

# THE BAPTIST VIEW

## HAVE BAPTIST CHURCHES BEEN IN EXISTENCE SINCE NEW TESTAMENT TIMES?

**B**aptist history begins with Christ. Baptist churches had their beginning during the ministry of Jesus.

Christ established His church during His personal ministry here on earth. This was one of the things He came to do (Matthew 16:18).

Before He left the earth, He said that the work He had come to do was finished (John 17:4 and 19:30). The first members of the church were the apostles (I Corinthians 12:28).

This assembly had all the essentials of a church. It had the gospel, an organization, a church roll, the ordinances, a commission, a treasurer, etc.

Baptists alone can trace their teachings and principles back through the ages to Christ. Churches like the first church have continued to exist from that day to the present time. Historians of various denominations confirm that Baptists have existed through the ages since Christ. Let us note the statements of just a few of them.

"I have no question in my own mind that there has been a historical succession of the Baptists from the days of Christ to the present time." Dr. John T. Christian (Baptist historian)

"The Baptists can trace their origin to Apostolic times and can produce unequivocal testimony of their existence in every century

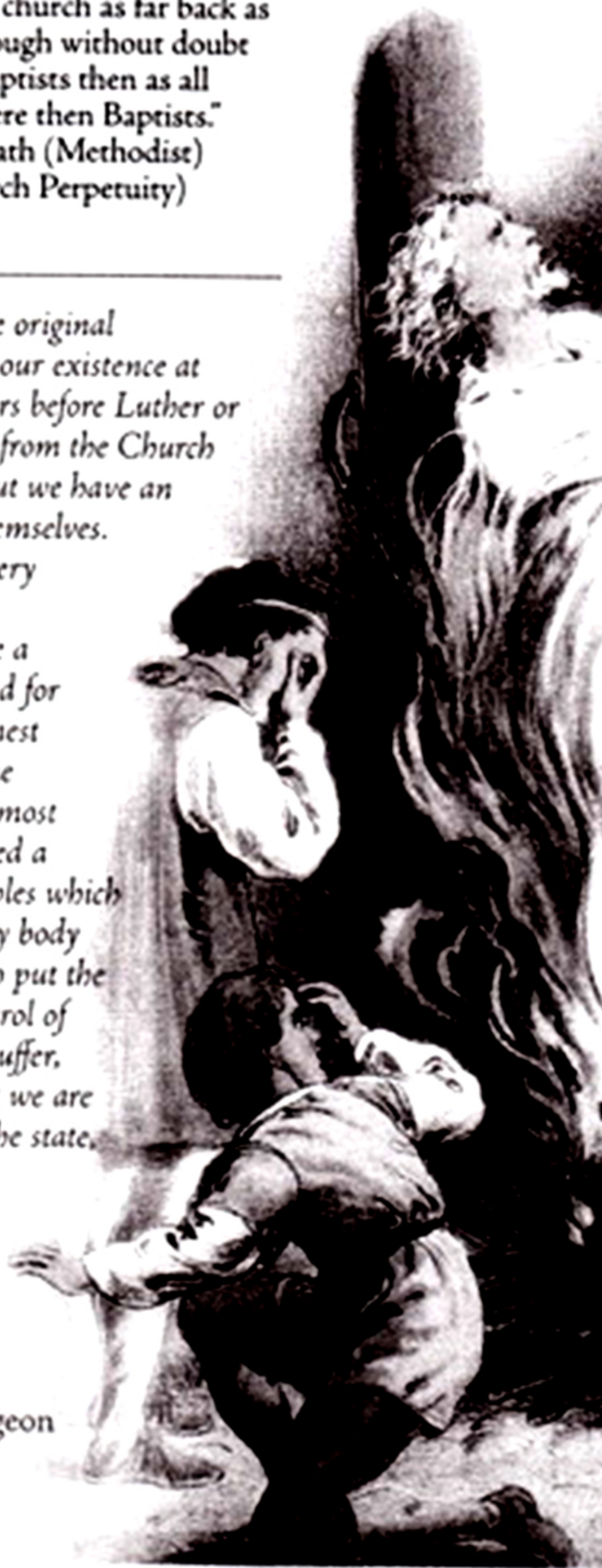
down to the present time." Alexander Campbell (Founder of the Church of Christ)

"I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A.D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then as all Christians were then Baptists." John C. Ridpath (Methodist) (Jarrel's Church Perpetuity)

*We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation; we were Reformers before Luther or Calvin were born. We never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves.*

*We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor, I believe, any body of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the state, to prostitute the purity of the bride of Christ to any alliance with the government, and we will never make the church, although the queen, the despot over the consciences of men.*

—C.H. Spurgeon





"We have now seen that the Baptists who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of the origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community that has stood since the days of the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all the ages." Ypeig and Dermout (*History of the Dutch Reformed Church*, Vol. I)

"The first century was a history of the Baptists."  
Mosheim (Lutheran)

"If the truth of Religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists; since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished."

Cardinal Hosius  
(Catholic) (*Orchard's History of Baptists*).

The New Testament recognizes a democratic simplicity, and not a hierarchial monarchy. There is a constant recurrence of type, a persistence of fundamental doctrines, and a proclamation of principles.

This marked the whole apostolic period, and for that matter, every period since that time.

The great doctrines of the atoning work of Christ, conversion and repentance, the baptism of believers, the purity of the church, the freedom of the soul, and the collateral truths, were

everywhere avowed. At times these principles have been combated and those who held them persecuted, often they have been obscured; sometimes they have been advocated by ignorant men, and at other times by brilliant graduates of the universities, who frequently mixed the truth with philosophical speculations; yet always, often under the most varied conditions, these principles have come to the surface.

Baptist churches have the most slender ties of organization, and a strong government is not according

*Baptist churches are like the river Rhone, which sometimes flows as a river broad and deep, but at other times is hidden in the sands. It, however, never loses its continuity or existence. It is simply hidden for a period.*

to their polity. Baptist churches are like the river Rhone, which sometimes flows as a river broad and deep, but at other times is hidden in the sands.

It, however, never loses its continuity or existence. It is simply hidden for a period. Baptist churches may disappear and reappear in the most unaccountable manner. Persecuted everywhere by sword and by fire, their principles would appear to be almost extinct, when in a most wondrous way God would raise up some man, or some company of martyrs, to proclaim the truth.

The footsteps of the Baptists of the ages can more easily be traced by blood than by baptism. It is a lineage of suffering rather than a succession of Bishops; a martyrdom of principle, rather than a dogmatic decree of councils. It is, nevertheless, a right royal succession, that in every age the Baptists have been advocates of liberty for all, and have held that the gospel of the Son of God makes every man a free man in Christ Jesus." Dr. John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists* (Some material was taken from a message by Dr. Bruce Cummons.)

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