churches to almost extinction. Pastors and those involved in the training of the future generation of preachers must awake from the lethargy of complacency or we will find no one to stand in the gap. I know of no better forum to introduce into such a discussion than those on the mailing list of The Baptist Heritage.

I realize that many Baptist preachers are vocal in blaming “preacher training institutions” for the decline in men in Baptist pulpits who have any depth of understanding of the Baptist heritage, doctrine, or practice. It is indisputable that some Bible colleges are more interdenominational or nondenominational, more fundamentalist and protestant, and more catholic [small “c” on purpose] than Baptist. This is true in an astonishing number of such institutions that have or had Baptist as part of their name. Fear of being labeled as “making too much of being a Baptist” has undeniably led many a school to soft-pedal to such an extent that they refuse to identify Baptist doctrine and practice and thereby send forth graduates believing that they are indeed only another branch of the “separated brethren” of Protestantism. Good men may disagree about the way to describe the perpetuity of the church, which the LORD Jesus Christ declared that He would build, even as they may quarrel over exactly when the LORD Jesus established His church; however, no honorable historian is able to deny that there are sufficient reliable records to establish the premise that from the days of the apostles until the present hour a series of believers—whether in chain link succession is not the issue—that were never connected with the Roman Catholic Church or with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Identified by various names, mostly given in derision, and traceable throughout the Middle East, Asia Minor, North Africa, Europe, and into Asia, the history of these groups of churches, separated from fellowship with either Rome or Constantinople is unchangeable evidence that there is a legitimate claim for a lineage [again, chain link succession is not the issue] of churches that were non-Catholic, Eastern or Western, and non-Protestant. From India through the Valley of the Piedmont to England, across North Africa and around the Mediterranean, nearly twenty centuries of historical evidence exists to validate the claim that Baptists are not Protestants. I have no more desire to try to prove that The Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola can trace her pedigree to that church instituted on the mountain side in Galilee [Luke 6:12-18] than I do to prove that the Llewellyn Setter in the back yard had a *great^x-grand-dam* and a *great^x-grand-sire* on the ark with Noah. The dog in the yard proves the validity of the claim; no further proof is required, since no dog on earth today came from any other source. The Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola did not invent herself or her doctrines and practices—they are identical with those taught and followed by the churches in the New Testament and many of those within that historical lineage. I need and seek no further verification of her ancestral lineage than I do for that Llewellyn Setter. Principles of doctrine and practice for which twenty centuries of believers have suffered, bleed, and died ought not to be forgotten so easily.

However, and this is a major however, the problem is not the consequence of the failure of some institutions to teach Baptist history or polity. That failure does not help remedy the situation, but that malfunction did not and does not cause the condition. The primary reason for Baptists of his generation having so little understanding of their heritage is that Baptists became fundamentalists and forget that they were Baptists. [See *Fundamentally Flawed, The Baptist*

Heritage.] Preachers sought the power of numbers and chose cooperation on the majors at the expense of the alleged minors. One cannot insist on baptism by immersion under the authority of a New Testament Church in a meeting of Fundamentalists. Preaching on the eternal security of the believer is not conducive for a Fellowship of Fundamentalists. Preaching against infant baptism will not unite a Moral Majority. Preaching the separation of church and state does not bring invitations to a Christian Educators Conference seeking government school vouchers. The list continues. Name-only Baptists have become the norm and not the exception. This preacher is grateful whenever one of the “forget-the-heritage-and-do-not-be-Baptists” churches drops “Baptist” from their name.

One of these new wave preachers informed me that the very word ‘Baptist’ was “a deterrent to growth” because it was *so negative*. “Baptists,” said he, “are known for what they are against; I want to be known for what I am for.” *I assured him that I felt the same way*—I want it known that I am for salvation by grace, baptism restricted to those making a credible confession of faith, the Bible as the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and practice, the separation of church and state, the sanctity of life, the priesthood of the believer under the LORDSHIP of Christ, creation by the direct act of God, the incarnation and virgin birth of the sinless Son of God, His vicarious death on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His pre-millennial, pre-tribulational rapture of all believers, His literal reign on the earth for 1000 years, and the Judgment Seat of Christ where believers will be rewarded or will lose rewards for faithful, separated, dedicated service. In other words, I want the community to know that I am a Baptist. He was not amused. I conclude the story by reporting that the man soon after our conversation was using the word “charismatic” as part of the name of the church that he created out of the Baptist church that he was called to pastor.

While exceptions do occur, most of these situations have a very common connecting thread. In my view, the predominant reason for the success of flock-stealing preachers is the failure of Baptist pastors to understand their responsibility to follow the Biblical pattern of replacement. Why anyone would think that the Chief Shepherd would not have realized that churches outlive the ministry of pastors is amazing in itself. The fact that pastors and churches do not seem to consider that the Bible reveals by principle and precept the process of pastoral replacement is a pathetic example of how little we depend upon the scriptures for our lives. Contemporary churches are far more apt to mimic the commercial world in executing “a search” for a pastor rather than examining the Scriptures for instructions. I am insisting that the Bible is to be the sole and final authority for all matters of faith and practice and that, in particular, that this principle includes the function of pastoral succession. The pattern begins with the replacement of that “pastor of the church in the wilderness” recorded Numbers 27:12-23.

12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. 13 And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. 14 For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that *is* the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. 15 And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, 16 Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd. 18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; 19 And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give

him a charge in their sight. 20 And thou shalt put *some* of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask *counsel* for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, *both* he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. 22 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: 23 And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Please take note of the precepts of this pattern: as Moses learns that he will be leaving the leadership, he prays for a successor. For forty years, Moses had Joshua as his helper [Exodus 24:13] and had used him in ever increasing roles of leadership. Joshua was not the only man that Moses trained, but he was the primary trainee. A careful study of when, where, and how Moses used Joshua is worth the effort. It is most interesting to observe how the LORD describes the chief qualification of Joshua—“a man in whom is the Spirit.” Though the translators of the Authorized Version do not capitalize the word “spirit” in this passage, I do because the use of the pronoun clearly indicates to me the identity of the Holy Spirit. Moses is instructed to set Joshua before the congregation and to lay his hand upon him—a practice carried over into the New Testament and called “ordination.” Then, he gives Joshua “a charge.” He places Joshua “under orders.” What follows is most instructive: the LORD commands Moses “put some of thine honour upon him.” Through this process of ordination, charging, and sharing honor, Moses identifies for the congregation of Israel in an unmistakable way the exact man that shall be his replacement. There is to be no room for doubt in the minds of any of the congregation as to the successor. I wish to write more concerning this process, but for now, just consider these practical sequential steps.

I am convinced that much of the loss of churches to apostasy would be eliminated if the pastor would have a man ready to step into the gap created by his departure, whether by resignation or death. Sadly, pastors do not make any provisions for the future of the church that they give their life to build. I read and hear much about the concern of pastors for “compensation packages” and “retirement benefits,” but very little of “successor preparation” and “continued testimony insurance.” Moses prepared Joshua; Elijah readied Elisha; Christ left His disciples fully equipped; Paul prepared Timothy, Titus, and a lengthy list of others. I believe that the pastor of every church has the responsibility to look beyond his personal tenure of ministry and to prepare *both the church and a man for the time of his departure*. That is the Biblical pattern, it is the Scriptural teaching, and it is not being followed. Paul seems to me to be giving Timothy instruction to that effect and to be doing so shortly after Paul placed Timothy in the church at Ephesus as pastor.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

This makes me believe that the pastor should be praying and seeking the will of God *for his successor* from the time he assumes the pulpit of the church. Preparing for the inevitable is the demonstration of wisdom, not foolhardiness.

Why is it that pastors do not prepare for the day when some one else must pastor the church? Equally important, why do churches not expect the pastor to plan for that day? Both pastor and church know the day is coming when he will leave that ministry and know it from the day that he accepts the call to become pastor. For neither pastor nor church to arrange for the inevitable is foolishness that contributes considerably to provide the potential for the church to be led into

heresy. The questions now beg answers? I am not certain that I have the ability to place in any order of rank or importance the reasons why pastors and churches fail in this essential matter. Frankly, the reasons may vary widely from one situation to another. Therefore, I will simply present issues that I believe contribute to the problem.

It is obvious that the fault must lie primarily with those of us who are pastors because we are responsible to teach the membership of the church the responsibilities that that membership entails. This is a serious deficiency in many ministries. In the rush to conflate a mega-church or at least a mini-mega-church, many pastors de-emphasize membership to the extent that baptism is not connected to church membership or to “being raised to walk in newness of life.” That “new life” business requires teaching on separation from the things of the world and separation unto the things of the LORD and introducing those concepts will certainly deflate the attendance. Tithing is a foreign word to modern Baptists—I know pastors who never use the word, let alone teach on tithing. I understand that it is considered a relic of the Nineteenth Century, that mythical Victorian era, but it is a sad loss that either many Baptist churches do not have a covenant or if they do, neither members nor pastor seem to be aware that the covenant exists. Church membership is a covenant relationship, not a social connection. Until the latter part of the Twentieth Century, most Baptist churches had a copy of the Church Covenant hanging on the front wall of the auditorium on the opposite side of the pulpit from the Sunday School Attendance Board. The members were verbally and visually taught that membership had responsibilities. That framed Covenant was a constant reminder of the responsibilities that the membership has toward the church and toward each other.

Before the trend of ignoring the biblical pattern of reproduction “after his kind,” churches started churches. However, since the advent of “church cloning,” organizations called churches just seem to appear. In the *old days*, a church was burdened to plant a church in a given location. Seeds were sown—usually a two or three week meeting was held in a tent or a rented location and from the contacts made—un-churched-believers and converts—a mission work was started. The Covenant was used as the founding document for a new church. When the mother church determined that the mission work was strong enough to be self-supporting and grounded in the faith enough to become an autonomous “sister” church, a service was held in which those desiring to form the new church entered into a covenant together as a body of Christ. The pastor of the mother church opened the service with a firm message explaining the responsibilities this step entailed. Those who were members of the mother church [All converts had to this point been baptized under the authority of the mother church and were members of that church and often there would be other members of the mother church who lived in this new community and would now transfer membership to the new church.] that desired to unite together to form this new church were asked to stand and enter together into covenant with each other by reading the Covenant—that action was deemed the founding of a new church. After the Covenant, the new church adopted her provisional constitution and then called her pastor. The Covenant changed the mission work into a new church.

This church uses a modified form of the Covenant generally associated with the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. It does not hang on our wall; it is printed on the back of “The Weekly Heritage”—the sixteen-page “bulletin” given to the congregation each Sunday containing the announcements, the reports, pertinent information, and seven pages of prayer requests.

**The Covenant of
The Heritage Baptist Church of Pensacola**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote her prosperity and spirituality; to sustain her worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give to her a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of this church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion, to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage and drugs for non-medical purposes; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rule of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

We, moreover, engage that when we remove from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church of like faith and practice, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of the word of God.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to keep the church aware of her accountability to the Chief Shepherd for the performance of His commands. Too many pastors neglect the call to this duty. I do not advocate the haranguing and the browbeating of congregations, but the advocacy of Biblical responsibilities is not only proper and right, it is the duty of the pastor. A major portion of his obligation is to prepare the congregation in how to apply doctrine to daily life. Biblical doctrine is in every sense of the word practical, not theoretical. Churches survive or succumb exactly as the individual church applies the doctrine of scripture to the practice of that church. Whenever any church adopts practices that are not derived from the doctrine of the church that church is charting a course toward apostasy. I would also add the statement that I believe a church becomes apostate because of the failure of some pastor. Scripture teaches that and history records the examples. I recognize that some churches [so-called] are apostate from their inception; their doctrines are false; their practices are corrupt; however, some biblically planted churches become apostate. No sound church becomes apostate without cause. "As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come" Proverbs 26:2. There is always a cause and the cause is pastoral failure.

That failure is the lack of having trained the church about the process of pastoral succession and lack of having trained a man to stand in the gap left by the departure of the pastor. Having stated that indictment, it becomes incumbent to explain it and then to offer a remedial course.

There are likely a variety of reasons why pastors and churches fail in this regard; however, I think those reasons can be summarized in limited categories.

First on the list must be the failure to follow the Biblical pattern of preparing a Joshua. Churches are often in such financial bondage that it is deemed by the officers or the membership to be impossible to hire "the second man." The lack of restraint and the lust for "bigger and

better' by churches is a direct result of the contagion of pastoral ambition. Pastors are biblically instructed to have concern for people, not programs. The drive for numbers has dominated Baptist pulpits for almost five decades. It seems to have begun with Dr. Elmer Towns releasing his book on the "Ten Largest Sunday Schools" and Dr. John R. Rice's call for two hundred baptisms yearly and has culminated with the full-blown mixed-multitude Baptist-in name-only-seeker-friendly-purpose-driven copycats. During the 1960's and 1970's, I heard numerous speakers, who were engaged in promoting all types of activities and a wide variety of gimmickry for growth, remind us [with great emphasis] that "God is so interested in numbers that He even named a Book in the Bible, Numbers." Not one ever seemed to notice that the number of Israelites at the beginning of Numbers [1:46] is larger than the number at the end of Numbers [26:51]. The lessons taught in the Book of Numbers are not connected with "increasing the numbers in attendance."

This issue of adding a "second pastor" is primarily one of priorities. Our budgets show what we really think is spiritually important. One wonders how much of the expenditures of the typical Baptist church of 2006 is truly connected with the role of the New Testament church? A local supplier of sound systems to churches across this nation and into several foreign countries responded to a specific inquiry that churches where that business installs sound systems invests an average of \$250,000. One quarter million dollars is not required to enable any preacher to address a congregation; obviously, the money is spent to enable a program of entertainment. Predominately, that entertainment is connected with music and it is certain that the singing of hymns by a congregation does not require that kind of investment. I wonder what Spurgeon spent on his "sound board"—only an old-timer like me will remember when churches often hung a "sound board" over the pulpit to direct the sounds from the pulpit to the congregation. The LORD Jesus never intended His church to be in the amusement business—but that is precisely where many pastors have misdirected the churches that they were charged with shepherding. It should be a greater priority to maintain the doctrine of the church and to prepare a Joshua than to entertain the congregation.

However, some pastors are leery of having a "second man" around. Every pastor knows the stories of the betrayal of a staff member and many have experienced it firsthand. I do not think that I know a pastor with ten years experience who has not endured that trauma. The apostle Paul had his Demas *and* his Alexander, Hymenaeus, and Philetus—there may have been others who betrayed the man who led them to the LORD and who prayed them through trials and burdens; but he left behind a great company of preachers, including Titus, Timothy, Luke, Silas, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Aquila and it seems to me that Fortunatus, Erastus, Achaicus, Quartus, Jason, Epaphroditus, Stephanas, and Artemas were also pastors trained by the apostle Paul. Training men in any field is risky—the old nature is ever present and some individuals prove themselves to be counterfeit. King David knew what it was to be betrayed by "mine own familiar friend." A preacher who is willing to try to prepare men for ministry is exposing himself to the hazards of humanity; but the task is worth the risk. I believe that it takes about five years to develop a firm understanding of another person. That is not a Biblical statistic, but it seems to have proven itself to be about right. Some men have betrayed my trust in less time and others have done so after I have invested twice that time in them. I believe it is my obligation to help in the preparation of the next generation of preachers and have tried to practice that philosophy all of my ministry. While I have experienced disappointments, the joys far outweigh the pain. I had men who mentored me and that is a debt to be repaid. No pastor should let the possibility of a Korah rising in rebellion prevent him from preparing a

Joshua. It is ministry multiplication.

Sadly, I fear that pastors very often are not willing to share their “honor” with a subordinate. I am sorry to put this into such pejorative words, but it does seem that too many pastors are more concerned with gathering honors rather than sharing honor. Moses was told to transfer some of the honor that he possessed to Joshua. Ministry for Moses was a team effort. A pastor does not add a man to do things that he does not wish to do; he employs a man so they might do the work together. I have known pastors who would not allow an assistant any “face time” with the congregation for fear of that man becoming too popular. I learned long ago that not everyone likes me and that some folks come to church *not because I preach, but because of the participation of some staff member*. I was fortunate in early ministry to work with Dr. Bill Barbry as his associate. The first day that we were together, he informed me that I was not to consider myself or to allow myself to be labeled “the assistant pastor.” Instead, I was to understand from the beginning that I was “the associate pastor.” He instructed me that an assistant is “one who assists, a helper” and the associate is “a partner.” He scheduled me to preach on a regular basis and treated me in private and in public as a colleague and not a helper. His attitude gave me standing with the congregation. I did not recognize it at the time, but he was sharing his “honor” with me.

I believe that the first addition to the staff ought to be an associate pastor. As in the case of a good marriage, the strengths of the one compensate for the weaknesses of the other. The choice ought, in my view, to be made on the sole basis of pastoral qualifications and not on specific talents. The acquiring of staff in most churches is more connected to programs than it is to pastoral succession. Generally, the first addition will be a *youth pastor*. Prior to the post World War II days, mainline denominational churches hired an *educational director* to oversee the teaching and training ministries of the church. In the 1950’s, Baptists began hiring *youth directors/music directors* largely in response to the success of Youth For Christ. A decade and a little more later, the title *youth pastor* began appearing and it seems to have lasted longer than the predecessors—probably because it sounds more Biblical. A recent church letterhead crossing my desk listed more job-titled pastors than my bank has vice-presidents. (*The older I get the less I like the dilution of the biblical concept of pastor and the adaptation of the corporate imaging.*) From the worship pastor through the evangelism pastor to the children’s pastor, it was quite a list. I realize that I am in the minority, but there is a significant difference between *sounding Scriptural* and *being Scriptural*. The Bible never recognizes any pastor who is not an elder who is not a bishop. I believe the early churches had a plurality of pastors/elders/bishops—one office with three titles. The LORD Jesus established the pattern—He sent His disciples out on their preaching ministries two by two. I accept that as the standard. The pattern established by Barnabas and Paul is that they took their church planting journeys accompanied by what I will call “Joshuas” until I think of a better word. We are aware from the Book of Acts that, at times, Paul had a sizeable number of these young men under his tutelage.

The LORD Jesus clearly had from twelve to seventy men in His school of training at any given time. The old book, The Training Of The Twelve, ought to be read by pastors and implemented. I take note that while the LORD Jesus was the One in charge He involved His disciples in every facet of the ministry. We find Him actively engaged in instructing them and then giving them important assignments directly connected with His teaching. The LORD Jesus even condescends to consulting them, even when He knew what He would do [John 6:6]. When He ascended to the Father, the LORD Jesus left behind at least *eighty-two* prepared and equipped men to carry on His ministry. Eighty-two were trained within the three years of His ministry—

that is an example that we pastors are not following [1 Peter 2:21]. Could it be that our priorities are confused. Maybe the issue at the Judgment Seat will be more connected with how many preachers we left behind than it will with how big our church was. Priorities are important.

While on the subject of youth pastors, I will submit that I have observed more frequently than not that youth pastors are not successful pastoring in the same church that they served as a youth pastor. *Those who survive the youth ministry usually make good to excellent pastors, just not in the same church.* I think that this situation is a direct result of the position—the man who works primarily with the youth cannot make the transition from ‘buddy’ to pastor. I learned the hard way that I could not be the companion of the young people engaging in the give and take of completion and social interaction and, function as their pastor. It is not possible to slide hard into second base Saturday evening to prevent a double play and rise to preach Sunday morning on “Blessed are the meek.” Unfortunately, youth pastors are considered by both church and pastor as *convenience employees* who exist to attract and to entertain young people even while acting as role model, sports equal and competitor, arbitrator of social entanglements, and parental apologist (while applying spiritual growth principles, of course). Simultaneously, the youth pastor must enforce church standards and uphold parental authority even as he puts down rebellion within the group and yet continues to attract the youth. It is little wonder that youth pastors seldom last beyond the third year in a church. Those who do not suffer *burn out* will discover *close out*.

The nature of the job creates a revolving bitterness that is ever-present, varying only in which of the youth or their parents is affected at any particular given time. A percentage of the youth (*not always the same individuals from week to week*) are always mad and a different percentage of parents for diverse reasons are complaining at the same time. I do not like to put it into these terms, but the youth pastor is considered by the pastor and the congregation as a mid-level bureaucrat who exists in a buffer zone between the pastor and the parents. He is there to do the work the pastor cannot accomplish and the one that the parents will not perform. The problem(s) that develops when a youth pastor tries to make the transition into the role of ‘pastor of the whole’ is not a lack of ability or evidence of a biblical call; rather it is the ingrained mindset of the congregation. Because of this factor, I would suggest that the best title to use is “assistant pastor” or “associate pastor” for any man the pastor is considering as a possible candidate for his future replacement. Responsibilities can be assigned to cover any area for which a person is well suited, but the title ought to keep him in the lineage of pastor. Too often, it seems that a man becomes the victim of ‘type-casting’ by the congregation and is never able to move beyond that ‘role’ for that church.

A pastor will likely train several young men, each for a lengthy period, in the course of a pastorate. He should examine each as to whether he is suited for that pastorate or not. Some will disappoint him; some will betray him. Sometimes a mission work will need to be established or the man will be led by the Spirit of the LORD to leave for another work. If he endures the worst of these circumstances, the pastor will not have suffered a unrecoverable loss and, more importantly, he is fulfilling his responsibility. Among the total number of men that he trains, he and the church will very likely find the man who is prepared by the LORD for his replacement.

One of the reasons that pastors do not train their successor is that, very naturally, it is difficult for older pastors to take their hands off the wheel of the ship and to let the new pastor chart the course. To labor for years crafting a beautiful vessel and to be standing helplessly, able only to watch as the ship is set on a course will bring certain shipwreck is the nightmare of every pastor. This is why I believe that the transition into team ministry is very important. If the two

captains have worked together as a true team for a number of years, they have, as a natural consequence of that interaction, developed the same philosophy and, with that common philosophy, will develop a competency on the part of the younger and a trust on the part of the older. The more “wheel time” the new captain has had, the more comfortable the old captain will be with the abilities of the new captain. Controlled transference of responsibility is what I see as the key to a successful pastoral succession.

I have nearly exhausted my space and yet I feel that this topic deserves so much more attention. I do hope that I have at least conveyed my feelings that pastoral succession should be considered by every pastor and by every church as among the highest of priorities.

—Dr. Jerald Manley