

Thoughts on the Bride of Christ

Compiled From Several Compositions of Mine where I Expound upon the Subject.

From a paper on compromise in the SBC:

God's ordained institution for service today is the church, Christ's ecclesia. This institution is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). It is an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord's work, not a universal, invisible entity. In this dispensation, the church has the keys of the kingdom (Mt 18:18)— it is the visible entity which represents and recruits people for God's invisible, spiritual kingdom, composed on earth of all the saved. It is represented as Christ's body, as His temple (1 Cor 3:9-17), and as His bride (John 3:29, 2 Cor 11:2). It is congregational in polity and absolutely independent and sovereign; no centralized body, man, body of other churches, convention agency, civil government, school, nor any other man or institution under heaven has the right to impede her authority. Christ organized her (Mt 16:18) during His earthly ministry out of suitable materials, that is, those converted and baptized under John the Baptist's ministry (Jn 1:35ff), and He gave her the commission to go into all the world, teach the lost how to be saved, baptize the converts, and disciple them (Mt 28:17-20, Mark 16:15-16, etc.). She is properly made up only of true converts, of the saints. This is shown by the fact that one is baptized into the church (1 Cor 12:13, Ac 2:47), and baptism identifies the saint with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in which alone He trusts for salvation (1 Cor 15:1-4, Rom 4:25), and shows forth his personal death to his old life and resurrection to new life in Him (Romans 6:1-14) which occurred at the moment of his salvation (2 Cor 5:17). The metaphors for the church also show her purity; as Christ's body, only those in Christ can possibly be her members (1 Cor 12:13-27); as Christ's holy temple, children of the devil, the objects of God's hatred (Ps 5:5, Rom 8:8, 14:23), are not partakers; as Christ's bride, she has Jesus as her Husband and Lord, while the unregenerate hate Him.

footnote #15 in that paper:

This truth about the church's existence as the bride of Christ has been a source of much controversy and misrepresentation. The fact that the church on earth is currently represented as an espoused bride does not mean that non-church members are not saved, or that they will not inhabit the New Jerusalem, nor does it discount Israel's position in her pre-Christian dispensation in a like bridal position. It is the opinion of the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational, and generally

dispensational author that the Marriage Supper will occur on earth at the end of Daniel's 70th week, at which time Israel will be restored again as God's bride (Hos 2:19-20) upon her national conversion, and she will reign with all the saints during that period of time. In the eternal state, the New Jerusalem is represented metonymically in reference to the whole company of the elect as God's bride (Rev 21:9). However, among living saints during the church age, only those baptized into Scriptural ecclesiae are part of the bride of Christ.

from a paper on the Biblical position on Divorce (i. e., no divorce, ever):

Those who believe that divorce is justified in certain instances appeal to Jeremiah 3:8, and conclude that "God Himself recognized (and thereby taught us) that divorce for the sexual sin of adultery is an option. He taught us this by both precept and example in His own relationship with Israel. What God has taught, let no man deny!" The passage presents an apparently strong argument: "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." Furthermore, Hosea 2:2 reads: "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband..." How can these declarations be reconciled with the passages mentioned above, that clearly forbid divorce? First of all, we must recognize that the metaphor of marriage when employed to describe the relationship between men and God symbolizes the closeness of communion between the faithful and their Lord. We see in the Old Testament that those faithful to God's chosen nation, Israel, are pictured metaphorically as a bride or wife. The same holds true in the New Testament for the church, God's recruiting agency for His kingdom in this dispensation. In the Mosaic economy, as in all ages, salvation has been a free gift to all who believe in Christ, but the special miracles of God, His greatest manifestations, and the fullness of worship was only available in the Old Testament to those that allied themselves with the nation of Israel and could consequently participate in the sacrifices, the Tabernacle and Temple worship, and so on. In the New Testament, the church, the congregation of baptized believers, is God's chosen institution, and is pictured as Christ's body (1 Cor 12), and bride (2 Cor 11:2, Eph 5:23-32). The church is also called God's temple (1 Cor 3:9-17, 1 Tim 3:15)— it is the NT place of God's special presence. The fellowship of the church with Christ is seen in the NT quotation of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31-32; the OT word "cleave," which deals with the close communion of man and wife in their unique relationship, is translated "joined" from the Greek in Ephesians with reference to the church and her Savior. One does not need to join the church to be saved, but fullness of communion with Christ will not be available to the NT believer who refuses church

membership. In contrast to both unscriptural universal ecclesiology which equates all believers with the bride of Christ at this present time and the “future glorified” view that correctly sees the church as a local entity but removes her from a present status as bride, the Bible places the church in a present bridal relationship (2 Cor 11:2, Eph 5:29-32). The same was true for Israel in the Old Testament; her bridal status with God was spoken of in the present tense (Ezekiel 16:8ff, Jer 3:14, etc.). “Cleaving” closeness to God is the present joy of His obedient saints (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17).

In the Old Testament, as in the New, one of God’s children could sin and fall away from obedience and His Lord’s chosen institution (cf. Heb 10:25, 1 Cor 5:7, 13). While still eternally secure, such would temporarily lose the special fellowship available for the faithful. A backslidden member of a true Baptist church today can leave and join a Methodist church with less strident preaching, and thus, while still reckoned righteous in the sight of God, lose the temporal joy of being part of the bride of Christ. In eternity, however, the New Jerusalem is referred to synechdochically as the bride (Rev 21:2), and all the blood-washed, whatever their degree of disobedience to the Lord or faithfulness to God’s institution during their lifetime, will, free from sin, “cleave” to their God forever. It is God’s purpose that those dead to sin by Christ “should be married to another,” (Romans 7:4), that is, brought into that place of close fellowship, and He will not allow His will to be eternally frustrated. We can see this same working in God’s covenantal promises to Israel; as He swore to Abraham, “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26, Genesis 17:7-8), inherit the fullness of the promised land, and see the fulfillment of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31), which was given specifically to “the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah” (31:31). At the end of the Tribulation, when Israel turns back to God, her Messiah shall come, destroy her enemies, and re-establish the nation in its bridal relationship. A careful comparison of Romans 9:25-27, Hosea 1:10 and 2:23, and Revelation 19 will demonstrate this; the marriage supper of the Lamb does not occur in heaven for the church alone, but occurs on the earth at the commencement of the Millennial kingdom with the participation of all the saints. The Supper only commences after the destruction of the great whore (19:2), which is far along within the Tribulation period; we hear that the marriage supper “is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (19:7) immediately before the second coming of Christ (19:11ff) to redeem Israel, the “wife” in view, who has now turned back to God and received imputed righteousness (19:8)— the church age saints have already been glorified for seven years, so to make them only “ready” at this point is unreasonable, whatever one may have personally experienced about the speed with which women adorn themselves. “Is come” (elthen) is a futuristic aorist; it “involves the use of the aorist tense to indicate an event which has not in fact happened but which is so certain to happen that it is depicted as though it had already happened.” “[H]ath made herself” (*hetoimasin*) refers to the conversion of Israel which had just

occurred; it should be classified as a dramatic aorist, “a use for emphasis or dramatic affect... it describes something which has just happened, the effect of which is felt in the present.” It was the common belief of first century Jews that “in the day of the Messiah redeemed Israel would be gathered to a great feast, together with the patriarchs and heroes of the Jewish faith” (cf. Is 25:6, Mt 8:11-12, 20:21, 23, 22:1-14, Lu 13:28-29, 14:15-24, 22:29-30). Indeed, were the marriage supper in heaven during the Tribulation, rather than in the Millennium when Christ has established His kingdom, the Savior would not be able to drink anything (Mt 26:29, Mr 14:25, Lu 22:18). It is apparent from the Scriptures, then, that God brings the nation He married back to Himself; the separation because of her sin lasts only until the impending future time when, by repentance, “the wife hath made herself ready.”

We have seen that in the bridal metaphor which relates God and His people separation because of sin, including spiritual adultery, is only temporary. The context of Jeremiah 3:8 supports this as well; the Lord says He “put them away,” yet still affirms “I am married unto you” (Jeremiah 3:14) and foretells her restoration; He is still her husband and Lord, and He will bring her back to Himself. In the immediate context of Hosea 2:2 we see that God promises Israel “I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.” (2:19-20). The Lord both declares that Israel is not His people (Hos 1:9), since they have violated the Sinaiatic covenant, yet they remain His and He will restore them (Hos 1:10, 2:16-20, 3:5, 11:1-11, 13:14-14:9), in accordance with His unconditional promises to Abraham. Isaiah 50:1 and 54:1-17 show God as “husband” still to Israel, without an abiding “bill of divorcement”— because of their sin, God “for a small moment... fors[ook] [Israel], but with great mercies will [He] gather [her]” (54:7). On strictly Mosaic grounds, God could divorce Israel, but “the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was... after, cannot disannul, that is should make the promise of none effect” (Gal 3:17)— the promises to Israel in Abraham and the greater, eternal covenant promises that, by grace, bring a sure (Rom 4:16) and eternal salvation to the chosen, forbade the Lord’s divorce of His people (Rom 11:28-29). These higher principles of grace, expounded by Jesus Christ (Mark 10:1-12) in accord with God’s original design (Gen 2:24), apart from the lower permissive standard (Dt 24:1-4) allowed temporarily because of hard hearts (Mark 10:5), prohibit human divorce, just as they prevent God from putting away His people forever. The child of God, if he finds himself in a marriage to a persistently sinful and adulterous spouse, should act as his Lord commanded Hosea: “Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine” (Hosea 3:1, cf. Jer 3:1). He should follow the precept and example of his God and Savior and seek for reconciliation, not

divorce.

Examination of the relevant passages on divorce in the Bible make it clear that God's original plan in marriage of one man and one woman for life cannot be violated by the New Testament Christian. Originally instituted in the Garden of Eden and clearly reaffirmed by Christ (Mark 10:1-12) and the apostle Paul (Rom 7:2-3, 1 Cor 7:10-11), sound hermeneutics dictate that less clear passages which involve seeming exceptions to this rule must be interpreted in light of such plain Scriptural affirmations. The fact that God "hateth putting away" (Mal 2:16) is also demonstrated in His restoration of Israel, despite her sinful and backsliding ways. All believers can rejoice in this as another in the cornucopia of Scriptural evidences that God's faithfulness and unconditional love will bring all of His people home (Jn 10:27-30, Ro 8:28-39, etc.) to be joined to Him as His everlasting and eternal spouse (Rev 21:2), with none put away or ultimately lost—and consequently, out of love for their great God and Savior, and in His power, obey His admonitions to shun divorce absolutely.

a footnote from that paper:

Paul does not take his quotes in Romans 9 out of their original context; verses 25-26 deal with the restoration of Israel, as seen in Romans 11, not with Gentiles—the "also" of 9:27 demonstrates this, as does the natural interpretation of Hosea one and two. Some make a distinction between Israel, which is alleged to be God's earthly wife, and the church, which is then made Christ's heavenly bride. A close study of the terms employed of both entities will demonstrate their fluidity; for example, 21:9 refers to "the bride, the Lamb's wife," while a thousand years after the marriage supper the New Jerusalem is called "bride," not "wife" (Revelation 21:2). The saints of this dispensation will also "reign on the earth" alongside their Old Testament brethren (Rev 2:26-27, 20:6).

from a letter to someone on this issue, slightly edited:

So, is that (what I just stated, essentially the matter above from my paper cut and pasted) a "Baptist Bride" position? Well, you tell me. What that term means depends upon whom you ask. Most people have never bothered to study the Bible on the subject, and just believe what someone else has told them. I have heard a man who is now a missionary under a fundamental Baptist mission board, who believes in a universal church, tell me in all seriousness (to my recollection) that a Baptist Brider is someone who believes only Baptists are saved. Some say that a Baptist Brider is someone who says that only Baptists are raptured. These two views are usually those of universal church advocates who have not done their homework (well, I guess

that is obvious— they believe in a universal church!), and since they speak of “the Rapture of the church” and mean all believers, when someone says that only Baptist churches are true churches, they immediately conclude that only Baptists are Raptured— when the Bible teaches the Rapture of church and non-church saints. Others define a Baptist Brider as someone that says that only Baptists are guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I think this is probably an accurate definition of the position. As you can see, I don’t believe that— I don’t think it is in heaven during the Tribulation at all, but on earth at the commencement of the Millennium. My position is, I think, a minority position. I came to it by studying the Scriptures alone, and thought that there was nobody out there that agreed with me. I was pleasantly surprised when I found out that a very popular Study Bible, *The King James Study Bible*, (of which I have a copy) takes the same position. Hmm, perhaps this is what the Bible actually teaches. :-) I also don’t believe that only Baptists are in the New Jerusalem; everyone that is saved can live in there. If any of these are the Baptist Bride position, I am not a Baptist Brider. If a Baptist Brider is someone who says that, on earth at this moment, only Baptist churches are true churches and so only Baptists have a special “cleaving” relationship that comes from membership within God’s ordained NT institution, then I am a Baptist Brider, and have no plans to change unless someone can show me that I am interpreting the Scriptures incorrectly. It seems that many folks have some vague idea swirling around in their heads to the effect of: “Baptist Bride=bad” when they have no idea what the term means in the first place. Now, where do I draw the line and say different views on the bride of Christ are a major issue? Well, while I don’t think it is correct to have Baptists only at the Marriage Supper in heaven during the Tribulation, I don’t think it is a separating issue or a huge deal if someone does believe this view, which I believe is the traditional Baptist Bride model. The Systematic Theology textbooks we used at Fairhaven, those four spiral bound blue books by Robert Sargent (you probably own a copy), advocate a Baptist Bride position. Dr. McNeilly is a “Baptistic Brider”— since he puts the Marriage Supper in heaven and only for the church, he is closer to the traditional Baptist Bride position than I am. I believe that Lehigh Valley Baptist Church generally takes the Baptist Bride view. At the same time, most of the college students at Fairhaven did not really know what a Baptist Bride view was, but thought it was incorrect. It seems like some from Fairhaven take the inconsistent view that the church is local and visible only, but the body of Christ, bride of Christ, etc. are universal and invisible. When you state in your letter (that I actually got; I don’t know, of course, what you said in the earlier one) that the bride of Christ is the church, and to become a member of the church and so of the bride of Christ one must be immersed, you are then about as much of a Baptist Brider as I am.

The question of the legitimacy of alien baptism (baptism performed by non-Baptist churches) is often linked to the question of the nature of the bride of Christ, although, strictly

speaking, they are different. I believe that baptism must have a proper subject (a child of God), a proper method (immersion in water), a proper purpose (to picture Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and the believer's death to his old life, burial, and resurrection to new life with Him; not to take away sins), and a proper administrator (the church). To take away any one of these makes the baptism invalid. (By the way, I also believe that the Lord's supper, as a church ordinance, should be "closed," that is, for members of the individual church only, although I would not separate from those who hold to a different view. LVBC practices closed communion.) The controversial one of these four today among fundamental Baptists is the necessity of a proper administrator, a NT church. Historically God's churches have always rejected alien baptism, including alien immersions: the pre-reformation Baptists were heavily persecuted for rejecting Roman Catholic baptisms for centuries—baptisms that were immersion, for Rome did not complete a switch to sprinkling until around the seventeenth century. The Eastern Orthodox Catholics, which split from Rome in the eleventh century, still immerse after the Old Papist manner. Early American Baptists did not just reject the sprinkling of other denominations, but also immersions after salvation from gospel-preaching Methodist, Presbyterian, etc. churches. This is only natural, for if non-Baptist churches can legitimately administer baptism (and the Lord's supper), they are true churches in every way, for these ordinances were committed to the church alone. I also take the historic Baptist viewpoint that only Baptist churches are true churches and so only they have the authority to baptize. I defend this from the Scriptures at some length in my paper on the Great Commission for last semester's class on the book of Acts, which I sent you. Most Baptists who hold that the church is local and visible only can agree up to this point, as long as we are in the realm of theory. It is somewhat less popular when put in practice, though. Why? Well, if:

1.) God gave the Great Commission and the authority to baptize to the church, not to individuals, and He promised to preserve His churches so that the gates of Hell would not prevail against them:

2.) The Roman Catholic denomination is not the church of Christ, but anti-Christ:

THEN we must conclude:

3.) Catholic baptisms are null and void.

4.) Protestant baptisms are null and void, because the founders of Protestant denominations came out of Catholicism. As individuals, they had no authority to baptize, and the church they were protesting, as antichrist, has no authority to baptize.

5.) Nothing has happened since the Reformation to magically make Protestant baptisms valid, so they are still invalid, and will continue to be so unless they humble themselves and submit to baptism under the authority of a Baptist church. This would mean all Protestant baptisms are invalid.

6.) Baptist churches still have valid baptism, because they are not Protestants, but have been around since the day when Christ, their founder, gave them the authority to baptize.

In your letter, you asked if one who has not received Scriptural baptism is part of the bride of Christ. My answer: “No.” It was then asked “where the pastor receives his authority for baptism, from apostolic succession, the church, or from the Bible, and how would you feel about fellowship with a church that disagreed with you?” My answer: God, in the Bible, gave the authority to baptize to the church. Baptism is a church ordinance, according to the Bible. There is nothing special about the pastor that makes it so that he can baptize people; he, as an individual, does not have authority to baptize anyone. Here at Lehigh Valley Baptist, Pastor Doug Hammett’s son, who is the youth pastor, typically performs the baptisms, and when he does, he will say something like “I baptize you, my brother/sister, on the authority of the Lehigh Valley Baptist Church, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” and then immerse the new Christian. There is nothing special about him; the church votes that the one getting baptized will be immersed and join the church, and it is his hands that actually plunge the candidate under the water. So, strictly speaking, the pastor does not have the authority to baptize except as it is delegated to him from the church. There is no apostolic succession. Well then, is authority for baptism from “the church, or from the Bible?” I believe this is a false dichotomy; it is like asking someone, “Did you stop your drug dealing operation? Yes or no?” The answer is “both.” In the Bible, God gave the authority to baptize to the church. The Bible states that the church has the authority (see my paper on the Great Commission) to baptize and administer the Lord’s supper. Most Baptists would agree that it is unscriptural to take some bread and grape juice to someone in the hospital to “have the Lord’s supper,” because it is a church ordinance. If someone wanted to do that and said, “Oh, but I am doing it on the Bible’s authority,” he would be wrong, because the Bible does not give him the authority as an individual; the Bible gives the church authority to administer the Supper. In the same way, if someone gets saved, witnesses to some of his friends, who also get saved, and, when they see that the Bible teaches immersion, they all get together and the first fellow dips the others under water in his pool and they vote themselves into, let us say, the “Joe Schmoe church of Boonyville,” they are not a true church and their baptisms are not valid baptisms. It does not matter if they are successful in starting the “St. Joe Schmoe Gospel Movement” denomination that is around for 100 years, starts churches all over the US, and believes what true Baptist churches do (on matters other than authority in baptism— obviously they cannot agree to that!); they are still no church of Christ, and they still are not baptized. They cannot say “we have authority from the Bible,” because none of them ever received the authority from the institution God’s Bible gave the power to, the true, NT Baptist church. There is nothing magical about the word “Baptist” either; if the fellow who dips the other guys in his swimming pool and begins the

Joe Shmoe church of Boonyville later decides that independent Baptists are really cool and his church votes to change its name to the “Joe Shmoe Baptist church of Boonyville,” they still are not a true church and they still do not have valid baptism; one does not vote himself into the church of Christ, he is immersed into it.

What does this mean about Baptist succession? I believe the Bible teaches an actual succession of Baptist churches. Christ gave the Commission to the assembly He started in the first century, and that assembly started other churches, and on we went down to today. Any denominations and organizations that started themselves after the first century, such as the Catholic and Protestant groups, have no justification for their existence in the Bible. Does this mean that we have to know all the ins and outs of the history, so that if we cannot trace a succession back to the first century, we are not a true church? No. God is omniscient, but history is not. We don't have all the facts about what was happening in the Dark Ages. One might say, “So how do we know that we have Scriptural baptisms today? What if sometime around A. D. 750 everything went sour? How do we know that didn't happen and make all our baptisms invalid today?” Well, God has promised to preserve His churches (Mt 28:20, Eph 3:21, 1 Cor 11:26, etc.). We know He has done it, because He said He would. He also commands His people to join true churches (Heb 10:25). Therefore, God will make it so that His people will know where the true churches are. I don't need to worry that LVBC is not a true church because somebody goofed in the Dark Ages somewhere, because LVBC teaches and practices what the Bible says and, as far as we are able to tell, she has a lineage from other Baptist churches. Since God will not make it so that His people cannot tell where His churches are, and if LVBC were not a true church there would be no way to know, she must be a true church of Christ. If, in contrast, one looks at an assembly called “XYZ Baptist church,” which used to be a Presbyterian or Congregational church, a “Gospel church,” etc. and voted to put the name Baptist on her sign, she is not a church of Christ unless her members receive immersion from a real Baptist church. The view I hold is a faith position, one that trusts that God will do what He says in His Word. I think a good illustration of church succession, made by J. R. Graves, author of the book *Old Landmarkism* and a defender of Baptist ecclesiology in the 19th century, is the way that we come from Adam. Christ, the Second Adam (1 Cor 15:22, 45), died only for those that came from Adam; He did not die for monkeys, fish, etc. So how do I know that I can trust in Christ? How do I know that I came from Adam? Well, my parents were human beings, and so I am a human being, since kinds only reproduce the same kind. Can I trace my lineage all the way back to Adam? No, I cannot. Do I need to do that before I can trust Christ as my Substitute and Second Adam? No, I don't need to, because I have the guarantee of God's Word that all men came from Adam. Nevertheless, was there a literal, physical succession of people from Adam to me, without which I would not be eligible to receive the benefits of Christ's death? Yes. In the

same way, I believe it is not necessary to trace a chain-link succession of churches back to the Jerusalem church of A. D. 31 and following to be a true church; if a church believes and practices New Testament doctrine and has, as far as we can see, NT churches for “parents,” she is a NT “Baptist” church with Scriptural baptism. Nevertheless, did she come from a literal, physical succession of churches, without which her baptism would be invalid? Yes. Now, where would I draw the line of separation? If a true Baptist church accepted a handful of people with alien (non-Baptist) immersions, that would not make her no longer a true church, although I believe this line of action is unquestionably harmful. In fact, if that church sent one of these people without Baptist baptism, and that individual baptized others and organized a Baptist church under the authority of the “mother” church that does have Scriptural authority, the church started by the man without true baptism would still be a true church and the baptisms of its members would be true baptisms, because the authority does not reside in the man, but in the church. Even if, for example, a church-sent missionary who physically dips people under water turns out to have a false profession and not be saved (and so, obviously, not have a valid baptism), it does not make all the people he dunked unbaptized—the authority is in the church, and as long as the church is a true church, those people are still baptized. Anyway, I have probably given you enough detail on what I believe. I cannot say I know all the ins and outs of everything your church in ----- holds on this issue, although I think I have a general idea. Feel free to share this letter, and my paper on the Great Commission, with Pastor ----- or other folks over there who are knowledgeable in the Word. Also, if in whatever I said here there are various conclusions that differ from what they believe there, it is right to stand in line with the church of which you are a member and promote unity in the body of Christ. Fairhaven, for example, while it holds the church is local and visible only, takes a somewhat different position, but I did not go around beating a drum with a wooden sign denouncing them draped over my back. Also, if someone can show me that some part of what I have said above is not found in the Scriptures, I will be happy to change— but if this cannot be done, I am not going to change. I tend to think a change is unlikely. I have discussed this matter of actual succession and authority in baptism with various individuals who hold alternative views, some of whom are very knowledgeable and diligent in Scriptural study, and nobody has been able to prove anything else from the Word. The most common argument is not one based on exegesis of Scripture, but on pragmatism: “Well, if there must be an actual succession, then we cannot know if we are a true church or not.” The argument is invalid (even apart from the fact that it is based on uninspired reasoning, not Scripture) because God has promised to keep His churches around (Eph 3:21), and has commanded us to join true churches of His (Heb 10:25), so He will make it so we can tell where they are (Mt 7:7). There is plenty of evidence for actual succession from history outside of the Bible, but even if there were none at all, it would still be the correct position and still be

historically true, because it is the doctrine of God's Word. By the way, historical records seem to indicate that LVBC came through a line of Welsh Baptist succession. Baptist churches were established early in Wales before the Catholics existed, and Papist "Christianity" only arrived centuries after the beginning of the true faith on the island. These Baptist churches appear to have continued up through the time of the Reformation, and after the discovery of America, numbers of these congregations and members moved to the New World and participated in the Philadelphia Association, the first organization for Baptists in the USA. LVBC came from churches out of the Philadelphia Association. However, even if we did not know all this and nobody had ever written books about succession among Welsh Baptists or European Continental Baptists, LVBC would still be a true church for the reasons given above from Scripture.