

AUTHORIZED Church Constitution

Versus

DIRECT AUTHORITY

By

Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion?.....Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?..... - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816

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Note of Thanks

I want to thank Elder Robert Meyers, Bro. Steven Shults, Gerard Greisen and Bro J.B. Fenison for their help. However, I take full responsibility for all errors, since ultimately the responsibility for what is written, and final proofing falls completely upon my shoulders alone.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to those servants of God who are brave enough to "*contend for the faith once delivered.*" We are in a spiritual battle for the truth and it is not for the faint of heart. We live in a day of sloppy agape where love is defined as non-confrontational and doctrine is regarded as divisive, and where it is more acceptable to offend God, as long as we don't offend those who sin against God. God save us from this kind of love. Speaking the truth in love has been our goal without fear or favor of man.

I want to especially dedicate this book to my wife Kathy. She has served faithfully standing with me for the defense of truth for the past 41 years. I have no closer friend or companion on this earth, and I count it an honor to share my ministry with her. We are truly one, and I do consider her inferior to me nor my equal, but superior to me in those things that really count in this life.

Preface

In 2007 I wrote a book entitled **The Great Commission Credentials** (GCC) in response to Bro. J.C. Settlemoir's book entitled **Landmarkism Under Fire** (LUF). Bro. Settlemoir responded by writing a series of critiques on my book, and then published a new book entitled **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical** in 2012 in response to my book.

At the very outset let me make some things very clear. I have never personally met Bro. J.C. Settlemoir, and I have no personal ill will toward his person whatsoever. I know of him only through a few e-mails and reading his books. His writings represent him as a very capable person who can express himself well. So this is not a personal issue between us, and there is nothing personal that motivates my response to his book. I write to defend the truth, as I perceive it with malice toward none.

Bro. Settlemoir was kind enough to e-mail me a copy of his book. To his credit he begins where one should begin, and that is with the scriptures rather than with tradition and writings of uninspired men. Bro. Settlemoir introduces the Biblical segment of his book with these words:

“If we can ascertain the teaching of Scripture on this subject, we shall have no problem with history or tradition.” – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, 2012, p. 1

Therefore, I begin in agreement with Brother Settlemoir on this common holy ground. Scripture always trumps the traditions and writings of uninspired men regardless of how revered those uninspired men may be esteemed by Baptists. Regardless, if those men may be John Gill, J.R. Graves, Spurgeon, Milburn Cockrell, Wayne Camp or any other man one might name.

There are three notable things about tradition (secular church history) that must be emphasized:

1. It is uninspired
2. It is incomplete
3. It is often wrong

1800-1905 was a time of great apostasy. The universal, invisible church theory was in the ascendancy among Baptists with its practices (pulpit affiliation, alien immersion, open communion) which had permeated many Baptist churches. The “Restoration” movement was rearing its ugly head in the form of the Campbellite, the Mormon, the Jehovah’s Witness and Seventh Day Adventist cults during the 19th century.

In the midst of all this chaos and confusion, God raised up some men to oppose these seeds of apostasy. Dr. J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton and J.M. Pendleton attempted to steer Baptists away from internal and external seeds of apostasy back to the “old paths” that many Baptists had forsaken, and many more were on the verge of forsaking.

This great “Triumvirate” forged out Biblical truths into a logical “system” of ecclesiology between the years 1851-1881. They did not invent new truths, but merely formulated a logical system to present and defend old truths. These men had brilliant and logical minds. However, as uninspired men they were not always entirely consistent with their own positions and interpretations, or with each other.

Out of this period of development came various shades of Landmarkism that were more or less consistent with the historical and Biblical based definition of Landmarkism.

The “Direct Authority” position is a mixture of the universal, invisible church theory with Landmarkism. It was founded upon the inconsistencies and interpretive errors of Dr. Graves, and those who embraced his inconsistencies.

The twentieth and twenty-first century systemization and defense of the “Direct Authority” movement among Baptists was grandfathered by Duane Gilliland, then by Wayne Camp and finally by J.C. Settlemaier.

In a private email from Bro. J.C. Settlemaier to me dated March 22, 2012 he related to me *a case in which Lincoln defended a man who was accused of stealing a wagon*

wheel. The prosecutor argued long and convincingly that the man put this wheel on his wagon. Lincoln had both the axle and the wagon wheel brought into the court room. He merely rolled the wheel up to the axle and the jury could plainly see it was impossible that that wheel had ever been put on that axle for it was far too large for the wheel.

When all the evidence is brought out on the public floor, it will be clearly seen that the Direct Authority theory will not fit the axle of Scripture or the historical definition of Landmarkism.

The essence of this book is that scriptural authority to initiate and carry out the Great Commission is not by direct/vertical authority, but rather “*emanates, under God, from a Gospel church.*”

Mark W. Fenison
September 24, 2014

CHAPTER ONE

The Biblical Defense of Authorized Church Constitution

This book is arranged under three major divisions. The first chapter deals with the *Biblical* defense of authorized church constitution. The second chapter deals with the *historical* defense of authorized church constitution. The third and final chapter deals with the *logical* defense of authorized church constitution. The book concludes with a summary of these three premises.

We begin with the scriptures, because the scriptures are the final authority for Baptist faith and practice.

This chapter will define what is biblical church constitution, and then examine specific scriptures that are critical to this issue (Matthew 18:15-20; 28:19-20; Acts 8-18). This chapter will close by examining the inconsistencies of biblical interpretation by Dr. J.R. Graves followed by a summary.

The thesis of this book is that *Matthew 28:19-20 is administrative authority given to an already existing church identified as “ye...you” for gathering baptized believers (“them”) into an observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ in order to observe all things commanded.*

It is the indisputable consequence of both the English and Greek grammar found in the Great Commission, that Christ has grammatically placed those identified as “ye...you” in a *horizontal instrumental* position between Himself and baptized believers (“them”), so that they alone are the only *authorized administrator* of Matthew 28:19-20.

This is also the indisputable conclusion of the historic definition of Landmarkism, that it is the church alone which is authorized in the Great Commission.

The argument is that scriptural authority emanates under God, from a gospel church. – William Cathcart, **The Baptist Encyclopedia**, “Landmarkism” Vol. 2, pp. 731-732, The Electronic Edition of Baptist History, Ver. 1.0

What is Biblical Church Constitution?

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. – Matthew 28:20

This book considers two contrasting views in regard to what is church constitution.

The Direct Authority (DA) view is that baptized believers have *direct authority* from Christ through the Scriptures, to self-constitute themselves into a church without seeking authority from any other source but the Scriptures. *This is the principle by which all post-first century denominations justify their origin.* Therefore, it is the majority view.

The Church Authorized Constitution (CAA) view is that church constitution is inherent in the Great Commission. The Great Commission is administrative authority given to an already existing church identified in the text as “ye...you” which alone has authority to gather baptized believers into an observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ for the purpose to observe all things commanded.

We say Matthew 28:20 resides solely under the authority of baptized believers already in church capacity (“ye”). Direct Authority Baptists say it resides under the sole authority of any two or three baptized believers inside or outside of church capacity (“them”).

1. The Point of debate is Matthew 28:20

The actual point of debate between the DA and CAA positions is the correct interpretation of Matthew 28:20.

Two issues must be resolved concerning this passage of scripture. The first issue is whether or not Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers, existing outside of church capacity (v. 19 “them”), into a teaching/observing covenant keeping church relationship with each other and with Christ? The second issue is, if that is so, then who is authorized to do that? Does that authority reside in any two or

three baptized churched or unchurched believers, or only in baptized believers acting in church capacity (“ye”), as demanded by historic Landmarkism? These two questions will be more fully addressed a little later. However, right now, remember the historic definition of Landmarkism repudiates any authorized administer of the Great Commission except “*the church*.”

Direct Authority advocates are forced to deny that Matthew 28:19-20 establishes any kind of horizontal administrative authority (“ye”) to evangelize, baptize and bring such baptized materials into a teaching observing assembly (v. 19). Why? Because they believe such authority comes **direct** from Christ through the scriptures, apart from any authorized intervening agency such as “ye...you” - thus the position of **Direct Authority**.

If DA advocates admit that the plural “ye” in Matthew 28:19 is the church, then they have lost the debate and their position is proven to be unscriptural. However, if they deny it is the church, they have also lost the debate because they have pitted themselves against the historic position of Landmarkism proving they are not the true representatives of historic Landmarkism as they claim.

William Cathcart in his *Baptist Encyclopedia* under “Landmarkism” gives the following fuller definition of historic “Landmarkism”.

The doctrine of Landmarkism is that baptism and church membership precede the preaching of the gospel, even as they precede communion at the Lord's Table. The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church; that as “a visible church is a congregation of baptized believers,” etc., it follows that no Pedobaptist organization is a church in the Scriptural sense of the term, and that therefore Scriptural authority to preach cannot proceed from such an organization. Hence the non-recognition of Pedobaptist ministers, who are not interfered with but

simply let alone. – William Cathcart, **Baptist Encyclopedia** (Landmarkism) 1881 – emphasis mine

Indeed, even Direct Authority advocates admit that it is an existing New Testament church alone that is authorized to administer baptism! Hence, DA is a self-contradiction, as it argues that the Great Commission authorizes only the church to administer baptism, but at the same time denies it is the church that is authorized to bring baptized believers into a covenant relationship with each other and with Christ in observing “all things commanded” as stated in the very same commission. Both assertions cannot be true. If it is the church that administers baptism in Matthew 28:19, then it is also the church that brings baptized believers into an observing relationship with each other and Christ in Matthew 28:20.

2. The Biblical Qualifications for Constitution

Both sides agree that no *unqualified* group of people should be recognized as a *true* church or recognized to possess church authority. Both sides agree that the proper qualified candidates for church constitution are professed believers baptized by a *preexisting* New Testament church who are united in the same faith and order with previous New Testament churches. Hence, such qualified materials have already been baptized into the membership of a *preexisting* church.

The issue arises when such baptized church members find themselves in an unchurched condition, either due to church discipline or due to their church disbanding or a split. Simply moving away from the church wherein the membership consists does not remove them from under the authority of that church. However, in regard to the three former states (under discipline, disbanded, or split), the question arises from whence do they obtain authority to organize into a church?

DA advocates argue that no preexisting church, council or presbytery can convey church authority. However, that is a straw man argument, as both sides agree that previous to the act of church constitution these baptized believers are not a church, and therefore are without “church” authority. Church authority belongs to an

existing church rather than to non-church or unchurched baptized believers. **Hence, a church must first exist for church authority to exist.** Prior to church existence there is no church authority found in unchurched persons.

The real issue is from whence these unchurched baptized believers obtain authority to meet for the purpose to become a church with church authority.

DA advocates argue that authority to meet and organize into a church consists by virtue of scriptural baptism. In other words, they believe that authority to carry out all aspects of the Great Commission is conveyed in the act of scriptural baptism. This view directly contradicts the historic interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20 which demands that only an *existing* church can administer this commission.

Both historic Landmarkism and the Scriptures deny this DA interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20. Both historic Landmarkism and the scriptures plainly teach that only an *existing* church has authority to carry out all aspects of the Great Commission including gathering baptized believers into a teaching assembly (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:40-41). That being the case, then the consequence of such an interpretation would demand that authority to organize into a New Testament church is derived from a preexisting New Testament church. Since obtaining “church authority” occurs only after a group of baptized believers become a church, therefore, authority to be constituted into such a church falls under the authorized administrator of the Great Commission – “ye” as a preexisting church.

a. An authorized administrator – Those authorized to administer the Great Commission are identified by the plural pronoun “ye” in Matthew 28:19-20. This is a horizontal and instrumental administrator that is placed between Christ and “*them*”, (baptized believers) in the Great Commission. This is the irrefutable grammar.

b. An authorized orderly process for the preparation of, and constitution of a church- **First**, they must be gospel converts (v. 19a). **Second**, they must be scripturally baptized (v. 19b). **Third**, they must be gathered in covenant commitment to teach and observe the same faith and order of Jesus Christ (v. 20).

This orderly process is what earlier Baptists referred to, as *gospel church order* or *regular church order*, as this *order* begins with the gospel and concludes with bringing “*them*”, (baptized believers), together into a teaching/observing assembled relationship with Christ. It is called *regular* order because it is the only practice followed by all true churches of Christ.

As you can see, both sides agree that becoming a church must first begin with proper qualified materials (baptized believers). Both sides agree that it is only a preexisting church that is authorized to prepare material (baptism) for church constitution. In Matthew 28:19-20 that administrator is identified as “*ye*.” Significantly, it is this same administrative authority (“*ye*”) authorized to baptize, that is authorized to assemble “*them*” or gather them into a teaching/observing covenant keeping relationship with Christ. That final act is by definition church constitution under the same authorized “*ye*.” If “*ye*” represents the church administering the baptism, then it is also the church gathering baptized believers into a covenant relationship.

Therefore, baptized believers (“*them*”) existing outside of church capacity have never been authorized by Christ to administer any aspect of this commission, including the last aspect which is assembling baptized believers (“*them*”) into a teaching/observing covenant keeping relationship with Christ.

However, the Direct Authority position denies and reverses the order given in the Great Commission. They deny that Christ has established any horizontal and/or instrumental administrative authority (“*ye*”) in church capacity to bring baptized believers (“*them*”) into regular observing covenant relationship with Christ. They assert that those identified as “*them*” (baptized believers) in the Great Commission (those who are in non-church capacity) have direct authority from Christ to bring themselves into this relationship with Christ in spite of the fact that Christ plainly authorizes those defined as “*ye*” to baptize “*them*.” The pronoun “*ye*” denies any kind of self-evangelism, self-baptism or self-constitution by “*them*.”

3. The Authorized Custodian of the Keys

The Authorized Church Constitution (ACC) position is based upon the Biblical premise that only the New Testament congregation (“ye” in Matthew 28:19-20) is entrusted with *the keys of the kingdom*, rather than just two or three baptized believers (“them” in Matthew 28:19-20) in non-church capacity or the ordained office.

The keys of the kingdom symbolize the administrative authority to further the full work of God’s kingdom on earth, as summarized in the Great Commission (Matthew 18:17; 28:19-20). No other entity has been given authority to administer the keys of the kingdom.

This kingdom authority is not only inclusive of preaching the gospel to all nations,¹ and baptizing believers (Matthew 28:19), but gathering them together into a covenant relationship for the express purpose to observe all things Christ commanded – Matthew 28:20. Matthew 19:20 is the act of gathering baptized believers into a covenant commitment to observe “*all things*” Christ commanded.

The essence of church constitution is baptized believers brought together (united) into an observing covenant relationship with each other and Christ as described in Matthew 28:20. Hence, church constitution is inherently part of the Great Commission.

4. The Various Ways of Church Assimilation

As shown, Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring unchurched baptized believers together into an observing covenant observing church relationship with each other and Christ.

Baptized believers are brought into this relationship by a variety of ways. However, the authorized administrator remains the same in all these various expressions. Ultimately all of these ways originates with explicit, implicit or assumed church authority. All of these ways include public examination and acceptance of a person’s gospel

¹ Matthew 18:17-18 and 28:19-20 refers to **institutional** authority. The church as an **institution** is the only **institution** authorized by Christ to make disciples. Individual believers have authority to share the gospel with anyone. In Revelation 22:17 both the **institutional** bride (v. 16) and the *individual* believer are to call sinners to come and drink.

profession and baptism (Acts 2:41; 9:26-27) for assimilation into church membership.

For example, baptized believers may be brought into an *existing* assembly, as in Acts 2:41, or it may occur by church authorized representatives assimilating baptized believers into *new* assemblies, as in Acts 14:1-23. Either way, what is described in Matthew 28:20 is not completed until such baptized believers are brought into an observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ.

In the case of removal of membership from one existing church into membership of another existing church, baptized believers are dismissed and received by letter and/or statement of faith from their covenant union in the former church into covenant union with the latter church, all by the authority of an existing church, as no other entity has “church” authority except an existing church.

Transferring from one assembly to another in connection with a letter of recommendation has clear Biblical inference (Acts 18:27; 2 Corinthians 3:1-2).

The Biblical based inference of letters for dismissal and reception has also been the customary procedure for *directly* dismissing members from an existing church in order to form a new church.

Not only is there clear Biblical inference for dismissal in connection with letters of commendation, but there are clear Biblical principles to support that practice. For example, the scriptures command that churches are to do all things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Dismissing members from membership obligations to be received into the membership of another church by church letter is consistent with this principle of due order. Church members are accountable for their actions to the church where their membership resides. They are not free lancers who can move from church to church without due order and accountability. They are under the disciplinary watch care and authority of the church where their membership resides until they are received in an orderly manner into the covenant relationship of another church.

The only believers outside the membership of a true church are those never received through baptism or those who were disciplined from a church. All others are members, and remain under their

covenant obligation until they are received into some other congregation.

This is a primary problem for Direct Authority advocates, as they seem to think that baptized believers can exist in a non-membership vacuum/limbo without responsibility to any existing church, and are thus free to act without accountability to any church whatsoever. However, historic Landmark church policy has consistently confirmed that baptized believers remain under the authority and watch care of the church where their current membership resides until they are received into covenant union of another church in an orderly manner.

With regard to the formation of a new church in the mission field, the church has already pre-authorized the formation of such a church by sending forth a missionary to obtain that very goal. The church is not *transferring* its authority to the missionary, but is administering its authority *through* its ordained member, just as it does in the administration of baptism by one of its ordained missionaries.

5. The Biblical Pattern for Constitution

The Scriptures also provide an explicit pattern for the constitutional service of new churches. The pattern directly set forth in Scripture for church constitution is entrance into marriage by covenant arrangement.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. – Ephesians 5:31-32

The authorized means for bringing baptized believers into this *covenant relationship* with Christ is represented in scriptures under the Jewish espousal covenant arrangement by an authorized agent of the Bridegroom (John 3:29; 2Corinthians 11:2). John the Baptist was this authorized agent in regard to the formation of the first church. However, in regard to the Great Commission, it is this authorized “ye” that is the authorized agent to bring baptized believers into an

observing covenant relationship with Christ (Matthew 18:17-18; 28:19-20) through its ordained representatives (Acts 13:1-4; 14:1-23):

*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for **I have espoused you to one husband**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. – 2 Corinthians 11:2*

Therefore, churches simply do not self-originate apart from an orderly scriptural authorized process. They are not products of self-evolution or self-organization, but are built, framed and erected by a third party, or a church sent authorized “*masterbuilder*.”

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. – 1 Corinthians 3:10

The “*foundation*” of church existence which Paul alludes to, is the laying down process of the Great Commission in the lives of people. Proper materials are first prepared by preaching the gospel and baptizing them. They are then brought together into a teaching/observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ. This bringing “*together*” by the “*masterbuilder*” is the erecting, framing, building and uniting baptized believers together as one body in regular church order.

The Great Commission contains three elements in this foundation of Christ. (1) His gospel preached “*go preach the gospel*”; (2) His baptism – “*baptizing them*”; (3) His doctrine – “*teaching them*.” It is impossible for any aspect of this foundation to be self-laid. The only “*self*” aspect of this constitutional process is the free choice of the recipients (“*them*”) to submit to the administrator of these three elements of church constitution.

Scriptures clearly set forth church constitution as an act, which is initiated and completed through the instrumental means of a third party, which is selectively authorized by the groom to bring the bride into covenant agreement (espousal). This authorized third party is the “*ye*” of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Since marriage is

the Biblical background (Ephesians 5:31-32) for church constitution, Baptists have historically followed the marriage service as a pattern for church constitution services.

That service usually consists in sending out invitations to family (spiritual brothers and sisters) and calling for the assistance of surrounding churches and their ministers to officiate over the covenant union between these baptized believers and Christ (like an officiating minister at a wedding). The details involved in this public service vary from church to church, but essentially include the examination of their commitments to Christ manifested by their articles of faith and church covenant, as well as, examining and reading the letter for dismissal of these baptized believers from their church for this stated purpose (as expressions that follow after the idea of parents giving away the bride to enter covenant union with Christ – Ephesians 5:31). The constitution service includes a charge given them, as is the case in most marriage services.

6. The Point of Constitution in the Biblical Pattern

Regardless of third parties involved in marriage or church constitution, only the bride and groom can actually take part in the vows.

There is no marriage or church constitution prior to entering into covenant union. This covenant vow is expressed by baptized believers freely consenting to enter into an observing covenant relationship with Christ as their final authority for faith and practice.

The church or its ordained representatives officiating over the constitution service usurps the authority of the expectant new church, no more or less than the authority of an officiating minister usurps the authority of a new marriage. Neither the officiating authority force or take part in the covenant vows that bring a new church or marriage into existence. In the case of church constitution, the third party acts as the authorized agent of the Bridegroom in bringing the bride into this covenant union.

Direct Authority advocates have no Biblical basis or right to usurp Christ's authorized agent ("ye") for bringing the bride into covenant union with Christ.

Only after they enter into covenant agreement are they declared to be a New Testament congregation by those who officiate over the covenant ceremony (just as in the marriage of a man and woman).

As in the marriage ceremony, all the inherent rights of a New Testament congregation are possessed at the very point they are declared to be an organized New Testament congregation in covenant relationship with Christ, rather than at any time before they enter into covenant vows.

Therefore, their autonomy as a church is not infringed upon by Christ's authorized agent (previous existing church) because there is no church formed, until the precise point they enter into that declared organized covenant union "*under God from a gospel church*" (just as in a marriage ceremony).

The authority of the previous church is directed toward that very point, just as the authority of an officiating minister in the marriage ceremony is directed toward that point. It is at that point these baptized believers come directly under the authority of their new husband (Christ), just as it is at that precise point a woman comes under the authority of her husband.

Until baptized believers enter into that declared covenant with Christ, as His espoused wife, they remain under the authority of their parents (existing church). This is acknowledged by many Baptist church manuals:

*A regular proceeding like this is needful because in ordinary cases the persons wishing to form themselves into a new church are already members of an existing church, **which have a right** to watch over them **till** they have been regularly dismissed to some regularly constituted church. – William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 "Manner of forming a church" p. 182 – Emphasis mine*

*It was voted, that we cordially grant them letters of dismissal for that purpose, and **when regularly constituted as a church, shall cease to regard them as under our watch care.** – J. Newton Brown, **A Baptist Church***

Manual, Judson Press, thirty-sixth printing, 1981 –
Emphasis mine

No church authority is being passed from one church to another church, nor is one church being built upon another church. To accuse Authorized Church Constitution advocates of such things is either due to a lack of understanding their position, or an attempt to intentionally distort their position. Instead, church authority grants baptized believers the right to assemble in order to achieve that specific goal through free vote.

7. The Great Commission is Authority for Constitution

The right of the church to act in this capacity, as Christ's authorized agent in bringing believers of like faith and order into covenant agreement with Christ, is established by Christ in the Great Commission.

The historic definition of *Landmarkism* summarizes this Great Commission authority in the expression “*scriptural authority emanates under God from a gospel church*” in carrying out the Great Commission.

Dr. J.R. Graves asks,

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion?.....Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?..... - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord's Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816 –
Emphasis mine

Even anti-Landmarkers unwittingly admit that the Great Commission is inclusive of authority to organize churches:

In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches is beyond question. – T.G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, A Vindication.** (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27 – emphasis mine

Christ previously made it clear that such authority resides solely in His church (Matthew 18:17-18) rather than in the ministry. His customary manner for addressing His churches is through its ordained representatives (Revelation 2-3).

8. Summary Conclusion

Our position is simple. Matthew 28:19-20 is under the sole administration of an existing New Testament congregation, and establishes the church as Christ's only authorized agent for bringing baptized believers into an observing covenant relationship with Christ.

Moreover, the Great Commission alone is the *modus operandi* (mode of operation) for obtaining the proper materials necessary to form a true church, while the Biblical pattern of marriage provides the ceremonial procedure by which persons are brought into covenant relationship with Christ as a church.

Matthew 18:20 – The Issue

The following pages will deal with how certain Scriptures are interpreted and applied by Direct Authority advocates versus Authorized Church Constitution advocates. This study begins with Matthew 18:20.

Bro. J.C. Settlemoir's book **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical** defines "Direct Authority" in church constitution by the following words:

Here in this text is Christ's own word on church constitution. This is the positive declaration of the Word of God. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

*Whenever he leads men to gather together in his name by His Holy Spirit, then He promises to be in the midst of them. Church life is bestowed and another church-lamp is lit by the Lord Himself. This is how a church begins. – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 3 – emphasis mine*

Obviously he has replaced Matthew 28:19-20 with Matthew 18:20, as the basis for Biblical authority to constitute New Testament churches.

Bro. Settlemoir confidently asserts Matthew 18:20 is Christ's "own word on church constitution." However, does this text actually say anything at all about church constitution? Moreover, in Matthew 18:16 we also have two meeting together in the name of Christ:

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. – Matthew 18:16

These are baptized believers! Is a church being constituted here also when "two or three" assemble as Christ instructed ("in my name") in Matthew 18:16? If the reply is that Matthew 18:16 is found in the context of an already existent church, we reply so is

Matthew 18:20. Indeed, at minimum, Bro. Settlemoir's very interpretation of the text demands it is a church context.

1. Further Qualifications Necessary

However, even Bro. Settlemoir is not content that Matthew 18:20 sufficiently conveys church constitution, as he feels he must further qualify the actual words used by Christ in Matthew 18:20:

The actual constitution of a church takes place the moment a group of saved baptized saints... – Ibid. p. 4 (Emphasis mine)

So just two or three meeting together in His name is not sufficient for church constitution even according to Bro. Settlemoir's definition. According to Bro. Settlemoir, in addition to meeting together in the name of Christ, they must also be "baptized."

Furthermore, Bro. Settlemoir goes on to even further qualify Matthew 18:20. He insists that they are already a constituted church at the very "moment" they have this "purpose in mind" to be a church:

The actual constitution of a church takes place the moment a group of saved baptized saints meet together with the purpose in mind to constitute. – Ibid. p. 4 (Emphasis mine)

Indeed, he insists that this is true even though they may never actually "meet together" to be formally constituted:

*The **formal** constitution is but a ceremony and the church would be a church without it as much as with it. – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**. p. 4 – emphasis mine*

Dr. Graves was not completely satisfied that merely two or three meeting together in Jesus name provided all essentials to constitute a church, as he also added further qualifications:

*It is true that two or three **baptized** believers can organize a Church, **provided** they adopt the apostolic model of government, and covenant to be governed by the sole authority of Jesus Christ – J.R. Graves, **Great Carrollton Debate**. p. 975 – Emphasis mine²*

Now, when all the qualified interpretations by Bro. Settlemoir and Bro. Graves are combined together, we are told that Matthew 18:20 actually means the following:

Wherever two or three baptized persons meet with constitution in mind to adopt the apostolic model of government, and covenant to be governed by the sole authority of Christ, whether they ever actually assemble to formerly do this or not, they are a church – Direct Authority Interpretation of Matthew 18:20

I think the objective reader can see that Christ said no such thing in Matthew 18:20.

2. Constitution is a State of Mind?

What about this idea that meeting with mere “***purpose in mind***” makes them a church already whether they ever actually meet to enter into this covenant union or not? .

In Scripture the church relationship to Christ is compared to the relationship between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5:23-31). Bro. Steve Shults in an e-mail to me on March 20, 2013 made this observation:

Surely no woman is contented with the INTENTION of marriage, and no couple expects to partake of the blessings

² This was Dr. Grave’s response to the Methodist Dr. Ditzler who used it in keeping with the universal, invisible church application which required nothing more than two or three professed believers assembling.

and benefits of marriage without the actual ceremony! No indeed! There may be betrothal where relationship is grown, there may be commitments being planned; but these are rightfully under the authority of pastor and parents until the ACTUAL ceremony occurs where vows are publicly spoken. Then and only then, at that very point in time, do two become one (5:31). The same is true of a church – she is under parental authority until that vow (i.e. constitution) is publicly spoken. At that point does she accept Christ as her head and is no longer under authority of the parent church. –

Brother Steve rightly points out Paul’s use of the term “together” in the book of Ephesians is different when used between God and believers, than used between God and the church.

In regard to individual believers and their togetherness with each other and God, they are “**quicken**ed together” (Ephesians 2:5) and “**raised up** together” (Ephesians 2:6a) and made to “**sit** together” (Ephesians 2:6b) with Christ. However, in regard to the church it is “**buil**ded together for a habitation of God” (Ephesians 2:22) and the body is “**fitly joined** together and **compact**ed by that which every joint supplieth” (Ephesians 4:16). Bro. Shults then says:

“These verses are not only very strong arguments against a universal church, but evidence that the church must be constituted TOGETHER to fulfill their purpose. It is not enough for them to “intend” to be joined together, but they must be “fitly framed” together, and “fitly joined” and “compact” together in “every joint.” – Steve Shults – e-mail March 21, 2013.

Furthermore, Paul insists that church constitution is **not** by “Direct Authority” but is accomplished through the instrumentality of church-sent and church-authorized ordained representatives:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and

another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. – 1 Corinthians 3:10

I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. – 2 Corinthians 11:2

Again, it is the language of espousal agreement or what was equivalent to the legal beginning of a Jewish marriage service under a church authorized agent (see chapter on Acts 13:1-4) that is *necessarily* implied.

Certainly Christ is the builder of the Church, but Christ builds it through the instrumental means identified as “ye” (e.g. Paul – Acts 13:1-4) in the Great Commission. He administers Matthew 28:20 according to the historic definition of Landmarkism “*under God, from a gospel Church.*” This process is what Baptist history refers to as constituting churches by *regular church order* so that the church is “**fitly** joined together” not merely “joined,” but “**framed** together” and “**compacted** together,” and thus “*builded together*” by an instrumental horizontal authorized church “*masterbuilder.*”

2. Constitutional Service Irrelevant?

However, in his latest book, Bro. Settlemoir declares that church constitutional meetings are totally irrelevant. Indeed, according to the Direct Authority position, a church can be built directly by God without any church sent “masterbuilder” at all, as they claim churches are “self-built” instead of formed by a “masterbuilder.”

According to Bro. Settlemoir the only necessity are baptized believers with “*purpose in mind*” to be a church, even before they actually enter into a manifest joint covenant with each other by vote to be a church. However, in regard to its Biblical analogy with marriage, **this is an interpretation justifying spiritual fornication or declaring marital union prior to any marriage service.**

In other words, Bro. Settlemoir and Direct Authority advocates view nearly all recorded church constitution meetings in American Baptist history, as non-essential, and therefore misleading, since most of them state or imply they did not become a church, until they were

actually assembled by such master builders in order to be publicly united in a declared covenant union with each other.

Neither Scriptures nor church history support this pre-covenant and pre-agreement church existence idea by Bro. Settlemoir and Direct Authority teaching.

Indeed, Baptist Churches have consistently demanded that New Testament congregations must be constituted after *regular church order* rather than by mere “*purpose in mind.*” Later, it will be proved that *regular church order* is church authorized administration of the Great Commission principles according to the actual “order” found in Matthew 28:18-20.

3. The Contrary Admissions of Dr. Graves

Moreover, on more than one occasion, Dr. Graves freely admitted that Matthew 18:20 applies to an existing congregation and the minimum number necessary to administer church discipline rather than church constitution:

a. In 1860

*To sustain; See 2 and 4; see Matthew 18:20. To be gathered together in the name of Christ may mean in the capacity of a Church. See 1 Corinthians 5: 4 which undoubtedly means in Church capacity - J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.** “Church Constitution,” Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860, p. 553*

Here he denies it contextually refers to church constitution, but to two or three already in “church capacity” as in 1 Corinthians 5:4. There is no church constitution in 1 Corinthians 5:4, but an already existing church administering discipline. Likewise, it is the same in Matthew 18:14-20.

b. In 1876

Respecting the powers of each local church I submit the following:

Scriptural Proofs

*Matthew 18:14-20, Here, the Savior gives the minute details with respect to an offending member.....There is no high ecclesiastical court to which he can appeal. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 997*

He does not say “Matthew 18:14-17” but “Matthew 18:14-20” which clearly includes verses 18-20 in the context of church discipline.

Conclusion: The Direct Authority advocate must read into Matthew 18:20 many things it does not actually say. Furthermore, they must isolate Matthew 18:19-20 from its preceding context, and prove Christ has changed subjects. Dr. Graves flip flopped concerning his interpretation of Matthew 18:20.

What Matthew 18:20 Really Teaches

No one can dispute that Matthew 18:20 is found in a church context (Matthew 18:15-20). Even Direct Authority advocates admit that Matthew 18:19-20 is a church context, as they insist it refers to the constitution of a church.

Neither does anyone dispute that this text sets forth the minimum number necessary to be an assembly. One person cannot be an assembly, as the very term demands two or more (“two or three”).

What makes Matthew 18:17-20 particularly interesting is the use of the very same “ye” and “you” as found in Matthew 28:19-20 in regard to the very same subject of authority.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

However, Matthew 18:15-20 explicitly mentions and demand that it is “*the church*” in direct connection with the contextual “ye” and “you” in the church administration of the keys of the kingdom.

The issue is whether Matthew 18:19-20 simply continues the discussion about church discipline begun in Matthew 18:15-17 or has the Lord changed topics between verse 18 and verse 19?

1. The Contextual Evidence for Continuation

Evidence that this is a continued development of the same subject is confirmed by three facts.

First, there is continuation of the very same “ye” and “you” addressed in Matthew 18:18, as in Matthew 18:19-20. So whoever is being addressed in Matthew 18:18, is still being addressed in Matthew 18:19-20.

Second, the word “again” in Matthew 18:19 demonstrates continuation of the same topic in Matthew 18:18 as in Matthew 18:19-20.

Verily I say unto youAgain I say unto you – Matthew 18:18-19

The introductory term “Again” in verse 19 demands continuation rather than introduction of another topic. It is the topic of administrative church authority, or church administration of the keys of the kingdom by the existing church in Matthew 18:17 that continue to be the topic.

Third, there is development of thought. The very issue in Matthew 18:15-16 is one of disagreement. The issue is brought before the church in order to settle this internal conflict between members (v. 17). The church has the authority to make a final judgment (vs. 17-18). However, the use of authority requires both wisdom and unity for its proper administration. Matthew 18:19-20 provides the practical directions for the church to obtain the necessary wisdom in resolving such internal conflicts.

Dr. A.T. Robertson says of verse 19:

*Shall agree (συμφωνησωσιν). Our word "symphony" is this very root. It is no longer looked at as a concord of voices, a chorus in harmony, though that would be very appropriate in a church meeting rather than the rasping discord sometimes heard even between two brethren or sisters. – A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures** on Matthew 18:20*

This is especially true when cases of dispute are brought before the assembly, as characterized in verses 15-17. The church needs to be unified under the leadership of Christ to settle such disputes. This comes by seeking the presence and leadership of Christ (vs. 18-20).

2. Historical Evidence for Continuation

There are examples in church history where that understanding of this text is clearly expressed by small churches seeking to come to a unified agreement in the exercise of authority.

One example is found among the early English Baptists during 1644-1722:

On the thirteenth day of the fifth month, it being appointed to be observed, by prayer and fasting, for the election and ordination of a deacon in the church, the elders of the church being together at Eltisly, where the meeting was appointed, and very few of the brethren being present, it did so discourage those that were assembled, that they knew not what to do. But at length remembering the words of the Lord, saying, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them, it was resolved to proceed. Whereupon, much time being spent in prayer, bewailing our negligence, and craving forgiveness and assistance from the Lord, we then went about to choose one. But our company being so small, it was questioned by some whether it was meet for us to proceed to choose any that day. Whereupon we again sought the Lord for direction.” – E.B. Underhill, **Records of the Churches of Christ Gathered at Ferstanton, Warboys, and Hexsham, 1644-1720**, p. 177 – The Baptist Collection of History, Version 1.0

The Orthodox Creed presented by Baptists to Charles II in 1678 also gives Matthew 18:20 as a reference for disciplinary authority as an existing church in article 39. It is also found in article 41 for regular public worship (W.J. McGlothlin, **Baptist Confessions of Faith**, pp. 120, 121 – The Baptist Collection of History, Version 1.0).

As previously demonstrated, when Dr. Graves was defending the authority of an existing church, he applied this text for that purpose. He admitted that it “may” more properly apply to the administration of church discipline:

*To sustain. See 2 and 4, see Matthew 18:20 To be gathered together in the name of Christ may mean in the capacity of a Church. See 1 Corinthians 5:4 which undoubtedly means in Church capacity - J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed**. “Church Constitution,” Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860, p. 553 – emphasis mine*

Even one the most prominent universal, invisible church Reformed Baptist exegete, and commentator John F. MacArthur admits this when he says:

***18:20; two or three.** Jewish tradition requires at least ten men (a minyan) to constitute a synagogue or even hold public prayer. Here Christ promises to be present in the midst of even a smaller flock – “two or three witnesses” gathered in His name for the purpose of discipline (see note on verse 15). – John F. MacArthur, **MacArthur Bible Commentary**, “Matthew” (Thomas Nelson, 2005) p 1158*

So we have the same persons, and same subject being thoughtfully developed throughout Matthew 18:18-20.

3. The Contextual Identity of “Ye” and “You”

Now, just who are those being addressed as “ye” and “you” in Matthew 18:18-20? The answer to that is a matter of grammar and context.

To find out who is being represented by these pronouns, one must trace the pronouns to its nearest contextual antecedent. The identity of the pronouns in Matthew 18:18-20 is revealed by its nearest antecedent “*the church*” in Matthew 18:17. The term “*church*” is a collective noun inclusive of a plurality. Hence, “ye” and “you” refer to the existing church described in Matthew 18:15-

17.³ Biblical writers frequently address the church by the plural “you” (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2) because the church is a collective singular noun which consists of plural disciples.

Furthermore, what is declared to be church authority in Matthew 18:17-18, is later formally granted, or commissioned to the church in Matthew 28:19-20. The administration of the keys of the kingdom can be summed up in making disciples through *instructive*, *corrective*, and if necessary, *purgative* discipline. All of these are aspects of church discipline, and are inherent in teaching disciples how to observe all things commanded.

Indeed, the historic definition of Landmarkism demands that Matthew 28:18-20 refers to church administrative authority in all areas listed. Matthew 18:17-18 declares the church is final in its use of administrative authority.

³ Some attempt to argue that “ye” and “you” do not have “*the church*” for its contextual antecedent but have “*the disciples*” in Matthew 18:1 as its antecedent, which they further define as either the office of apostle or the ordained office.

This is the very same argument used by those who deny church authority in Matthew 28:19-20, in which they argue that the “ye” and “you” does not refer to the church but rather to “*the eleven disciples*” in Matthew 28:16 in the capacity of the apostolic office and/or the ordained class.

There are several problems with this line of thinking and interpretation for Landmarkers.

First, this would be an outright denial of the historic definition of Landmarkism which is based upon the interpretation that Matthew 18:17-18 and Matthew 28:19-20 fall under the authority of the church in contradistinction to elder rule or ministerial authority over the church.

Second, Christ does not say “*if they hear not the elders*” as the final administrator of the keys. No, the final authority is “*the church*” and the reason it is final is because the keys of the kingdom have been given to the church (v. 18). Also, Matthew 18:17-18 proves that Jesus had initially promised the keys to Peter only as a representative type of the material used by Christ to build His church. This is precisely how Peter interpreted it (1 Peter 2:5).

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. – Matthew 18:17-18

4. The Proper Use of the Keys

Do the “keys of the kingdom” refer to legislative or delegated administrative authority? Matthew 18:18 uses the future perfect tense, but the King James Version translates it by the simple future tense “*shall be bound*” and “*shall be loosed*.” Literally translated it would read “*shall have been bound*” and “*shall have been loosed*” already in heaven. In other words, the church is only given authority to administer (delegated administrative authority) what God has already determined should be bound or loosed in keeping with His revealed will. This particular wording sets forth the administrative boundaries for the proper administration of the keys in keeping with God’s revealed will.

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. – Psalm 119:89

How is the church to discern what God has already bound and loosed in heaven? At this point in history when Jesus spoke these words there were no New Testament Scriptures. They only had the Old Testament Scriptures. Hence, seeking to administer God’s will in cases of New Testament teaching was by seeking principles set forth in Old Testament Scriptures with prayerful guidance by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 18:19-20).

Conclusion: Therefore, the church is declared to be the final administrative authority on earth to settle all matters of discipline. Matthew 18:18 qualifies this authority by asserting that the church must exercise that authority in keeping with God’s will. Matthew 18:19-20 directs the church to prayer in order to obtain Christ’s

leadership in the exercise of the keys so that the keys of the kingdom are exercised “in my name” (in keeping with my will). There is not even a contextual hint that Matthew 18:20 refers to anything other than administration of the keys of the kingdom in a context of resolving internal problems.

Matthew 28:19-20 – The Issue

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. – Matthew 28:19-20

Earlier in this study we raised two issues concerning Matthew 28:19-20. (1) Does Matthew 28:19-20 authorize “ye...you” as the only qualified administrator of this commission, and if so, (2) Is that specific administrator the church?

The first issue is very simple. Does or does not Christ authorize the contextually defined “ye” to administer this commission to “them” in Matthew 28:19-20? If so, then Christ has completely repudiated any kind of *direct* administrator, as well as any kind of *self* administration of this commission. That being the case, then Christ has established a specific horizontal administrative authority to bring baptized believers into a church relationship with Christ.

One does not need to be a Bible scholar to see that Matthew 28:19-20 completely repudiates the doctrine of Direct Authority. Indeed, it drives a stake in the heart of the DA doctrine.

1. The Authorized Horizontal Administrator

It does not take a Bible scholar to easily recognize that there are four classes of people found in Matthew 28:19-20:

1. The one giving this commission – Christ
2. The ones being commissioned – “ye...you”
3. The ones who are the recipients of the gospel “*all nations*”
4. The ones who are the proper candidates of baptism and teaching – “*them*”

Those identified as “*all nations*” are the lost of this world unto whom the gospel is being sent (Mark 16:15 – *go preach the gospel to*

all nations). Those identified as “*them*” are those who received the gospel out of the nations and are the only proper candidates for baptism and instruction. (For an in depth study of this commission please see my book **In Search of New Testament Churches**, pp. 2-49)

Christ does not **directly** administer any of these things to “*all nations*” or to “*them*.” He clearly established “*ye....you*” as the horizontal authorized/commissioned administrator for all these things. The Great Commission “*ye...you*” stands between Christ and “*all nations....them*” in the administration of all these things. That is by definition the establishment of a horizontal authorized administrator for all these things.

This is a complete repudiation of any kind of **self** administration of any of these things. Christ never authorized **self**-evangelization, **self**-baptism or **self**- instruction in all things or **self**-constitution.

2. Authorized to bring baptized believers into an observing covenant relationship with Christ

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Consider this. Is it possible to administer verse 20 without assembling “*them*” (baptized believers – v. 19) with the teachers “*ye....you*”? The answer is no!

Is it possible to “*observe*” Matthew 18:15-17 outside of church membership and outside the very church where the offender resides? Again, the answer is no!

Both of these things are impossible to observe unless Matthew 28:19-20 is the command to bring baptized believers into covenant union with each other and with Christ as a New Testament congregation.

Furthermore, according to Luke, the church in Jerusalem understood the Great Commission to be inclusive of bringing baptized believers into a church relationship with Christ. In Acts 2:40

baptized believers “*were added unto them*” as the prerequisite for observing apostolic doctrine and practice (Acts 2:41).

The evidence demands that “*teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded*” is impossible apart from church membership. Matthew 28:19-20 is the orderly way of bringing baptized believers into an observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ as a New Testament congregation.

3. The Identity of the Horizontal Authorized “ye...you” in Matthew 28:19-20

The question remains, who are those identified as “*ye...you*”? They are those whom Christ has already brought through this process (“*I have commanded you*”). If it is impossible to observe this commission apart from actually being brought into an observing covenant relationship with each other and with Christ as a New Testament congregation, then “*ye...you*” must be an existing church for them to “*have*” already been brought through this same process. Again, Luke confirms that very thing. Luke describes them as those who regularly assembled with Christ since the baptism of John until his ascension or the same ones those on Pentecost were “*added unto*”

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. – Acts 1:21-22

Historic Landmarkism has consistently demanded that the Great Commission plural “*ye...you*” represented the existing church built by Christ during his earthly ministry. Indeed, the very historical definition of Landmarkism is based upon this position.

Therefore, Direct Authority advocates would be forced to contradict the very heart of historic Landmarkism if they denied this.

However, as we shall see later, there is more than sufficient Biblical based contextual proof to establish the identity of “*ye...you*” as the church of Christ.

4. The Accusations by Bro. Settlemoir

The remaining part of this section will address the accusations which Bro. Settlemoir levels against my exposition of Matthew 28:19-20 and specifically my interpretation of “*ye*” versus “*them*.”

a. The Accusation of Wrong Application

Bro. Settlemoir claims the weakness of my exposition of Matthew 28:19-20 is “*not grammar, English, Greek, or otherwise, but application*” (p. 11) – emphasis mine.

However, as any good Bible student knows, it is solid exegetical based exposition that ultimately determines the limits of proper application. **My applications go no further than what the proper exegesis of this text demands.** If he cannot overturn my exposition, neither can he overturn my applications, as my applications are nothing more than what the proper exposition of the text requires.

This is quite easy to demonstrate. The proper exposition of this text demands this is nothing less than an organic cycle of reproduction after its own kind. This cannot be exegetically disputed without looking foolish.

For example, consider the inherent *organic* nature of this commission. Scriptural baptism cannot occur without organic contact between the administrator (“*ye*”) and candidates “*them*.” Try to baptize someone without touching them? This is equally true with the other two aspects of this commission. Evangelizing them requires actual organic contact, as does teaching them to observe all things. They had no telecommunication system. Try teaching anyone to observe the Lord’s Supper or practice Matthew 18:15-20 without organic contact between the teacher and the students?

Furthermore, this is a commission to reproduce disciples of like faith and order. Matthew 28:19 literally reads “*make disciples*.” A disciple is by definition one that follows or adopts the faith and practice of another. Anyone who opposes or departs from the faith and practice of the master is regarded as a heretic (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thes. 3:6; Rom. 16:17) not a disciple. They are to be taught to observe all things commanded rather than be innovators of new

doctrine and practices. Hence, this commission is a command to reproduce after their own kind = disciples.

Moreover, this commission is inherently cyclic. Look at the natural cyclic order! Go....baptizing....teaching them to observe all things, and the last aspect demands repetition in the same precise order reproducing the same exact kind – disciples. In addition, it is confirmed by the divine promise that such a natural organic cycle would be successful until the end of the age.

Jude describes this commission as being delivered but “*once*” (Jude 3) rather than a commission repetitively redelivered by direct authority over and over again. That is precisely why Jude uses the Aorist tense (completed punctiliar action) “*once delivered*” rather than using the imperfect or present tense which would convey continuous repetitious redelivering as demanded by the Direct Authority theory. The Aorist tense demonstrates it occurred at a single point of time in history.

b. The Accusation of No Positive Law

Bro. Settlemoir says:

EMDA is a theory paraded as a law but it is only a theory...Positive law demands a positive command is an evangelical standard which no Baptist is brash enough to deny! Graves said, “Baptism is a positive law and since no positive law is left to be inferred, certainly no essential part of a positive law can be supposed to be left to be inferred, but must be clearly indicated. If Baptists deny this, they must repudiate one of their cherished and distinguishing principles, i.e., that the Scriptures are a perfect rule of practice as well as faith. [Dayton, Alien Baptism. Intro by J.R. Graves, p. vi]”

*EMDA is, in the estimation of its promoters, a law but their most able men admit it is a law without a positive command! – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, pp. 89, 90*

However, that is precisely what Matthew 28:20 is – a **positive law**. It is a positive command that authorizes assembling of baptized believers in covenant purpose to observe all things commanded.

Dr. Graves speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 demands it is a positive law, and is inclusive of authority to constitute churches:

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion? If a preacher should first organize a church then baptize its members and then proceed to disciple them, is his course as lawful, or no more unlawful, than one directly the reverse? If unlawful, I ask, Why? How can it be unlawful and not contrary to the law? If Christ has given a law, what is the law? Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?.....

*It must be granted, because true, that the **order** in which **positive laws** are given, is as important and as inviolable, as the law itself. It may not be violated with impunity. It is openly and palpably violating the law itself and confounds and nullifies its intent. The Divine Lawgiver had a wise design in the arrangement of that order of His laws. To invert them is to **pervert and subvert them**. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Lord’s Supper” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-816 – Emphasis mine*

Notice Dr. Graves says “**Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting time of opinion?**” He then goes on to argue that the Great Commission has a specific order to follow, and this order is **positive law** which cannot be altered or reversed. This is precisely the position that was set forth in my exposition of Matthew 28:19-20.

c. The Accusation that my exposition allows for ministerial authority instead of church authority.

Bro. Settlemoir asserts that my treatment of “ye...you” versus “them” demands an “Episcopal hierarchy” and I quote:

“If you actually have this episcopal stratification between the ye(s) and them(s) (it is painful to hear a Baptist pronounce such popish ideas!)....One can take the same reasoning and as logically come up with the theory of Roman Catholicism. He can claim the ye(s) refer to the Pope or to the Cardinals and that this is how the authority of Christ is conveyed.....one can claim that it is this Episcopal idea which is taught in this text and the authority trickles down through the fingers of the clergy.” Ibid. – pp. 11, 12

However, is it not claimed by Bro. Settlemoir that Direct Authority better represents historic Landmarkism? How does historic Landmarkism interpret “ye...you”? Do they interpret it as I do – the church, or as Bro. Settlemoir actually do a ministerial hierarchy?

*The administration of baptism is an official act, done by the authority of the church....They were addressed as the representatives of the churches.....To the Churches, therefore, the commission says, Go ye and preach my gospel to all nations, baptizing them &c.... – A.C. Dayton, **Alien Immersion**, pp. 212, 218, 219*

*The authority to administer baptism was not conferred upon the apostles or first church members as individuals, but upon the church to administer baptism, through her official servants. – D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession**, p. 47*

Indeed, this is the very essence of the historical definition of Landmarkism based on Matthew 28:19-20 that scriptural authority “**emanates under God, from a gospel church.**”

My exposition, according to immediate context, demands that “ye...you” represents an age long entity. Christ promises to be with “you” until the end of the age. Only the church is promised this kind of continuance by Christ (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:21).

However, it is the Direct Authority interpretation that is actually demanding eldership authority and thus an “Episcopal idea.”

5. The Direct Authority Position is Pro-Episcopal

However, this charge that my exposition of Matthew 28:19-20 allows for pro-episcopal ministerial authority brings me to the real crux of the “Direct Authority” problem.

The “Direct Authority” position is, at its very heart an anti-Landmark pro-Episcopal – Reformed Baptist position.

Some Direct Authority advocates deny that Matthew 18:18 and 28:19-20 were given to the church, but rather they believe such were given to the ministerial office in the church. Moreover, all Direct Authority advocates interpret the Great Commission actions in Acts 8-18 to be **ministerial** actions by direct/vertical authority under God **without any connection with church authority**. In other words, the Direct Authority application of the Great Commission in the book of Acts repudiates the historical definition of Landmarkism that such administrations “*emanate under God, FROM A GOSPEL CHURCH.*”

Direct Authority advocates cannot have their pie and eat it too! On one hand they demand that proper material for church constitution must be church administered baptized believers, while on the other hand they deny it is the church being authorized in the commission to administer baptism, and they deny the church authorized representatives are administering baptism in Acts 8-11.

The fact is that every example of baptism in the New Testament is administered by individuals. Either they are acting under the authority of a church or they are not. So at what point in scripture do Direct Authority advocates forsake this method of interpretation and depend upon inferences to establish their own doctrine of church authorized baptism from the scriptures???

If they establish church authorized baptism upon inferences at any point in scripture, then, why are insufficient details and silence problematic only in Acts 8-11???? Why not make the same inferential assumptions in Acts 8-11 that they are forced to make elsewhere in order to demand that proper materials for church constitution must have baptism administered by a preexisting church?

No church can administer baptism except through authorized representatives. Therefore, all examples of administrators will be individuals. However, are they acting as authorized representatives of the church or acting by direct authority?

Historic Landmarkism believed there was sufficient scriptural data that required the necessary inference that only the church is authorized to administer baptism, regardless if the term “church” was not found in the baptismal context.

Dr. Graves believed Matthew 28:19-20 is scriptural authority **“under God, from a gospel church”** and interpreted the Great Commission actions in Acts 8-18 to be consistent with that central tenet of Landmarkism:

*I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941*

However, is that how “Direct Authority” advocates interpret and expound these very same passages in Acts??? No!

For example, Bro. Settlemaier interprets the authority to administer the Great Commission by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:5-18:22 to be “vertical authority” alone without any authorized connection **“from a gospel church.”**

The *Holy Spirit* specially called these men and announced their call for a specific work and said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” **This was vertical authority....**He did not say: *I have appeared unto the Church at Antioch so that you can be a mother church and I authorize you to start other*

churches..... – J.C. Settlemaier, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 8 – Emphasis mine

According to his interpretation, the administration of baptism in Acts 13:5-14:23 was administered directly under God, rather than by “*authority that emanates under God, from a gospel church.*” **So who is really guilty of being pro-episcopal in their application of Matthew 28:19-20?**

We ask Bro. Settlemaier the same question Dr. Graves asked his opponent -

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion?.....Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?..... - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816 – Emphasis mine

The truth is that it is impossible for the entire church to administer baptism to anyone. The only possible way the church can administer baptism is through authorized individual representatives. Every example of baptism in scripture is administered by individuals. Therefore, if that is a problem in Acts 8-11, it is a problem in every other example as well.

Matthew 18:17-18 establishes that the church alone has the authority to administer the “keys of the kingdom” and does so through its ordained representatives.

The doctrine of Direct Authority is not historic Landmarkism but the Reformed “eldership rule” doctrine

Matthew 28:19-20 and “Regular Church Order”?

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Dr. Graves when speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 acknowledged that the precise order given in the Great Commission must be followed as positive law.

It must be granted, because true, that the order in which positive laws are given is as important and as inviolable as the law itself. – J.R. Graves

Dr. Graves used this line of argument to prove that gospel conversion precedes baptism in Matthew 28:19 just as church membership precedes observance of the Lord’s Supper in Matthew 28:20. Therefore, he believed that Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers into regular church order prior to observance of the Lord’s Supper, and considered Matthew 28:19-20 to be positive law in support of that position.

1. Thomas Patient Confirms this in 1654

However, long before Dr. Graves, in the year 1654, Thomas Patient used the same line of logic to prove that church constitution in Matthew 28:19-20 preceded observance of the Lord’s Supper:

*It is clear that the Ordinance of the Supper is committed to a Church, yea, a ministerial assembly gathered according to Christ’s commission, Matthew 28:19-20.
Here I understand the ORDER binding is this:*

First the ministers should teach the nations, or make them disciples by teaching;

Then the command is baptizing them, what them? Such that are made disciples by teaching.

Thirdly, the Command is to teach them to observe “whatsoever I have commanded you.” And I will be with you to the end of the world, that is, He will be with a people, first converted, secondly baptized, thirdly walking in the practical observation of all other administrations of God’s house, as these eleven did, and those they converted. I say His promise is to be with His people to the end of the world.

This is the **BINDING GOSPEL ORDER** which involves the Lord’s Supper.

THIS ORDER IS BINDING, as a minister is commanded to baptize one who is made a disciple and not any other, so he is commanded to put them upon the practical observation of all Christ’s Laws and His only. Until they are baptized, they are not, nor cannot be admitted into a visible church, to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

The Apostles followed this **BINDING GOSPEL ORDER**. That this is the true meaning of Christ in the commission appears by his Apostles’ ministry and practice, who, by the infallible gifts of the Holy Ghost were guided unfailing thus to preach and practice, Acts 2:37,38 with verses 41 and 42.

First, he teaches them the doctrine of Jesus Christ, they, upon hearing that, were pricked at the heart, and inquiring of Peter and the rest of the Apostles what they should do, he says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” See how he presses the **SAME ORDER** here as Christ does in the Commission, and afterwards in the 41 verse where it is said, “So many as gladly received the word of God, were baptized, and the same day there was added to the Church about three thousand souls,” by faith and baptism, “and they continued in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayer.” – Thomas Patient, **The Doctrine of Baptism**, 1654 (emphasis mine)

Consider this lengthy quote carefully. All the constituent elements found in my exposition and application of Matthew 28:19-20 are either stated or necessarily implied in this quote.

He distinguishes between “ye” and “them” exactly as I do. He demands there is a specific order that concludes with church constitution just as I do. He claims this is a “Binding Gospel Order” that demands incorporation of baptized believers into regular church order, just as I do.

How can anyone miss his repetitive description of this commission as “gospel order” that is “binding” positive law? Here is the historical root of the phrase “gospel order” or “regular church order.”

The very same rule of law used by Graves and Patient to prove gospel conversion must occur before baptism, and to prove church constitution must occur before observance of the Lord’s Supper, is the very same rule of law followed by my exposition, and my applications of Matthew 28:19-20.

2. John Spilsbury Confirms this Order in 1652

Particular English Baptist John Spilsbury acknowledged that the Great Commission was given to the church, and its content expressed a particular order that was essential to the constitution of any true church.

Faith and Baptism are Constitutional Ordinances for a Gospel Church

Secondly, the ordinance of baptism instituted by Christ is so essential to the constitution of the Church under the New Testament that none can be true in her constitution without it.

.....For the ground and pillar that bears up the truth, and that truth so born up, stands and falls together, as I Timothy 3:15. So that where there is not a true constituted Church, there is no true constituted Church-ordinance: and where there is a true Church ordinance in its

constitution, there is at least presupposed a true Church also.....

***Christ Left His Rule and Order for the Constitution
of His Church, Faith and Baptism***

*And lastly, I dare not go from that rule and order which Christ left in his last testament, **for the constituting of his church**, and taking members into the same, which is by faith and baptism. - John Spilsbury, **A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism**, 1652 – Emphasis mine*

Spilsbury was speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 as “*that rule and order*” for the constitution of churches.

3. A.C. Dayton Confirms this Order

Not only can this very same line of reasoning be seen in the preceding statements by Graves, Patient and Spilsbury, but it can be seen in the following words by A.C. Dayton.

*This commission was given to somebody. It conferred authority on somebody. It required this specific duty of baptizing believers to be performed by somebody. And that even to the end of the world. Now who was it? Not the infidel and the scoffer. Not the thoughtless and impenitent. This no one ever claimed. But did it not authorize all believers to baptize all other believers? But those to whom the commission was addressed were something more than pious penitent believers. Here is the proof. **Such people were recognized by the commission as the subjects to be baptized but not as the persons to administer baptism.** “Repent and be baptized. He that believeth and is baptized.” **They were not the “Ye” who were to baptize them.** Something more was needful to a baptizer. What was it? Could it be less than that he should himself have been*

baptized? Must he not first obey the command believe and be baptized before he could set himself up as a preacher of faith and a baptizer of others? It may have been more, but less than this it could not have been, and no man who is destitute of this qualification can ever claim to be a valid baptizer under this commission on the ground that he has repented and believed, or in other words is a truly converted and pious man. A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, pp. 243,244 – emphasis mine

Dayton believed the Great Commission was given to “ye” as authorized representatives of the New Testament church.

*And thus also have I made plain from the words of the commission itself, that **the Churches of Christ must, as the executors of this commission,** limit the administration within the same bounds... ***They were addressed as the representatives of the Churches*** which they should establish and the successors of those Churches to the end of the world. To the Churches therefore the commission says “Go ye and preach my Gospel to all nations baptizing them, &c - A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, p. 246, 247*

Dayton admitted that the same line of reasoning he used for baptism in Matthew 28:19 was equally applicable to church constitution:

*We fully agree with him when he says, in the answer to Wayland, quoted above, “The last commission of our Lord was certainly designed to be executed by someone. It was not a mere blank. It was not composed of mere words of empty sound. **It was addressed to somebody.**” He is speaking of it as a commission to preach, but it is equally a commission to baptize. If, as a commission to preach, it was addressed to somebody, and was designed to designate somebody by divine appointment to the duty of preaching, it*

*must equally have designated someone to the duty of baptizing. The two were united. And what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder..... He [Waller] is talking of church organization but every word is just as true of church ordinances as it is of organization - A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, pp. 131-132, 133 – emphasis mine.*

In the underlined portion of this quotation, Dayton is referring to his opponent - Elder Waller. He admits that Waller is not speaking about baptism, but sending forth preachers to organize churches. However, Dayton concerning the Great Commission draws the conclusion that “*every word is just as true of church ordinances as it is of organization*”

Do DA advocates believe what is true of church ordinances, is equally true of the organization of the church? No, they absolutely deny that! Indeed, this is the very point of our controversy. Matthew 28:19-20 is under church administration, and church constitution is inherent in verse 20.

4. J.B. Moody Confirms this Order

Christ Took to Water Before He Took to Service. And that was for our example. And then, by all authority in heaven and upon earth, he gave us his commanding precept as well as example. "Make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded." The baptizing and teaching are in the process of discipling. Disciple first to Christ for salvation, then disciple into His doctrine for service, and baptism stands between as the solemn profession of the first and the solemn dedication to the other.

*So the gospel order for all men in all the age is Salvation, Baptism, Service. – J. B. Moody, **My Church**. – Emphasis mine*

*The mission of this church constitutes another divine mark. Her work is—make disciples—immerse them—teach them all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. There is only one body observing this order, and doing this work, and the work can not be done except in order. – J.B. Moody, **My Church**, Emphasis mine*

5. The Same Argument by Old English Baptists:

I also provided the reference from the minutes of the Particular Baptist association in England in my former book.

Answer: 1 That it is in **the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that **this person sent forth** to the world and **GATHERING CHURCHES**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, Ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1654)** p. 56 – Emphasis mine.

My exposition and application of Matthew 28:19-20 said nothing different. My exposition and applications simply expanded all of these summary statements.

Church administration of the Great Commission is an historic Baptist position.

First, That Baptism is a thing of public cognisance and commission.

*Secondly, That as of old since the Apostles times, so now, and always till Christ come, the Church is the dispenser of such commissions and administrations. – Henry Lawrance, **Of Baptism; A Vindication of the Scriptures and the Ordinances; and Of our Communion and War with Angels**. Amsterdam, 1659 – Emphasis mine.*

6. Matthew 28:19-20 is “Law” and “Order”

Dr. J.R. Graves claimed this “process” was a prescribed “order” according to positive “law” to be followed:

*3. In his commission he placed baptism first and commanded it to be observed in this **order** - can it be denied that the order of the commission is **Law**? - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-81*

Dr. Graves was speaking explicitly of Matthew 28:19-20 when he claimed that no one had the right to change or reverse this “order” provided by Christ, because it is positive law.

*It must be granted, because true, that the **order** in which **positive laws** are given, is as important, and as inviolable, as the law itself. It may not be violated with impunity. It is openly and palpably violating the law itself and confounds and nullifies its intent. The Divine Lawgiver had a wise design in the arrangement of that order of His laws. To invert them is to **pervert and subvert them**. He did not say go and baptize the sinner then teach and then disciple, but, **per contra**. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-816 – Emphasis mine*

It should be easy for our readers to see how this Great Commission “order” beginning with the preaching of the gospel, and concluding with assimilating baptized believers into an observing assembly was called “regular gospel order” in regard to church constitution!⁴ Surely, the reader can easily see that Matthew 28:19-

⁴ It is true that Matthew 28:20 and the phrase “all things commanded” are also referred to as “gospel order” in regard to anything Christ commanded in the gospel accounts.

20 is essential to church constitution, as it provides the foundation upon which all true churches are constituted. The essence of church constitution is baptized believers gathered into a covenant observing/teaching assembly.

Bro. Settlemoir asks who else shares my interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20, and why didn't I list any references to show that my interpretation was not something new and of my own making?

When one makes a novel interpretation of Scripture, (and no one can deny that this is one of the most unique treatments of a text ever conceived!) he usually brings forth considerable evidence that others have taught the same thing. Yet in thirty-nine pages Bro. Fenison gave not one other man who ever held this position unless it was Bro. Cockrell (p. 17) and I believe the reason is obvious.....The proverb is true, "If it is true, it is not new, and if it is new, it is not true!" But Bro. Fenison's theory is new – very new! So new that no one before our own times ever heard of it! –
J. C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, pp. 11-12

I will let the readers' judge if I provided sufficient references that demonstrate other Baptists before me understood and applied Matthew 28:19-20 to church authorized, church ordained, and church sent representatives to evangelize, baptize and gather "*them*" into church order. Is not that the essence of my exposition and applications?

Conclusion: My applications are not only rooted in my exegesis and exposition of Matthew 28:19-20, but they are consistent with it. The Great Commission is the foundation of church constitution, and it is under the authority of an existing New Testament congregation.

Matthew 28:20 and Church Constitution

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

As we shall later prove, Dr. Graves had several inconsistencies between his interpretations of Scripture, as they applied to his theories versus his actual practices.

1. The Several Admissions by Dr. J.R. Graves

On more than one occasion Dr. J.R. Graves listed organization of churches among those things that the church alone was authorized by the Great Commission to do through its ordained representatives:

If the church alone was commissioned to preserve and to preach the gospel, then it is certain that no other organization has the right to preach it – to trench upon the divine rights of the church. A Masonic Lodge, no more than a Young Men’s Christian Association; an ‘Odd-fellow’ lodge or Howard Association, no more than a ‘Woman’s Missionary Board,’ have the least right to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer the ordinances and organize churches. – J.R. Graves, *Old Landmarkism, What is It?* p. 36

If no other organization “has the right to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer the ordinances and organize churches” then “the church alone was commissioned” to administer every single item listed by Graves including “organize churches.”

Was that a slip of the tongue? If so, it was consistent with the historic definition of Landmarkism. If it was a slip of the tongue, then he slipped on several occasions.

The apostolic churches, organized by the apostles, are the authoritative models for the formation of churches for all future time: a departure from which by a religious society is a forfeiture of its claims to be considered a Christian Church, and involves its originators in the sin of impiety.

PROOFS

“Go ye therefore disciple all nations immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”

Comments: This is a specific and therefore a restrictive command. It forbids those who are under it the doing of more or less than what is commanded, as the preaching of human philosophy or speculation for the Gospel, or in connection with it. It forbids the baptism of any but believers, for no other character is specified. It forbids immersion in the name of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego. It forbids them” to teach for doctrine the commandments of men.” **It teaches that Christ had given all sufficient directions for the formation and government of churches.** If it was incumbent upon the apostles or Christians, to organize churches, all the laws necessary for the internal regulation and discipline of his churches, as well as all Christian duties must have been taught.

If this is denied then it is certain that the specific terms of this commission forbid those acting under it to organize churches at all....It was an essential part of the good works of Titus as of ministers now to preach, baptize disciples, and organize them into churches.... – J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.** “Primitive Church Constitution,” Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860, pp. 547-548 – Emphasis mine

Consider carefully what he said above. He did not say the apostolic churches were self-organized, but were “organized by the

apostles.” The apostles were set in the church, and thus, were authorized representatives of the church. He did not say that self-organized churches were the “*authoritative models for the formation of churches*”, but rather that churches organized through church ordained representatives “*organized by the apostles*” is our model. He did not say they were models for the apostolic age but “*for all future time.*” Can you make it any clearer than that?

Graves not only reasoned that Matthew 28:20 was inclusive of Christ’s teaching for the formation of churches, but if the Great Commission was not the authority for constitution of churches, then, there is no authority for anyone “*acting under it to organize churches at all*”. In other words, he is fully admitting that constitution of churches falls “*under it*” – Matthew 28:19-20.

Was this interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20 at odds with his interpretation of Matthew 18:20? Yes! But his interpretation of Matthew 18:20 was not consistent either.

2. The Duties Prescribed in the Great Commission

What was the order of duties that Graves saw in this commission? Were they not the same that he listed in the previous quotation? Did not Graves explicitly say that these same duties that were “*essential*” for Titus then, are for “*ministers now*”?

“It was an essential part of the good works of Titus, *as of ministers now* to preach, baptize disciples, *AND ORGANIZE THEM INTO CHURCHES.*” - Emphasis mine.

Whose duty did he say was to “*organize them into churches*”? From whence did he draw this conclusion? He drew this conclusion from the Great Commission.

Did he actually claim once again that churches were to be organized by “*ministers now*” just as they were organized by apostles and ministers like Titus then? Was this another slip of the tongue? Dr. Graves believed that all these ministerial duties prescribed by the Great Commission were performed under the direct authority of “*God, from a gospel church*” through its ordained ministry:

*...for it is the church that administers the rite and not the officer, per se, he is the hand, the servant of the church. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were not entrusted to the ministry to administer to whomsoever they deemed qualified, but to the churches to be observed by them "as they were delivered unto them" (1 Corinthians 11:2) – J.R. Graves, **The Christian Act of Baptism**, Chap. VII, "The Proper Administrator of Baptism" (Texarkana, Ark – Tex 1928)*

Therefore, church organization was among the duties performed by the Apostles, by Titus, as well as by "ministers now" all of whom acted under the authority of the church. There were three duties viewed by Dr. Graves to be outlined in the three successive steps of the Great Commission (1) preaching the gospel, (2) administering baptism and (3) to "organize churches."

Apparently, that is precisely how the apostles viewed the Great Commission also, as they too include "added unto them" in their first application of this commission in Acts 2:41. *Then they that gladly [1] received his word [2] were baptized: and the same day there were [3] added unto them about three thousand souls.* – Acts 2:41

They understood the command of Matthew 28:20 to be inclusion into the membership of a New Testament church. Indeed, is not Acts 2:42 impossible without adding them to the teaching assembly??

Dr. Graves stated, that if, authority to constitute churches was not "law" contained in the Great Commission, then it could not be found anywhere else:

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion? If a preacher should first organize a church then baptize its members and then proceed to disciple them, is his course as lawful, or no more unlawful, than one directly the reverse? If unlawful, I ask, Why? How can it be unlawful and not contrary to the law? If Christ has given a law, what is the law? Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where? James

Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Lord’s Supper*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815-816 - Emphasis is mine

Now Bro. Settlemoir will undoubtedly claim there is evidence that Dr. Graves clearly taught self-administration apart from any church or ordained ministry. That is true! Indeed, **both** are equally true of Dr. Graves. Later we will provide evidence that this inconsistency was due to several factors (see chapter “The Inconsistencies of Dr. Graves”).

However, these clear admissions of church constitution in the Great Commission by Dr. Graves are very consistent with his system of Landmarkism, if the historical definition of Landmarkism is accepted to represent the core issue of Landmarkism. It is also consistent with the very inherent nature of Matthew 28:19-20. The evidence that church constitution is inherent in the Great Commission is simple and clear.

3. The third aspect of the Great Commission (v. 20) is impossible to obey without actually assimilating baptized believers into regular church order.

Teach them how to “*observe all things*” Christ commanded. Hence, this is more than mere mental instruction, but actual observation of all things. Many things Christ commanded cannot be observed without prior assimilation into regular church order.

For example, observation of the Lord’s Supper, which by Landmark definition follows church membership; (Matthew 26:19-30) requires church membership. They cannot be taught how to observe the Lord’s Supper without first actually being organically brought together as a physical assembly, and/or without existing in church order. Therefore, Matthew 28:20 must be interpreted to be authority to bring baptized believers into church order.

For example, they cannot possibly be taught how to observe Matthew 18:15-20, unless already assimilated into church order and members of the same church.

Therefore, this aspect of the Great Commission demands assimilation into actual church order either by bringing baptized believers into an existing church, as in Acts 2:41 or by constituting them into a church by church sent, church authorized missionaries, as in Acts 13:1-14:23.

This aspect of the Great Commission is authority to bring “*them*” (baptized believers – v. 19) into a ***covenant*** committed observing assembly.

4. The first clear administration of the Great Commission in the book of Acts explicitly includes assimilation of baptized believers into church order.

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there **were added unto them** about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers Acts 2:41-42.*

How did the leaders of the church in Jerusalem understand Matthew 28:20? Acts 2:41 provides the first post-ascension application of this commission.

First, notice the precise order followed in Acts 2:41-42 is precisely the order given by Christ in the Great Commission.

- a. “**Go**” preach the gospel = “*as many as received*”
- b. “**Baptizing them**” = “*were baptized*”
- c. “**Teaching them to observe**” = “*were added unto them...continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship...*”

Second, notice that everything listed in verse 42 is impossible without first being “*added unto them*” in verse 41. The ordained leadership of the church understood the third aspect of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20) required assimilation of baptized

believers into church membership (“*added unto them*”) and they understood it as authority to do so.

Moreover, Acts 2:41-42 is written to be recognized as the pattern, or “regular church order” followed by the church in Jerusalem, and thereby the pattern for all true churches.

We know this because Luke uses the imperfect periphrastic construct which is translated “*continued stedfastly*” to modify the words “*apostle’s doctrine*.” This phrase is a synonym for the Great Commission or “*the faith*” which was “*once delivered*” in Matthew 28:19-20.

The imperfect tense verb in this construct conveys the idea that what originated at some point in the past continues in the past. However, when joined with the present tense verb in this construct, it carries the action right up to the time that Luke penned the words. In other words, Luke is saying that obedience to the Great Commission as defined in Acts 2:41-42 was the habitual pattern, or “regular church order” practiced by the church in Jerusalem from the day of Pentecost until he penned these words. Most likely these words were penned after Paul’s imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28).

However, isn’t that reasonable? Would it not be unreasonable to believe that the church of Christ disobeyed Matthew 28:19-20, and followed some other pattern?

Furthermore, after once spelling out this pattern in Acts 2:41-42, Luke from that point forward uses the word “added” in subsequent passages to summarize the same process rather than repeating Acts 2:41-42 over and over again (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24). Why would they be “*added*” any other way than how Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19-20 or how the church understood and applied it in Acts 2:41-42? Why would they be added any other way after spelling out that this was the pattern followed by the church at Jerusalem?

Whenever, Luke uses the term “*added*” as in Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14 and 11:24 the number “*added*” can be counted. In Acts 2:41 there are 3,000 added. In Acts 5:14 there are 5,000 added, and so in Acts 11:24, the number “*added*” is countable.

When the number is too large to count, Luke changes from addition to multiplication (Acts 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24).

Therefore, both “*added*” and “*multiplied*” are summary expressions indicating Matthew 28:19-20 is authority to bring baptized believers into church order, and is the pattern laid down in Acts 2:41-42 that was followed by the church at Jerusalem

Then he organized his regenerated church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **To this institution he gave the commission** to disciple or convert all the nations, immersing them, etc., and the saved **through this law of propagation and multiplication** “were added to the church;” and when the church was scattered and could not assemble as a church in Jerusalem, the scattered material of the first church, with the converts they made “as they went everywhere preaching the word,” were congregated into other churches, and thus “churches were multiplied.” **But note well: all those churches came out of the first church, at Jerusalem, “which is the mother of us all.”** Thus we see this first church, “built by the God of heaven,” **contained seed within itself, and had the command to multiply, to perpetuate itself, by power inherent in its regenerated self,** and it had the promise of divine cooperation to the end of time. J.B. Moody, **My Church** – Emphasis mine

5. The Admissions of Non-Landmarkers

Even non-Landmark Baptists who were universal, invisible church advocates admitted that church constitution is inclusive in the Great Commission.

A. William Crowell: Crowell was a universal, invisible church advocate who denied that Christ even built a church in his own personal ministry. However, he denies church constitution is possible apart from entrance into a public ratified covenant.

Without a mutual covenant on the part of believers to walk together in the duties and ordinances of the gospel no church could ever have been formed. There might be real

Christians unconnected, and recognizing no power of mutual watch, reproof and discipline, but they could not be a church without entering into covenant for that purpose, and voluntarily assuming the obligations necessary to that relation. - William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 "Manner of forming a church", p. 65

He then asserts that Matthew 28:20 is designed to bring baptized believers into such a covenant keeping assembly:

This is evidently the import of the principle laid down by our Savior in Matthew 28:20 – William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 "Manner of forming a church", p. 65

B. T.G. Jones: Jones was a universal, invisible church advocate, and an opponent to Landmarkism. He candidly admits that church constitution is included in the Great Commission:

In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches is beyond question. – T.G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, A Vindication**. (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27 – Emphasis mine

Conclusion: The third aspect of the Great Commission cannot be obeyed apart from bringing baptized believers into regular church order. It is the authority to bring baptized believers into church membership. The historical definition of Landmarkism is founded upon the very principle that the Great Commission is authority "*under God, from a gospel church*" to administer all of its aspects. Christ never authorized two or three non-churched baptized persons to administer any aspect of this commission. Advocates of the Direct

Authority position interpret Great Commission administrations in Acts 8-18 to be ministerial authority under direct authority from God without connection to any existing church. The Direct Authority application is anti-Landmark, pro-episcopal and a Reformed Baptist position.

Matthew 28:19-20

And Organic Church Succession

*Baptists do not believe in “Apostolic Succession,” for that means a succession of apostles; but we believe in the succession of churches. Christ did not promise a perpetuity of men, nor to their office, but He did promise perpetuity to His churches. – J.N. Hall, **The Peerless Defender of the Baptist Faith**, p. 131*

Elder Milburn Cockrell called Direct Authority advocates “apostate Landmarkers” (Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, Revised edition, p. 44), and pointed out that the doctrine of Direct Authority is opposed to the doctrine of chain link Baptist Succession. That should be obvious, just look at any chain and the very nature of a chain is that every link inherently is interlocked and thus connected to the previous link.

This is precisely why Bro. Settlemoir denies that early Landmarkers believed in link chain church succession, and that is why he attacked the “links” in the histories provided by **The Missionary Baptist Church** of Oakland, California and **Twelve-Ryan Baptist Church** of Warren, Michigan. One cannot consistently believe in Direct Authority and also embrace chain link Baptist Church Succession.

Significantly, attacking link chain Baptist Church Succession is the consistent position for all opponents of Landmarkism. Whether in oral or written debates, the enemies of Landmarkism always focused upon the repudiation of organic chain link church succession. Thus Direct Authority advocates are bedfellows with all universal, invisible church opponents to Landmarkism in their opposition and ridicule of chain link church succession.

However, organic chain link succession is inherent in the Great Commission.

1. The Great Commission is an Organic Commission.

They had no telecommunications, computers; TV's and telephones in those days. Obedience to this commission requires actual organic contact in every aspect. They must actually "go" to them with the gospel. It required actual organic contact to baptize them. It required actual organic assembling with them to teach them how to observe all things.

Therefore, the Great Commission is impossible to observe apart from direct organic contact between the administrator ("ye") and the recipients ("them") in all three aspects of the commission.

2. The Great Commission is Reproductive by Nature.

The very command to "make disciples" is the act of reproducing like faith and order. A "disciple" by definition is a *follower* of their Master rather than an innovator of their own faith and practice. Those who attempt to serve Christ outside the membership of a New Testament congregation are not *following* Christ, and therefore cannot be regarded as *observing* disciples of Christ. This is a commission to reproduce *observing* disciples (Matthew 28:20) because those commissioned are observing whatsoever commanded.

Observing disciples cannot be made by anyone preaching "*another gospel*" or administering *another* baptism or teaching *another* faith and order than what Christ commissioned. Indeed, to do so is what produces heretics and apostasy. Hence, by definition this is a commission to organically reproduce after their own kind.

3. The Great Commission is Cyclical by Nature.

They are commanded **first** to go preach the gospel, **second**, baptize them, and **third**, assimilate them into an observing assembly which has the goal of teaching them to repeat this very same process all over again. Therefore, it is by nature an organic reproductive cycle.

4. The Great Commission is Successful by Promise.

This cyclic reproductive process is guaranteed success by Christ's promised presence in its administration "*all the days until the end of the age*" (Lit. translation). Not "*some of the days*" but "*all the days.*" No breaks in this chain link of time terms.

The Reformed Commentator Dr. Hendriksen says this phrase would be more properly translated

"day in and day out until the end of the age" (William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary, Matthew**, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., p. 1003).

5. The Great Commission Demands Chain link Organic Church Succession

Even Direct Authority "Landmarkers" must admit that such organic succession must exist, as their own position requires it. They believe that no church can be constituted without baptism received from a previous existing church, which in turn, could not be constituted without baptism administered from a previous existing church and so on, etc. That is chain link baptism through churches. They also admit the church alone is authorized to administer baptism and carry out the Great Commission. Hence, they admit to organic chain link baptisms through churches from the apostolic days to the present.

However, they believe authority to constitute churches is conveyed through baptism rather than through church administration of all the commission.

Graves, Dayton, Ray, Grimes and Moody believed in linear link chain Baptist Church Succession with no breaks in the chain. D.B. Ray in response to opponents of Landmarkism said,

They point to Roger Williams with an air of triumph; and say, "Here your chain of succession is broken....In following up the Baptist succession, it has been fully shown that their historic chain has neither been disturbed by the

*succession of the “Hard Shell” Baptists, nor the apostasy of the Campbellites; and it has been abundantly shown that the Roger Williams affair has not even produced a ripple upon the flowing stream of Baptist succession. The Atlantic cable of Baptist succession connecting the Baptists of Europe and America is composed of numerous cords. – D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession**, 1912 – Emphasis mine.*

The idea of a “chain link” succession is made clear in the debate between Dr. Graves and Dr. Ditzler. Their debate over “succession” must be carefully considered. This argument began in their debate over infant baptism, and concluded in their discussion over the Church of Christ. Ditzler argued that earlier Baptist historians such as Backus and Benedict paid no attention to “*linear...succession*” but rather believed that any two or three believers assembled composed a church, and he argued that early American and English Baptists, such as John Smyth, Knollys, Holmes, Olney, Roger Williams and John Clark practiced it. Dr. Ditzler says:

By Dr Graves rules, Dr Ford, Waller, Orchard and all the authorities here, these editors, unless the baptizer is in the regular line of so called Apostolic Succession, has his baptism in regular order handed down lineally by regular succession from John the Harbinger, he is not baptized and cannot administer the ordinance validly. But what a wild speculation is this.

*To the credit of all the early Baptists in England, Wales and America, this wild and unsubstantial shadow was never dreamed of. Backus, Benedict, Roger Williams, Clark, Knollys, Holmes and Olney, all paid no attention to it; did not believe it. They knew it was wholly untrue and unscriptural. But as our Baptist friends, led on by Dr Graves, make absolutely essential, and all conscience hangs here, let us examine it.....No chain is stronger than its weakest link. But here four most essential links part in sunder at once under Baptist hands - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Lord’s Supper” The*

Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 826-827, 829 – emphasis mine.

Indeed, Dr. Ditzler claimed that such Baptists sided with him against Dr. Graves and Landmarkers who followed Graves up to this point in time.

*See how they come down crushing all Dr Graves ideas of succession..... This is exactly our position all through this debate. Thus have these Baptists all with us against Dr Graves - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 923*

However, Dr. Ditzler misunderstood Dr. Graves’s position. Dr. Graves did not believe in “Apostolic” succession but in “church” succession.

*We repudiate **Apostolic** succession, a doctrine so dear to the Episcopacy, for the Apostles never had successors, but we do, and have a right to claim church succession; - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Lord’s Supper” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 844 – emphasis mine*

Instead of refuting Dr. Ditzler’s claim that all previous Baptists “paid no attention to” chain link succession, Dr. Graves asserted that these Baptists did acknowledge, and did provide historical evidence to prove there was a history of Baptist churches continuing from the apostolic days to the present:

i.e., that in the language of these historians, ours is the only Christian community that has stood since the days of the Apostles, and has during all these ages preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel until this day. This is what we do claim, a continuity of churches, and if our claim is not

good, history nor the Bible itself can be credited. – Ibid., p. 844 – emphasis mine

Now Bro. Settlemoir will attempt to claim that the above words also repudiate chain link church succession, and claim that Dr. Graves only believed in an unconnected continuity of churches. However, Dr. Graves defends “*the chain of Baptist Church Succession*,” and denies it is a “*wild speculation*” as claimed by Dr. Ditzler, any more than the historical undocumented claim there is a Northwest Passage:

*Now I put this question to you all, would it not have been becoming in him, who stands here as the professed and champion and defender of Methodism to have fairly, and honorably, answered this question and the defence of his Society and Discipline than to spent his time attempting to pick some flaw in one of links of the chain of Baptist Church Succession, a matter that has no more to do with this question than the question whether there be or not a northwest passage? Though it has been sought for three hundred years in vain it has not been proven that there is none, but as every new explorer has penetrated farther than the last, so it has been with Baptist history - the more thoroughly it is studied the clearer their claims - but one thing is manifest, Baptist Churches antedate any other existing religious organizations, and if they have not stood continuously since the ascension of Christ, then no Christian Churches have been on earth during all this period - but, another thing follows, if Christ has had witnessing Churches during all these ages, as he declared he would have, then Baptist Churches are those bodies - and to my mind the intensity, persistency and malignity with which Baptists are opposed and hated, and their distinctive principles have been and still are assailed by both Catholics and Protestants, as they were by Judaizing and Ritualizing teachers in the days of the Apostles, is to my mind an additional and a convincing proof of their claims. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-***

Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 1054-1055 – emphasis mine.

Dr. Graves’s view of “chain of Baptist Church Succession” is illustrated by things that demand organic continuity:

1. The Atlantic Cable stretching from Europe to America.
2. The River running under ground
3. The use of the terms “chain” and “link”
4. The requirement of an existing church to administer baptism for those being constituted.
5. The human cycle of reproduction after its own kind.

Do you think the advocates of Direct Authority would ever use these types of illustrations???? Would Bro. Settlemaier use the illustration of the human reproductive cycle after its own kind to illustrate his view of Baptist Church Perpetuity???? Not a chance!

This last illustration demands organic link by link church succession in the strongest language possible. Do human babies “self-originate”?

Does W.A. Jarrell use any of these illustrations to defend his view of Baptist Church Perpetuity???? W.A. Jarrell refuses to use the words “Church Succession”:

...the phrase “Church Perpetuity” is preferable to the phrase “Church Succession.” – W.A. Jarrell, Baptist Church Perpetuity or History. “What is Baptist Church Perpetuity?”

More than anyone else during that time, Dr. J. B. Moody provides extensive definitions of “continuity” versus “perpetuity” versus “succession” in his book **My Church**. He recognized the differences in these terms. He claimed to believe in church

“succession.” Not “apostolic” succession, but “church” succession. Not succession in the sense that any single church continues to the present day. Not succession in the sense that when one church dies, another is built upon top of it and takes its place, as in succession of kings. He believed in church succession in the sense of reproduction after its own kind. Not because he could prove it by secular history, but because the Scriptures taught it, and because that principle of reproduction after its own kind could be seen “*in operation now.*”

*Continuity is not far from the true idea, as these churches were a continuation and extension of the first church. **So out of continuity there came perpetuity,** as in human history. **These other churches did not spring out of the ground, but came from the first church...**This is true of our own species. I know I am in the succession, **not because I can trace it,** but because God originated the race with **this law of self-propagation** – a law we see **in operation now,** and so far as history testifies, **it has thus ever operated;** hence the proof and conclusion are irresistible. You may tell me I can't trace it. You may urge variety of complexion and countenance, and customs, as unfavorable to one origin....**I claim to be in the succession.** Men may challenge the historical proof, and it may never be furnished, yet the proof, the right kind of proof, is abundant, and **the succession is true.** – J.B. Moody, **My Church**, pp. 133,160,161. – Emphasis mine.*

The law of “self-propagation” refers to the instrumental means of a mother and father of like kind as the source for a new human being.

Landmarker T.T. Eaton recognized Baptist Succession was inseparable from some kind of organic contact between churches.

*If Baptist succession be the bad thing some brethren say, then certainly it ought to be given up. There should be no more of it. The churches now in existence ought to have no succession. **When a new church is organized, it should have no sort of connection with other churches, or***

*relations with them. **Let churches be organized anywhere, anyhow, by anybody.** Just let people be believers, and let them baptize each other and start a church. **This does away with Baptist Succession.** And if it is a bad thing that is charged, it ought to be done away with at the earliest minute.* Those who oppose Baptist Succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material furnished by other churches, and with those baptized by regularly ordained Baptist ministers. – J. B. Moody, **My Church.**

What was it that Eaton claimed did “*away with Baptist Succession*”? His argument began with “*When a new church is organized it should have no sort of connection with other churches.*” – emphasis mine

D.B. Ray believed that Baptist church succession is directly related to church organization:

But again, we are told that there is no importance whatever attached to the doctrine of succession; that it makes no difference whether we are in the succession or not, if we hold the Bible doctrine at the present time! But no man can hold the Bible doctrine of church organization who denies the succession.- D.B. Ray, **Baptist Succession** – Electronic copy, p. 17 – Emphasis mine

Graves, Dayton and J. B. Moody clearly and unmistakably believed in link by link Baptist Church Succession in the manner of human reproduction after its own kind, even though they freely admitted they could not prove it by secular church history, and nor did they think they needed to prove it, because it was the self-evident principle at work in every denomination once that denomination was originated.

Their logic is best expressed after this manner; if it looked like a duck, acted like a duck, walked like a duck, quacked like a duck, it is a duck, and all ducks are begotten by ducks. The present operation of this cycle from mother church to daughter church is sufficient evidence.

*So when we find a church holding the doctrines of Christ, and “walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” **constituted to all appearances upon a heavenly model**, we are justified in taking it for granted that it is a true church, until someone can, and does show evidences to the contrary.....**If it looks like a true church, believes like a true church, and acts like a true church, to me, it is....** – A.C. Dayton, Alien Immersion. pp. 126,227 – emphasis mine.*

Remember, that Dr. J.R. Graves defined the “*heavenly model*” for constitution to be the churches “*organized by the Apostles*” (rather than by self-organization) according to the Great Commission.

*The apostolic churches, organized by the apostles, are the authoritative models for the formation of churches for all future time: – J.R. Graves, **The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.** “Primitive Church Constitution,” Southwest Publishing Company, New York, 1860, p. 547*

However, did not Dr. Graves and those who followed his Matthew 18:20 theory argue just as vehemently that it was not necessary for any church, presbytery or minister to be present to help organize a New Testament church? Yes! The reasons behind this obvious inconsistency will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Conclusion: Regardless of what you think these earlier Landmarkers believed or did not believe does not change the fact, that Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers into church order. Neither does it change the fact that Matthew 28:19-20 cannot be observed apart from organic reproduction after its own kind. Organic chain link church succession is inherent in the Great Commission.

Acts 8-11 and the Great Commission

Another portion of scripture in the book of Acts that advocates of Direct Authority attempt to use to support their position is Acts 8-11.

1. Direct Authorized Ministerial Application?

They argue that Great Commission activities described in Acts 8-11 were not administered under church authority through its ordained representatives, but were ministerial actions administered directly under God without any connection with church authority. They imagine that direct leadership by the Holy Spirit is contradictory to church authorized actions. However, such is not contrary to the essence of the historical definition of Landmarkism which interprets Matthew 28:19-20 to be “*authority that emanates under God from a gospel church.*”

Furthermore, their assumptions are contradictory to the historical position of Landmarkism that only the church has been authorized by Christ to administer baptism.

In addition, they assume that Acts 8-11 activities are contrary to the pattern spelled out in Acts 2:40-41 and thus in open disobedience to the Great Commission.

More importantly, their interpretations are contrary to their own stated view that the only proper materials for church constitution are those baptized by a preexisting New Testament church.

Therefore, their interpretative schemes of Acts 8-11 not only repudiates the historic definition of Landmarkism, and denies these ministerial actions were in keeping with the positive law given by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20, and contradicts the positive pattern spelled out in Acts 2:41-42, but repudiates their own stated position.

What is the basis for their interpretations? Pure silence! Instead of interpreting Acts 8-11 in keeping with the stated pattern spelled out in Acts 2:40-41 or in keeping with the Great Commission command they instead assume the very opposite based upon pure silence.

2. Church Authorized Ministerial Administration

However, is it possible to interpret all the ministerial actions in Acts 8-11 to be “**under God, from a gospel church**”? Is it possible to interpret all the administrations of baptism in Acts 8-11 in keeping with the positive command (Matthew 28:19-20) and pattern set forth in the book of Acts (Acts 2:41-42)? If possible, why even consider an interpretation that openly contradicts all previous spelled out commands and examples?

There are Landmarkers who believe it is possible to interpret the events in Acts 8-11, as well as in Acts 13-18 to be ministerial actions “**under God, from a gospel church.**”

For example, many have assumed the scattering in Acts 8-11 of the membership of the church in Jerusalem is a random scattering. However, the gender used to describe all these preachers is masculine (Acts 8:4), and the use of the Greek term that specifies males rather than females or children is used to describe these preachers (Acts 11:22). Hence, this may be a directed scattering by the church rather than a random scattering. Remember, the first church before Pentecost already had at minimum seventy ordained preachers in it. Jesus selected and ordained seventy with a limited commission within Israel prior to Pentecost. In addition, the church at Jerusalem had seven ordained deacons (Acts 6).

Second, Luke *may* have set forth Philip as an example of the kind of gospel preachers that went forth. He was a church ordained man (Acts 6:6; 8:5-40).

Third, the term translated “*scattered*” in Acts 8: *may* be interpreted to mean a determined and willful sending out of gospel preachers under church authority in keeping with Matthew 28:19-20. Everett F. Harrison says in his commentary on the book of Acts:

Luke could have used a general term for scattering but chose instead to use a word which means to scatter as seed is scattered on the ground. This suggests that as the episode was viewed in retrospect by the Church, it was seen as a providential event to facilitate the mission set before his followers by the risen Lord (1:8). The people went as

missionaries more than refugees – Everett F. Harrison, **Acts the Expanding Church**, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1975, p. 130

Fourth, Harrison's view is supported by the fact that the leaders in the church at Jerusalem did not flee (Acts 8:1). They not only remained, but took part in the funeral service of Stephen (Acts 8:2). Therefore, the persecution did not scatter the church in an unqualified manner.

Fifth, Luke expressly states twice that the church followed up the ministerial fruits by its own preaching members (Acts 8:14; 11:22). This action *may* be interpreted that the church regarded these as fruits under the authority of its own administration through its ministerial members (Matthew 28:19-20), rather than ministerial actions without connection to the church. They felt they had the right to investigate and take the oversight of the baptized believers in Samaria (Acts 8:14) in keeping with church authority expressed in Matthew 28:20.

The very Greek term translated “*sent*” (exapostello) in Acts 8:14 and 11:22 infers they were authorized representatives. These men were not sent by the church on a vacation to merely see the sights, but to investigate its own work performed by its own missionary members acting under its own authority.

Peter, as an apostle and member in the church membership at Jerusalem did not challenge the right of church members requiring a response for his actions at the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:1-17). This infers ministerial accountability “*under God, from a gospel church*” rather than ministerial action under direct authority.

Sixth, the churches gathered in Judea and Samaria (Galatians 1:22; Acts 9:31) *may* be interpreted as the fruits of the Great Commission work performed by preaching members under the authority of the church at Jerusalem. This includes a church at Damascus under Ananias, who may have been its first Pastor.

Seventh, the constitution of the church at Antioch *may* be interpreted as the work of the preaching members of the church at Jerusalem on their way to Cyprus. The way Luke expresses their work in Antioch

implies they did not have time to remain and administer the third aspect of the Great Commission and this unfinished work explains why the news came back to the church at Jerusalem, and why Barnabas was authorized to follow up their work to Antioch. It is beyond doubt that the work of Barnabas refers implicitly to Matthew 28:20 which would have been the natural deficiency due to the transit movement of these preachers to Cyprus. Hence, the church believed it had the oversight of the fruits of its ministers according to Matthew 28:20, and authorized Barnabas to fulfill that duty in regard to these believers.

Finally, this interpretation of Acts 8-11 is assumed by the primary defender of Landmarkism.

*I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941*

In other words, Dr. Graves’ interpreted silence and/or insufficient details to be compliant with church administration of these Great Commission actions instead of contrary to Christ’s command. In light of no rebuke or correction stated in Acts 8-11, Dr. Graves assumed that all the preaching and baptisms in Acts 8-11 were church authorized, and church administrated through its membership. He assumed that baptized believers were “*added*” unto the same church that the administrator represented whenever there were not sufficient persons to be constituted into a church (Eunuch).

The historic definition of “Landmarkism” demands that such preaching and baptizing, as found in Acts 8-11 and Acts 13:5-18:22 by such men falls “*under God from a gospel church*” rather than ministerial actions under “Direct Authority.”

Conclusion: The advocates of Direct Authority not only interpret this section of scripture in complete contradiction to Christ's Commission to the church, and in complete contradiction to Apostolic example in Acts 2:41-42, and in complete contradiction to the historic definition of Landmarkism which asserts that such Great Commission activities are under church administration alone, but in complete contradiction to their own demand that only church authorized baptisms provide proper materials for church constitution. Moreover, they use this portion of scripture as their primary basis to defend their Reformed Baptist Church doctrine of ministerial authority by direct authority "under God" apart from any gospel church.

Acts 13:1-4 and the Great Commission

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. – Acts 13:1-4

In chapter three of Bro. Settlemoir's book entitled "Acts 13:1-4 EXAMINED" he begins his critique of "Chapter Two" of my book **The Great Commission Credentials**, where I deal with church administration of the Great Commission in the book of Acts.

1. Ridicule versus Substance

How does Bro. Settlemoir approach sending forth missionaries to preach the gospel in Acts 13:1-4? Does he approach it according to the historic definition of Landmarkism which defines sending forth gospel preachers as a Great Commission action under the authority of the New Testament congregation? No!

Instead, he again stoops to the tool of ridicule by listing certain things found in the text and mockingly asks:

Fasting is mentioned in this text. Is fasting essential to constitute a church?.So does this text mean you have to have an apostle to constitute a church....There is laying on of hands. Is it not reasonable to say that no church can be constituted without laying on of hands...Prophets are in this passage are they essential to constitute a church...The Holy Spirit spoke audibly...Is it essential to hear an audible

voice to constitute a church? – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, pp. 7, 8

Bro. Settlemoir has simply built a series of straw men arguments, as no Landmark Baptist believes any church is being constituted in Acts 13:1-4. Therefore, fasting, apostleship, laying on of hands and prophets are not essentials for the constitution of churches then or now.

2. Contextual Based Questions

Ignoring Bro. Settlemoir's attempt to ridicule for the moment let the reader ask some valid contextual based questions concerning Acts 13:1-4.

- a. Does the Holy Spirit directly address Saul and **Barnabas** in this text? The answer is no!⁵
- b. Does the Holy Spirit work through human instrumentality in the selection and sending forth of Saul and Barnabas to preach the gospel in the mission field? Yes!
- c. Are those whom the Holy Spirit worked through members of the church at Antioch? Yes.
- d. What role do they play as members in the church at Antioch? They are called “prophets” and “teachers” in the church at Antioch.
- e. What role do “prophets” and “teachers” play in New Testament churches prior to the Holy Spirit providing the New Testament Scriptures?

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

⁵ Even if the Lord would have spoken directly to Saul and Barnabas it would not discount He also worked through the leadership of the church.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ- Eph. 4:11-12

In absence of any New Testament Scriptures for guidance, the Holy Spirit selected and gifted certain men with revelatory gifts “***for the work of the ministry***” to act as ordained leaders of the church through whom He revealed His will to the churches. This gifting seemed to be through the instrumental laying on of hands of the apostles (Acts 8:15-17; 14:22; 2 Timothy 1:7). Such gifts were temporary until the scriptures were provided, but necessary for the ordained leadership to communicate the will of God to the churches in absence of New Testament scriptures.

In other words, God spoke to the church at Antioch through such gifted leaders just as he spoke to the church through ordained leaders in Revelation 2-3. The term translated “angel” in Revelation 2-3 is also translated “messenger.” The Pastor is God’s messenger boy to His church. He seeks God for the message and then communicates it to the church.

So those “teachers” and “prophets” in Acts 13:1 were the ordained and gifted leadership of the church at Antioch.

3. Apostles and Apostles?

Now let us shift to another supposed problem with this text. Why did gifted elders in the church lay their hands upon them? The text gives the reason –

“separate... for the work that I have called them.”

They were being ordained as “*apostles*” or church authorized missionaries by the laying on of the hands by the ordained ministry. Is not Barnabas called an “*apostle*” equally as “Saul”?

But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles..... Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their

clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, - Acts 1:4, 14

The term “*apostles*” has a technical and non-technical use in Scripture. The noun “*apostle*” and its verbal form translated “sent” have a secondary non-technical use. It can be used for a church authorized, and church sent missionary.

It can be also used in the technical sense as one of the “*apostles*” as in the “*twelve*” apostles. Since both Saul and Barnabas are having hands laid on them by the ordained leadership in the Church, and since both are equally called “*apostles*”, what sense do you think is intended? Was Barnabas one of the Apostles in a technical sense or was he first called “*apostle*” in Acts 14 due to being separated by the church in Acts 13:1-4 to be their authorized church sent missionary? I think the answer should be obvious.

4. Biblical Ordination

Let’s go a little further. How were they ordained by the church at Antioch? Were they ordained after the apostolic example provided in Acts 6 or some new way? In Acts 6 the Lord worked through the ordained and gifted leadership to reveal the necessity for men to be ordained for the work the Lord had need of them, but it was the church that approved them, and presented the seven to the apostles to be ordained:

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. – Acts 6:5-6 (Emphasis mine)

However, let us cut to the chase and ask the more important question. Does the historical definition of “Landmarkism” demand that selecting, ordaining and sending forth men to preach the gospel

unto all nations originate “***under God, from a gospel church***” and is therefore by church authority? Yes! Can one be rightly called a “Landmarker” and deny this? No!

5. “*I Have Called Them*” – Acts 13:2

This statement by the Holy Spirit completely repudiates Direct Authority. Luke uses the perfect tense indicating that the Holy Spirit had already called them as a completed action previous to revealing this to the prophets and teachers. If DA theory is correct, there would be no reason for the Holy Spirit to speak anything to the church at Antioch, or for the church to take action to “*Separate me...*” If DA is correct, Barnabas and Saul would have already been doing mission work, and indeed were disobedient **not** to have been doing so already. Here is compelling evidence that the Holy Spirit works through horizontal instrumentality in carrying out the Great Commission. Even DA advocates admit that only the church has been commissioned to administer the Great Commission, and yet they repudiate their own position in their interpretations of Acts 8-11 and Act 13-18:22

6. Consistency with Historical Landmarkism?

According to Bro. Settlemoir’s exposition of this text, can he be properly regarded as a “Landmarker” according to the historical definition of Landmarkism? No! Indeed, Bro. Settlemoir and all “Direct Authority” churches treat most of the Great Commission attributes recorded in Acts 8-18 as ministerial actions under Direct Authority rather than ministerial actions authorized “***under God, from a gospel church.***”

I would remind the reader, that according to the historical definition of Landmarkism those things listed in Matthew 28:19-20 are to be administered under church authority. Moreover, I would remind the reader that the “Direct Authority” movement claims to be the real “Landmarkers” and yet all of their scripture expositions of Acts 8-11 and Acts 13-18 deny that these were ministerial actions authorized “***under God, from a gospel church.***”

If “Direct Authority” were really taught in Acts 13:1-4, the Holy Spirit would not have spoken to the leadership in the church, but directly to Paul and Barnabas, and told them to go.

What is being established in Acts 13:1-4 is that the Holy Spirit did not directly authorize Paul and Barnabas to administer those things listed in Matthew 28:19-20. Instead, the Holy Spirit honored that institution in which Christ entrusted authority to administer Matthew 28:19-20 through its ordained ministry.

7. Church Ordained Men under Church Authority

In Acts 15 when the dispute over circumcision occurred in the church at Antioch between Paul and some Judaizers from Jerusalem, who was it that determined and sent Paul and Barnabas to the church at Jerusalem? Were they sent by “direct authority” or by church authority?

*When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, **they determined** that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way **by the church**, - Acts 15:2-3*

Dr. A.T. Robertson the great Baptist Greek Grammarian says about the Greek word translated “appointed” in verse 2 the following:

The verb *εταξαν* (*τασσω*, to arrange) suggests a formal appointment by the church in regular assembly. – A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures** on Acts 15:2

How could the church “determine” what they should do, unless they were still under the authority of that congregation as its missionary members? Why does Paul habitually return and give a report to this congregation (Acts 14:22-23; 18:22) if he was not accountable to its administrative authority?

In Acts 15 when the decision was reached concerning the dispute over circumcision, did the apostles arbitrarily make that

decision or was it the decision of the whole church under the leadership of its ordained members?

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch – Acts 15:22

In Acts 11:20 the Holy Spirit uses the verbal form of “*apostle*” translated “*sent*” to describe the missionary endeavor and its limitations for Barnabas by the church in Jerusalem.

All these things fall under church authority by the historical definition of “Landmarkism,” but all these things are repudiated as church sent, church authorized actions by “Direct Authority” advocates.

Acts 13:1-4 must be interpreted consistently with the overall context of scripture on this subject. What occurred in Acts 13:1-4 was the selection, separation and ordaining of Paul and Barnabas to be church authorized and church sent missionaries in keeping with Matthew 28:19-20 and in keeping with the historical definition of “Landmarkism.”

The church at Antioch was led by godly gifted men unto whom the Lord revealed that members of this church should be prayerfully set apart and ordained by the laying on of hands and to be church sent, church authorized missionaries (apostles in the general sense of the term – authorized representatives).

Their preaching of the gospel, baptizing the believers and gathering them into observing assemblies was authorized by their sending congregation at Antioch in perfect consistency with the Great Commission given to the church in Matthew 28:19-20. The church merely authorized its own ordained members to carry out the Great Commission on the mission field which included authority to gather the baptized believers into observing congregations (e.g. Acts 14:22-23).

8. Historical Testimonies

The ancient Particular English Baptists interpreted and applied Acts 13:1-4 to church authority in sending forth of Saul and Barnabas:

Answer: 1 That it is in **the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, **Acts 13:2f.** Secondly, that **this person sent forth** to the world and **GATHERING CHURCHES**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, Ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1654)** p. 56 – Emphasis mine.

Dr. J. R. Graves believed all the baptisms in the book of Acts were administered under church authority:

*I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941*

*Subsequently, by the direction of the Holy Spirit the church at Antioch formally commissioned Paul and Barnabas to the full work of the ministry, and to go forth as missionaries to foreign lands. – J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What Is It?** – p. 46*

However, Bro. Settlemoir, and Direct Authority advocates believe no such thing. When it comes to their interpretations of Acts

8-18 they repudiate church authority in baptism, but believe the ministerial actions were authorized directly from God apart from any church authority. They ridicule Graves' belief that the Eunuch, Saul and the house of Cornelius were baptized into the membership of the administrator's church.

Bottom line, they repudiate the historic definition of Landmarkism that scriptural authority for the administration of Great Commission essentials in Acts 8-18 was authorized “*under God, from a gospel church.*” Hence, by their own mouth they are not historic Landmarkers in any sense of the term. **Indeed, their principle is the same principle that all universal invisible church advocates embrace for defending the origin of new denominations since the close of the first century.**

The Biblical Inconsistencies of J.R. Graves

Bro. Settlemoir rejects the idea that there may have been inconsistencies within the interpretational system of Dr. Graves or between his theory and his practice in regard to church constitution.

As to your suggestion that I assume the practice of Landmarkers was consistent with their philosophical approach..." is strange to say the least. So far as I am able to understand it my own position it is not taken from any assumption at all but upon what these men expressly stated their position was. Is that not how we should gather what a man believes? These men were capable and fully committed to giving their own position in their own words and it begs the question to assume they said one thing and practiced another! – J.C. Settlemoir, e-mail to me dated 3/23/13

However, I have already documented the flip flop in his interpretation of Matthew 18:20. I have also documented his admissions that Matthew 28:19-20 included organization of churches through church selected, ordained and sent representatives, which is contradictory to one of Dr. Graves' interpretation of Matthew 18:20.

I will document that the roots of his Matthew 18:20 flip flop can be traced to two contradictory positions and misapplications of Daniel 2:44-45 and John 3:3-8.

His interpretations of these texts, and the logical conclusion he drew from these texts, are the root of his dual application of Matthew 18:20 that contradicts his application of Matthew 28:19-20.

1. Graves Flip Flop Interpretation of Matthew 18:20

Let's begin with his flip flop of Matthew 18:20. **When he defended church autonomy** he interpreted Matthew 18:20 one way, but **when he defended church authority** he interpreted it another way. Significantly, both interpretations can be found in the same debate with Dr. Ditzler a Methodist minister. Dr. Ditzler had argued that early Baptist Historians took his side in denying any kind of

succession and that nothing more than two or three believers gathered together in Christ's name was necessary to form a church: It is in response to this unqualified view of Matthew 18:20 by Dr. Ditzler that Dr. Graves responded:

It is true that two or three baptized individuals can organize a Church, provided they adopt the apostolic model of government, and covenant to be governed by the sole authority of Jesus Christ. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Church of Christ" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 975

However, in another part of the debate where he was defending the authority of the church, he declared:

Respecting the powers of each local church I submit the following:

Scriptural Proofs

Mat. Xviii. 14-20. Here the Savior gives the minute details with respect to an offending member.....There is no high ecclesiastical court to which he can appeal. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Church of Christ" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 997.

Now Matthew 18:20 refers in context either to church administration of discipline or church constitution, but not both. Which one is right? We have already proven the former is right.

2. Graves' Misapplication of Kingdom Texts

It has been shown that his "church constitution" interpretation of Matthew 18:20 is contrary to its context. I will now provide evidence to show that this forced interpretation of Matthew 18:20 is due to another misinterpretation of Scripture.

Dr. Graves held to a unique view of the visible kingdom of God, which he believed consisted of the entire aggregate of New Testament congregations.

But I have previously said that the literal visible kingdom of Israel was a type of Christ's spiritual, visible kingdom. The former was composed of twelve tribes, distinct and independent of each other, locally, like the States, of these United States, but all united by one constitution into one kingdom, having the same head or king over all, with one religious faith, and one form of worship. You see that either tribe might multiply in numbers, prosperity and power to any extent, and it would not effect in the least the increase of any other tribe. Israel was emphatically E Pluribus Unum - one people from many, one nation from many nations or tribes.

*Now the Kingdom of Christ is the exact antitype of that type. Many independent local churches - as the churches of Galatia, churches of Asia, and in twenty one instances in the New Testament, - not the church of Asia or Samaria, North and South one body embracing a whole State or Kingdom. I say many local churches, each separate and independent of each other, but all united under one Head, and divine King, into one Kingdom, having the same faith, the same baptism, administering to the same subjects, and for the selfsame purpose. Now each one of these individual churches may increase so as to embrace all persons in the recognized field, and not in the least conflict with or exterminate another church, for it would not absorb into itself the membership of another sister church, no more than one tribe of Israel would absorb another. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Lord's Supper" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, pp. 820-821*

Although it is perfectly true that the churches provide the *visible* expression of God's kingdom on earth at any given time, as this is where the keys of the kingdom are administered, and therefore the

visible rule of God is being manifested. However, it is not true that the character of the kingdom in all cases, and in all scripture passages is restricted to a visible and/or to a present existing kingdom.

The problem with Dr. Graves view was that he applied kingdom scriptures to the present church, that did not apply to its *visible* manifestation (Jn. 3:3-8) or to its *present* condition (Dan. 2:44-45).

*It was foretold that Christ himself should set it up. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed....." The stone is admitted by all sound commentators, to symbolize the visible Kingdom or Church of Christ which he was to set up at his advent.....I affirm, then, in view of these facts, that any organization confessedly invented, originated and set up by men, cannot be considered or recognized as a church of Christ, it not being from heaven, but of men, of the earth earthly – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Church of Christ" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 932-933*

*"Except a man be born of water he cannot enter the kingdom of God" - John 3 5; which is the visible Church of Christ. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Lord's Supper" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, p. 822 – emphasis mine*

This erroneous interpretation and application to the churches of Christ forced Dr. Graves to take the view that the church must be constituted in the very same manner that these passages demanded the kingdom was constituted among men:

The characteristics of the visible Church and Kingdom of Christ, is that it is of God – from heaven, of Divine origin, and hence called Kingdom of God, and of Heaven, Church of God, of Christ, etc.

It was not originated by sinful man, or men, Prophet nor Apostle, but by Jesus Christ, the God of Heaven and King of his own Kingdom – and not mediately – by and through others, but “without hands,” by his own present, personal agency.

*It was foretold that Christ himself should set it up. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.....” The stone is admitted by all sound commentators, to symbolize the visible Kingdom or Church of Christ which he was to set up at his advent.....I affirm, then, in view of these facts, that any organization confessedly invented, originated and set up by men, cannot be considered or recognized as a church of Christ, it not being from heaven, but of men, of the earth earthly – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 932-933*

This kingdom application to the church was responsible for his vacillating interpretation of Matthew 18:20 and admissions of Matthew 28:19-20 that were contradictory to this interpretation of Matthew 18:20.

3. The Roots of His Inconsistencies

His inconsistencies can be traced to the erroneous premise that kingdom constitution equals church constitution. Therefore, his applications due to that logic were no better than his premise.

a. Daniel 2:44 refers to the Future Kingdom on earth at the Coming of Christ:

VS. 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it

shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

VS. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

In this dream, each kingdom is represented by its king. The present kingdom of Babylon is inseparable from its king, as Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is that head of gold (Daniel 2:38). Likewise, the stone that was cut out of the Mountain without hands is both the kingdom of God with its King. This stone strikes the image at its feet, proving that what is represented by the feet has already come to pass in history prior to being struck by the stone. The precise time of their arrival in history and destruction of these ten toes is foretold by John in Revelation chapter seventeen:

*Revelation 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, **which have received no kingdom as yet**; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. VS. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.*

*VS. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and **the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings**; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

The ten toes are the same ten horns in Daniel 7 which is the basis for Revelation 17:

Daniel 7:20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

VS. 21 *I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;*

VS.22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

VS.23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

VS.24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

VS.25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

VS.26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

However, Dr. Graves applied this eschatological aspect of the coming kingdom to the first, instead of the second coming, and to the churches rather than to the visible rule of Christ as King of kings over this whole subdued earth:

It was foretold that Christ himself should set it up. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed....." The stone is admitted by all sound commentators, to symbolize the visible Kingdom or Church of Christ which he was to set up at his advent....— James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate,

“The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 932-933 – emphasis mine

b. John 3:3-8 was Applied by Dr. Graves to the Churches of Christ:

“Except a man be born of water he cannot enter the kingdom of God” - John 3 5; which is the visible Church of Christ. - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, *“The Lord’s Supper”* The Southern Baptist Publication Society, p. 822 – Emphasis mine.

Again, this misapplication of John 3:3-5 to baptism and church membership forced him to the conclusion that just as the new birth is originated directly by God, so must church constitution be directly originated by God.

However, this text teaches no such thing. John 3:8 makes it very clear that it is the invisible work of the Holy Spirit rather than any visible expression of the churches:

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. - John 3:8

Furthermore, this is an internal work of the Holy Spirit within individuals rather than external work through administrative hands of men by baptism:

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

This failure to discern between the internal unseen works of God, called the new birth, and the external administration of baptism in connection with the visible church of God is responsible for his misapplication of Matthew 18:20 to church constitution.

The term “water” in John 3:5 can be interpreted any number of ways other than a reference to baptism.⁶

4. The Logical Conclusions of Misinterpretations

It is this misapplication of texts dealing with the future (Daniel 2:44-45) and invisible aspects of the kingdom of God (John 3:3-8) that led to Dr. Graves misapplication of Matthew 18:20 and church constitution by direct authority:

*I affirm, then, in view of these facts, that any organization confessedly invented, originated and set up by men, cannot be considered or recognized as a church of Christ, it not being from heaven, but of men, of the earth earthly – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 932-933 – emphasis mine*

The doctrine of DA is built upon this misapplication of Daniel 2:44-45; John 3:3-8 and Matthew 18:20 by Dr. J.R. Graves, and the erroneous logical application to church constitution.

However, whenever Dr. Graves dealt with Matthew 28:19-20 he applied it consistently with the historic definition of Landmarkism

⁶ Some understand the phrase “water and Spirit” to mean “water **even** Spirit” as confirmation that the ceremonial use of water in the Temple symbolized the work of the Spirit of God through the Word of God (just as Jesus used water as a reference to the internal work of the Spirit in John 4:10, 14; or as Paul used it for the cleansing effect of the Word of God in Ephesians 5:26).

Others interpret it in regard to the first birth in a sack of water followed by the second birth by the Spirit or as Jesus responds to Nicodemus question whether he had to re-enter his mother’s womb in John 3:6:

That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit – John 3:6

that demanded this was authority “*under God, from a gospel church*” administered through its ordained representatives. He demanded that Matthew 28:19-20 was positive law, and that as positive law it demanded a strict order to follow that consisted in evangelizing through preaching the gospel, then baptizing followed by organization of churches.

*If the church alone was commissioned to preserve and to preach the gospel, then it is certain that no other organization has the right to preach it – to trench upon the divine rights of the church. A Masonic Lodge, no more than a Young Men’s Christian Association; an ‘Odd-fellow’ lodge or Howard Association, no more than a ‘Woman’s Missionary Board,’ have the least right to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer the ordinances and **organize churches**. – J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What is It?** p. 36 - emphasis mine.*

In perfect consistency with this view of Matthew 28:19-20, he vehemently denied that any baptism in the book of Acts was without connection to a New Testament church through its authorized representative:

*I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941*

The above statement by Dr. Graves was in response to the following assertion by Dr. Ditzler:

Now, baptism does not initiate into, or make the parties members of, such local congregation.

*1. The Bible nowhere teaches it. Let the place be found. Of what local church was Philip, and of what local congregation did his baptism make the traveling Eunuch a member? Did Ananias make Pual (sic Paul) a member of his congregation which he baptized Paul, or Peter constitute Cornelius and his house members of the church at Jerusalem, or of Joppa, where he was lodging? – James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “*The Church of Christ*” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 914*

Indeed, Graves approached the Great Commission almost exactly as I have in my exposition. He demanded the Great Commission provided this explicit “order” beginning with the gospel, followed by baptism and then organization of churches. Was he inconsistent? Yes! This inconsistency was adopted by many of his followers (e.g. W.A. Jarrell)

5. Universal Church Interpretation

Dr. E.J. Fish writing in *The Baptist Quarterly* in 1874 clearly states that the kingdom/church view was the common universal church position:

*IN neither the universal Roman Catholic nor the invisible Protestant universal idea of the church is there supposed to be any distinction between the church and the kingdom of Christ. Both are supposed to cover all saints. Their identity moreover is commonly asserted as may be seen by reference to the current confessions of faith and definitions of the church or to writers upon church polity and current topics. – Henry G. Weston, ed., **The Baptist Quarterly**, Vol. 8, July, 1874, “*The Church Distinguished from the Kingdom*” by Dr. E.J. Fish*

Remember, that the ascendancy of the universal, invisible church theory and its practices (alien immersion, open communion, pulpit affiliation) was the very thing Landmarkism was attempting to expose, condemn and turn Baptist churches from embracing.

However, not all Landmarkers (Jesse B. Thomas, A.C. Dayton, J.B. Moody, etc.) accepted this kingdom/church interpretation embraced by Graves and others (Jarrell, etc.)

For example, A.C. Dayton rejected this concept of the kingdom and churches. A.C. Dayton debated Baptists who embraced Pedo-Baptists as gospel ministers and gospel churches. Among the big church Baptists who embraced such big church views were such men as Francis Wayland, J.B. Jeter, W.W. Everts, John L. Dagg, Andrew Fuller, William Whitsitt, A.P. Williams, John Waller, and E.Y. Mullins, etc. [Notably, the vast majority of the sources quoted by Bro. Settlemoir to prove the DA position come from these big church men]

6. Some Landmarkers Rejected Kingdom/Church View.

Dayton responded to some of these men in his book **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**. In this book he repudiates the kingdom/church theory. This can be clearly seen in his response to John L. Waller's arguments:

*We come now to W.'s great argument. The Evangelist is an officer, not of a church, but of the Kingdom of Christ. The churches are one thing, and the Kingdom is another. "Of the Kingdom, the Apostles were the chief officers next the seventy Disciples and now the Evangelists." Let us admit all this, and what will follow? The Kingdom of Christ, as he established it, was designed to have a set of officers called "Evangelists." What of it? These Evangelists could preach and baptize. Well what of it? We freely grant all this..... But someone may say the "unbaptized" is a member and an officer in the "invisible Kingdom". But the invisible has no organization, no ordinances and no officers. - A.C. Dayton, **Pedo-Baptist and Campbellite Immersions**, 1858, pp. 107-106,109 – emphasis mine.*

Graves, Dayton and Pendleton differed on many ecclesiastical interpretations of scripture, however, none more significant than this kingdom/church view of Graves.

7. Graves's Kingdom/Church View More Consistent with Anti-Landmark Position

Although Dr. Graves completely repudiated the doctrine of the universal, invisible church, his misapplication of these kingdom scriptures incorporated that very error into his logical system of thought (Matthew 18:20).

Indeed, it is the very same type of misapplication of kingdom scriptures that originated the error of the universal, visible church by Augustine and the error of the invisible, universal church by Luther and Calvin. All of these men took a kingdom context (Matthew 13; Daniel 2:44-45; John 3:3-8) and misapplied it to the church when the context had no bearing on the church.

The Direct Authority doctrine is brought to its consistent application with William H. Whitsitt's theory of Baptist origins. Whitsitt's view of Baptist origins perfectly harmonizes with the doctrine of Direct Authority. Indeed, his theory demands Direct Authority as the only possible explanation for his view of self-baptism, self-ordination, self-church constitution in the 1640 theory.

Indeed, the doctrine of Direct Authority is inseparable from the universal invisible church theory, as it is the essential basis for the origin of all false churches and denominations. It is essential for anyone who wants to overthrow Biblical church discipline. It is essential to the origin of the first apostates described and predicted by Paul in Acts 20:29-30.

8. The Prevailing Practice of "Regular Church Order"

Regular church order as defined by Matthew 28:19-20 and spelled out in most Baptist Church manuals was the general practice of Baptists. On the other hand, constitution by direct authority apart from any connection with any other churches (letters of dismissal, ordained representatives, etc.) is the exception to the rule.

S.H. Ford, who knew Dr. Graves very well, and who was the first one to write a biographical sketch of Dr. Graves's life and teachings, gives the following statement in regard to how they customarily constituted churches:

*4. For the accomplishment of so glorious a work it is necessary that a day of fasting and prayer be appointed by and among such believers, and that such procure some neighboring helps as they can, especially of the ministry. – S.H. Ford, **Life, Times and Teachings of J.R. Graves**. “How is a gospel church formed?” – Baptist Waymarks, p. 17 – emphasis mine.*

Was this merely Ford's evaluation or was that the normal practice of Dr. Graves himself? After setting forth clearly his theoretical position based on Matthew 18:20 Dr. Graves then says:

But as churches now are associated, it is a matter of proper caution, and for a presbytery to be called to see that the organization, at the very out start, is sound and orderly. An ounce of preventative is worth a pound of cure. [Graves. **The Baptist**. 1877. Month and date not legible but on page 661, probably Aug to Sept.; Electronic page 275]. Provided by J.C. Settlemoir by e-mail to the Author. – emphasis mine

Here is undeniable proof from Dr. J.R. Graves that his interpretation of Matthew 18:20 was more theoretical than a matter of practice. It is not about what Dr. Graves theorized one *could* do, but rather what he said they *should* do. The same is true with the current Baptist church manuals of that day. Most of the church manuals quoted by Bro. Settlemoir were written by universal, invisible church advocates (John Dagg, H.T. Hiscox, William Crowell, etc.).

This interpretational theory versus actual practice affected nearly all Landmark Baptists who followed Graves in his kingdom/church theory. J.B. Moody was affected by this contrast between interpretative theories versus actual practice. In his section on the

characteristics of the first church he sets forth this interpretational theory of how a church **can** be formed,

*20. It Multiplied Like Baptist Churches (Acts 8:1-18; 9:31; 11:19-26). Whatever the circumstances or causes of their scatteration, if they chose, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, they congregated and organized on the voluntary principle, and elected their own officers. Any Baptist church can divide; or any part of it for a good reason can pull out and organize when and where it pleases, because individual liberty is not destroyed or impaired by church membership. The churches of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, etc., thus organized, were recognized by the mother church, and by the apostles, and Christ. This is a golden mark. – J. B. Moody, **My Church** – Emphasis mine*

However, J.B. Moody explicitly states that Matthew 28:20 resides under the sole authority of the church rather than two or three baptized believers:

*I shall earnestly contend for a baptized and organized Christianity, called "the church," **and not the saints unorganized, though baptized.** The gospel is to be preached not only to the lost for salvation, but also to the saved for service.*

"Saved to Serve."

*Let us go first to the last part of the commission—Matthew 28:20. "Teaching them" (**all the baptized disciples**) "to keep safely" (the same as contend earnestly); and the "all things whatsoever commanded" is the same as "the faith once for all delivered." **That this trust or commission was given to the church, a pattern of which he had built once for all, is evident** from the sets of the Apostles, where the Lord added to the church those disciples, made and baptized, and that "every day." **Unorganized Christianity has no trust or commission.** as unorganized anything is incompetent to do*

*anything. Persecution was made "against the church;" the gates of Hades tried to "prevail against the church," for unorganized Christianity never did offend anybody or defend anything. – J.B. Moody, **My Church** – Emphasis mine*

J.B. Moody believed that authority was given in the Great Commission unto the church once for all in order to reproduce churches and no group of people could originate a church apart from that authority already given to the church:

*Was the commission given to such? The "go ye" was to a special class, to do these things preach, baptize and teach. They were given all at once, and only once, and that to an elect, called-out and trained body. It was the beginning of authority, to be transmitted; and for anyone to presume to assume such a work is "despising authority." - J. B. Moody, **My Church** – Emphasis mine*

The finer points of Landmarkism were still on the anvil of development during 1851-1905. W. A. Jarrell attempted to redefine Dr. Graves use of "Church Succession" and avoided his illustrations for that phrase ("chain", "reproduction" "underground river" "Atlantic cable" etc.). J.B. Moody attempted to harmonize all these phrases and retain all of Graves' illustrations, plus added some new ones of his own. Some Landmarkers were more consistent than others, and they disagreed with each other in how they responded to secular church history. Some of their inconsistencies were simply the results of misapplied scriptures, lack of thorough logical developed thought processes, or a lack of consistency between the historical definition of Landmarkism and its application to all pertinent scriptures dealing with Great Commission aspects.

Summary Conclusion

If we can ascertain the teaching of Scripture on this subject, we shall have no problem with history or tradition. – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, 2012, p. 1

Scripture, not tradition determines truth. Scripture is the only basis of doctrine and practice for New Testament congregations. As Bro. Settlemoir says, “*If we can ascertain the teaching of Scripture on this subject*” then contrary tradition is of no authority. Catholicism is based upon boat loads of uninspired tradition contrary to the Scriptures.

I believe that I have provided irrefutable contextual based evidence that Dr. J.R. Graves misinterpreted Matthew 18:20. It has nothing to do with church constitution in its context.

I think I have provided irrefutable Biblical evidence that baptized believers are assimilated into church relationship under the Great Commission authority given solely to the church in Matthew 28:20.

I believe the evidence that unequivocally repudiates Direct Authority is that “ye” is placed in a horizontal instrumental administrative position between Christ and “them” in Matthew 28:19-20.

I believe I have provided irrefutable evidence that Acts 13:1-4 teaches that the Holy Spirit works through the church in carrying out the Great Commission.

I believe I have provided sufficient evidence that baptisms administered in Acts 8-11 were authorized “*under God, from a gospel church.*”

I believe I have demonstrated there is a “regular” order established in Matthew 28:19-20 that must be regarded as positive law, which demands a precise “order” to be followed that begins with the “gospel” and concludes with bringing baptized believers into an observing covenant relationship with each other and Christ, called “the church.” Baptist history identifies this as “gospel church order” or “regular church order.”

I believe that I have demonstrated the basic interpretative error behind Dr. J.R. Graves' view and application of Matthew 18:20. This basic error accounts for not only his flip flop applications of both Matthew 18:20 and Matthew 28:20, but accounts for the same kind of inconsistencies among those who followed him.

Finally, the bottom line is, that Matthew 28:20, is authority to constitute baptized believers into regular church order, and that authority belongs to an already existing church rather than to unorganized baptized believers.

Whether Bro. Settlemoir likes it or not, Christ established a horizontal instrumental administrator of the Great Commission identified as “ye...you” in Matthew 28:19-20 with authority, and with a divine orderly process, not to merely provide suitable materials for church constitution, but to actually constitute or bring that material together into a teaching/observing covenant keeping relationship, called a “church.” No aspect of this commission was given to baptized believers outside of church capacity.

However, that is precisely the position of Bro. Settlemoir, as he believes that those identified as “them” in Matthew 28:19-20 have direct authority from Christ to gather themselves into that kind of church capacity.

Abraham Lincoln brought an axle with a wheel into the court room. He rolled the wheel up to the axle to show there was no possible way the disputed wheel could fit that axle. Likewise, we have rolled out the scriptures on to the public floor to prove it is utterly impossible to harmonize “Direct Authority” with either the Great Commission or with the historical definition of Landmarkism, which is based upon the Great Commission. That theory simply does not fit with either.

The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church; - William Cathcart, The Baptist Encyclopedia “Landmarkism”

CHAPTER TWO

The Historical Defense of Church Authorized Constitution

Bro. Settlemoir and Direct Authority advocates see absolutely nothing in secular church history prior to the mid-twentieth century that supports Authorized Church Constitution:

*There is not one single specific statement of this tradition that has ever been produced from any Baptist source before our own time. That is, there is no Baptist manual, no Baptist history, no Baptist sermon, no Baptist book of doctrines, no Baptist commentary, no Baptist handbook, no Baptist book of theology, no Baptist record, no Baptist confession, no Baptist covenant – no Baptist source of any kind – which states this doctrine or even gives it a glancing notice! – J. C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 88*

Of course, Bro. Settlemoir is entirely correct in his assessments, **just as long, as you abide within the boundaries of his definitions, and with his interpretations of history.**

1. Bro. Settlemoir's Biblical Premises

However, his conclusions can be no better than his premises. We have already seen that his Biblical premises are built upon Dr. Graves' complete and utter inconsistent misinterpretations of scripture.

We have seen he ignores the clear Biblical basis for the constitution service, and its language founded in the institution of marriage, and the espousal covenant by an authorized representative (Ephesians 5:30-31; 2 Corinthians 11:2; John. 3:29).

He completely ignores the language for a structured organized constitution in 1 Corinthians 3:10 performed by a “*masterbuilder*” in keeping with the strict order spelled out in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 or what Baptists summarily referred to as “regular church order.”

Remember the words of Bro. Settlemoir when he said:

“If we can ascertain the teaching of Scripture on this subject, we shall have no problem with history or tradition.” – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, 2012, p.

As we have seen, Scripture provides no support for “Direct Authority.” It is Scripture, and it is only scripture, which is our final authority for faith and practice.

2. Bro. Settlemoir’s Historical Premises

Well, how about his historical basis? Is that any better?

Remember, at the beginning I listed the problems that characterize secular church history as:

- a. Uninspired, limited and biased human perspective
- b. Incomplete, thus room for various interpretations
- c. Often incorrect, thus inconsistent with truth

Bro. Settlemoir’s position is founded primarily upon the uninspired writings and practices of men. Baptist history is literally full of false doctrines and false practices (e.g. conventions, associations), and so, it is an easy thing to document just about any doctrine and practice among Baptists.

He arrives at his conclusions primarily by ignoring and dismissing how historic Baptists defined “regular church order.”

He ignores the historical fact that this very expression “regular church order” was, and is historically founded upon the orderly steps

spelled out in Matthew 28:19-20. Thomas Patient spelled this out clearly, as early as 1654 (see pages 45-46). The associational minutes of Particular Baptists confirmed Patients explanation in the very same year:

*That it is in the power of the church to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth **to the world and gathering churches**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660**. (Association Records of the West, Country, 1654) p. 56 – emphasis mine.*

Indeed, as we have already documented (see pages 48-53), how both Graves and Dayton spell out this same “order” and demand it is essential, and cannot be reversed, or ignored in the administration of the Great Commission and constitution of churches. Matthew 28:19-20 is the foundation for constituting churches, as it is the essential order that must be followed in providing the proper materials, and constituting that material into a church of Christ.

He ignores the use of the passive voice in regard to recorded church constitution processes throughout over 99% of American Baptist history. It is the churches being gathered while it is the ordained men or churches that are doing the gathering.

This is the general rule found in Baptist history. For example, simply open up Spencer’s history of Kentucky Baptists or any other state history, and you will repeatedly read how such and such a church was organized “by” some church sent missionary elder(s).

The only exceptions to this rule are either imagined due to silence or insufficient details or rare exceptions to this rule. All exceptions to this general rule among recorded Baptist constitutions are so rare that historians treat it as unique whenever they find such examples (but Bro. Settlemoir treats these unique examples as the rule instead of as the rare exceptions).

He ignores the fact that voluntary agreement to enter into covenant relationship with each other, and with Christ, in becoming a

New Testament Church, is neither violated, nor contradicted by the whole process of being authorized and supervised by the Lord's church, and/or its authorized representatives. There is no church formed until there is actual declared covenant union obtained by voluntary vote. Their church authority is not violated, because no church yet exists until the point covenant union is declared by mutual consent of those entering into that constitution.

As we stated at the beginning of this book, no church, ecclesiastical council, ordained man or any other external entity can give church authority, as that comes with being a church. However, there are prerequisites to becoming a church. Among those prerequisites are a sufficient number to assemble (one person cannot be called an assembly), professed faith in Christ, scriptural baptism, authority under God from a gospel church to conduct the constitution meeting, confirmed like faith and order, and entrance into covenant union with each other to be an observing congregation of all things commanded by Christ. All these things are implied in Matthew 28:19-20.

He ignores that church authority is manifested in various forms without contradiction. It is manifested by a church vote or some sort of majority expression. That vote is revealed by ordaining and sending out a church representative to preach the gospel, baptize the believers and assimilate them into a covenant keeping assembly. That vote is manifested in letters of dismissal or direction for the very purpose to be constituted into a church. That vote is manifested by the very actions of submitting to a presbytery of church ordained representatives in a constitution service.

He ignores that authorized church constitution is spelled out in Baptist books, histories, church manuals, etc., every single time "regular church order" is mentioned or described, and that is the essence of submission to church authority by practice.

Can we find DA belief and practice of self-organization within American Baptist History? Yes, but it is extremely rare and treated always as unique by historians. However, we can find many other erroneous doctrines and practices as well. Bro. Settlemoir provides some documentation of churches formed on the basis of this misinterpretation of scripture (Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical, pp. 21-28). What is our response to such examples? They

were sincere but sincerely wrong, and their churches were irregularly formed, if Scriptures are our only true guide to regular church order.

3. The Historical Background of the 19th Century

In the 19th Century, Landmark Baptists were found within the Southern Baptist Convention, within individual associations. Therefore, associations and conventions could be a mark of Landmark Baptists during this period. However, Bro. Settlemoir would admit that this practice is contrary to the basic theory of Landmarkism. Landmarkism in theory repudiates boards, conventions or associations exercising authority over the church or in carrying out the Great Commission. Hence, here is a classic example where the theory of Landmarkism was violated by the practice of early Landmarkers.

The doctrine of the universal, invisible church theory permeated Baptist writings and churches during this period. Indeed, many of Bro. Settlemoir's historical proofs for Direct Authority come from the writings of big church advocates during this period.

However, there were two classifications of big church Baptists during this period. There were those whose big church theory was *inconsistent* with their practices (closed communion, rejection of alien immersion, rejection of pulpit affiliation, etc.) and there were Baptists whose practices were *consistent* with their Big church theory (alien immersion, open communion, and pulpit affiliation).

In addition to these two classifications of big church Baptists within the Southern Baptist Convention, there were also those churches which rejected the big church theory, as well as the big church practices, and yet remained in the same convention with such and had other inconsistencies in their interpretation and application of scriptures due to big church influences.

This same threefold division within the Southern Baptist Convention continues to exist even to this day.

- a. Universal, Invisible Church advocates consistent with that theory – open communion, alien immersion, and pulpit affiliation.
- b. Universal, Invisible Church advocates with inconsistent practices

with that theory – rejection of alien immersion, rejection of pulpit affiliation.

- c. Local church only with local church practices – close/closed communion, rejection of alien immersion, rejection of pulpit affiliation.

However, in the 19th century these Landmark types of churches were at a critical stage, as the big church theory was in the ascendancy and gaining ground. Those churches which held to the big church theory, but not the big church practices, were slowly being influenced toward making their practices more consistent with their theory. Baptist churches who were consistent between their local church only theory and practices, were not merely being influenced toward the big church theory, but were in a convention and associational relationship that was increasingly hostile to their position.

It is at this critical point in history that God raised up what many later called “*The Great Triumvirate*” consisting of J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton and J.M. Pendleton who developed local church theory and practice into a logical and systematic form that would be later called “Landmarkism.” These men stood up and defended this position. Their defense of Landmarkism strengthened those churches which believed and practiced this position. It also brought many Baptist churches into Landmarkism whose big church theory had been inconsistent with their Landmark practices. In addition, it prevented many big church advocates from becoming consistent with big church practices (alien immersion, pulpit affiliations, etc.) thus preserving this inconsistent big church theory/Landmark practice type of churches among the Southern Baptists even to this day.

One of J.R. Graves’ greatest opponents among Southern Baptists admitted that his defense of Landmarkism was responsible for turning this tide of ecclesiastical liberalism within the Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. E.T. Winkler wrote in the Alabama Baptist in 1871:

Extreme as the views of Dr. Graves have by many been regarded as being, there is no question but that they have

powerfully contributed to the correction of a false liberalism that was current in many quarters thirty years ago. – E.T. Winkler, **The Alabama Baptist**, 1871

Such Baptists as Winkler continued to embrace the big church theory, but practice Landmark characteristics.

However, inconsistencies continued to exist within Landmarkism until the end of this century. Many left the Convention. Some never joined it. Others left and formed similar conventions or associations. Some continued in the Southern Baptists Convention.

Moreover, these three great advocates of Landmarkism (Graves, Dayton, Pendleton) disagreed among themselves about many issues. In some areas they were inconsistent between their Landmark theory and practice. For example, they inconsistently operated within a Convention and organized associations with non-Landmarkers. As we have already seen the big church interpretation of Matthew 18:20 and kingdom/church view tainted their view of church constitution.

Can it be documented that early Landmarkism was systematized and practiced within the confines of Conventions, boards and associations with non-Landmark Baptists? Yes! However, is that consistent with Landmarkism? No!

Can it be documented that *some* early Landmarkers interpreted Matthew 18:20 as a basis for church constitution? Yes! Was that consistent with Landmarkism? No!

So whatever historical documentation Bro. Settlemoir may legitimately provide to support his position is no better than historical documentation that others may provide to support consistency between Landmarkism and Boards, Conventions and associations with non-Landmarkers. Both are equally inconsistent with Landmarkism, as well as unbiblical.

However, it will be demonstrated that Landmark practice was more consistent with regular church order as customarily spelled out in Baptist Church Manuals written by both Universal Invisible Church Advocates, and Landmarkers. So in spite of a theory about what *could* be done, the actual practice of regular church order prevailed as the rule among Landmarkers of what *should* be done.

Direct Authority “Landmarkers” are inconsistent with their demand that church authorized baptism is essential for the

proper material to constitute a church, while at the same time, claiming that in Acts 8-11 baptisms were not connected with any church.

Our Position is Distorted by DA Advocates

Our position concerning Authorized Church Constitution is very simple. It is in perfect keeping with the historic definition of Landmarkism as recorded by Cathcart. We believe that all aspects of the Great Commission are “*under God from a gospel church*” including the assimilation/constitution of baptized believers into a covenant observing assembly. This is the practice of regular church constitution by Baptists. This is the Biblical position and the consistent practice of Baptists in history (Mt. 28:20).

In my first book I attempted to clarify our position in light of what I believed then, and still believe now, to be several distortions of our position by Bro. Settlemoir (GCC Introduction). However, I see that the same distortions are perpetuated. When all the historical quotations are taken away from his book which he uses to support his straw man arguments, it drastically reduces the number of his quotations. Some of his distortions of our position are as follows:

1. Church Authorized Constitution Usurps Church Autonomy:

Bro. Settlemoir charges that our position usurps the autonomy of the newly formed church. However, in reality it is his view that usurps the authority of the Church to administer Matthew 28:20. His view denies that Matthew 28:20 falls under the administrative authority of the church and absolute proof is in his own interpretations of baptisms in Acts 8-11.

Many of his quotations on church autonomy, definition of a church, and church authority are presented to repudiate this imaginary idea about our position.

The truth is that a non-church has no church authority to be usurped. No church exists until those wishing to be a church actually become a church, and that does not occur until after they enter into covenant relationship with each other by declared consent. The truth is that a non-church entity does not become a church until after its organization rather than **before** or **during** its organization. Therefore, church authority to conduct and supervise an organizational meeting

does not violate church autonomy because no church exists until it is organized.

Take away all the historical quotations used by Bro. Settlemoir on this point and much of his historical proof for “Direct Authority” vanishes.

2. Church Authorized Constitution delegates Church Authority:

Bro. Settlemoir charges that our position is one church giving another church its authority.

It is one thing to claim that a church grants authority to some of their members to enter into this covenant agreement to be a church, and it is quite another thing to say that the church gives church authority to this non-church. The former is true but the latter is not true of our position. Church authority is inherent in being a church and therefore when a group of baptized believers enter into covenant union they become a church with church authority received directly from God and not a moment prior to constitution.

As previously argued, there is no church until baptized believers are united in covenant agreement by mutual consent to be a church. Church authority comes with being a church, just as marriage privileges come with being married. There is no marriage prior to the marriage service, just as there is no church prior to the constitution service. **The previous existing church has merely authorized the marriage ceremony, but marriage with all of its privileges comes directly from God when a couple enters into the vows, and those vows are declared to make them man and wife.**

No church, ecclesiastical council, ordained man or any other external entity can give church authority, as that comes only with being a church.

If you take away all the historical quotations used by Bro. Settlemoir on this point, in addition to the quotations concerning the former point, then you take away much of his proof for “Direct Authority.”

3. Church Authorized Constitution Contradicts Self-organization.

Church authority validates the constitutional service, whereas, actual church autonomy was secured by the declared covenant vote, which none could participate in, but those wishing to become a church. Hence, the church granted authority to be dismissed in order to take the vote, but the actual church was gathered and constituted by that declared vote. Therefore, **they gathered themselves by declared vote, and yet at the same time, it was church authorized, and church supervised either directly or indirectly.**

In my former book I provide many examples taken from the minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association (GCC, pp. 76) and from the history of the Middle Tennessee Baptists (GCC, pp. 108-112) where members petitioned their church for authorization to conduct an organizational meeting wherein they took a vote by which it is said they covenanted themselves into a New Testament congregation. In these quotations, authority from a church was requested, granted and yet they are said to have “*put themselves into church order by themselves*” while at the same time church ordained representatives were “*instrumental in their gathering*” (GCC p. 78). This constitutional service is outlined in every Baptist Church Manual.

Many of Bro. Settlemoir’s historical quotations are devoted to fighting this imaginary straw man argument. Take away his quotations on this point, in addition to the quotations for the previous two distortions; you remove much of the bulk of his book.

4. Church Authorized Constitution Builds One Church upon Another:

This is another erring definition of our position by Bro. Settlemoir. We believe no such thing. Jesus Christ is the foundation for every church, but the Great Commission is the authorized administrative and instrumental means for laying this foundation. God used instrumental church authorized and church sent means to lay that foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10) rather than by “Direct Authority.”

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and

another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. – 1 Corinthians 3:10

In addition we have already shown that the historical definition of “Landmarkism” demands that all those things listed in Matthew 28:19-20 are under church administrative authority through church authorized instrumental means for laying this foundation.

The administration of the Great commission lays down the foundation of Christ in the gospel, in baptism and in gathering them into an observing assembly in covenant commitment to all things Christ commanded.

Remove the historical quotations in Bro. Settlemoir’s book wasted on this distortion, in addition to all the quotations used for the past three distortions, and his book is almost emptied of historical proof against Authorized Church Constitution.

5. Church Authorized Constitution is a confused position?

That Bro. Fenison is not able to tell us exactly how EMDA is nor how it is transferred indicates how precarious his position is.

*He suggests the authority is obtained by the direct vote of a church in a called business meeting [GCC. pp. V, 67, 72, 76]. But wait! It may also be conveyed in a church letter! He then opines this church authority alone is insufficient and insists you must also have an ordained man in the constitution to make it valid. But when he remembers that these things will not cover all the historical cases, he also decides that it may be done by an ordained man alone! And if this does not answer all situations (and it will not do so) he suddenly remembers that this essential authority may just possibly be in baptism itself [pp. 96, 141]. J. C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical and In Historical.** P. 87*

Of course this is all concocted out of the pure imagination of Bro. Settlemoir in order to ridicule our position.

I stated very clearly that assembling for church constitution has its authority in a previous existing church in a called business meeting. How that authority is made manifest and applied can vary. A regular called business meeting is responsible for sending out a missionary for that purpose. A regular called business meeting is responsible for letters of dismissal or direction for that very purpose. A regular called business meeting is responsible for direct supervision by the churches and/or by their ordained representatives. Most Baptist churches in America were gathered in connection with one or more of these expressions of church authorized approval.

As far as baptism, I never said any such thing. I never suggested that authority to constitute a church is transmitted through baptism. That was not my argument. Bro. Settlemoir needs to read more carefully. My argument concerning baptism was in regard to his position of Direct Authority, not Authorized Church authority. My argument was, and is that Direct Authority depends upon the authority of a previous existing church for constitution of a new church. They demand that authorized church baptism is the absolute prerequisite for any two or three believers to organize themselves into a church. Hence, without the authorized administration of baptism by a previous existing church there is no such thing as constitution by Direct Authority according to Bro. Settlemoir's view. Therefore, even his view demands church succession linked by baptism. To infer that I was referring to my own position is due to careless reading. However, as before noted, Bro. Settlemoir contradicts his own requirement for qualified material for church constitution by his own interpretations of baptism in Acts 8-11 which he demands has no connection with authority of a previous existing church.

6. Charges of insufficient evidence to support Authorized Church Constitution:

In chapter 14, and in the conclusion of Bro. Settlemoir's newest book, he gives a list of things that he claims I believe, but I could never prove. I guess he means that I could never prove sufficiently to his mind. I really don't think any amount of evidence will prove it to his mind, as he chooses to look at history through colored glasses.

a. He claims that I did not prove “regular church order” is the practice of Authorized Church constitution?

Gospel order is the practice of Matthew 28:20 which falls under the administrative authority of the church. I have documented it well. Thomas Patent spells out clearly that gospel order is based upon the order delineated in Matthew 28:19-20, which is inclusive of gathering churches. The old associational Baptists of England spell it out clearly that the church commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is inclusive of gathering churches. J.R. Graves and A.C. Dayton admit that Matthew 28:19-20 is inclusive of gathering churches. Even non-Landmarkers like T.G. Jones admit that Matthew 28:19-20 is inclusive of gathering churches.

Both Graves and Dayton insist there is a chronological order presented in Matthew 28:19-20 beginning with the preaching of the gospel that must be followed in order to lay the foundations for any true church of Christ. It seems apparent to most Baptists in history but Bro. Settlemoir chooses to ignore that.

b. He claims that I list Benedict as a supporter of Authorized Church Constitution.

I did not! I simply quoted from Benedict a case where Authorized Church Constitution by gospel order occurred. I never said anything about Benedict’s own personal beliefs. Benedict was a universal, invisible church advocate who believed that any Christian without baptism could assemble, and self-constitute, and “initiate” the ordinances, and the very quote that Bro. Settlemoir gave me proves that.

*Any company of Christians my [sic may] commence a church in gospel order, by their own mutual agreement, without any reference to any other body; and this church has all power to appoint any one of their number, whether minister or layman, to commence anew the administration of gospel institutions – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**. Quoting Benedict, p. 82. – Emphasis mine*

Now, even Bro. Settlemoir would disagree with this conclusion by Benedict that baptism is of no importance in constituting a church, and yet he quotes Benedict to support his theory.

Benedict cites Roger Williams and John Smyth as examples, both of which had no previous church administered baptism. Williams and Smyth were consistent Direct Authority advocates, as they believed they could reinstitute the ordinances, as well as the church. However, even DA advocate's demand baptism cannot be reinstituted but must be received from a prior existing church.

The British Baptist historian, Crosby denied that any church in England obtained its baptism from John Smyth, and J.R. Graves denied that any church in America received its baptism from Roger Williams.

However, Bro. Settlemoir cites them both as proof of his doctrine! Bro. Settlemoir is correct! Both of them correctly and consistently represent the doctrine of Direct Authority. The theory of Baptist church origin by Dr. William H. Whitsitt is the most consistent view with the doctrine of Direct Authority.

Neither did Dr. Graves quote Benedict as one who believed in church succession. In Graves's debate with the Methodist Dr. Ditzler, Ditzler claimed Benedict did not believe in church succession and Graves never denied that claim. Graves simply claimed that Benedict's history proved that Baptist churches had existed from the time of the apostles.

c. Landmarkers could not defend Succession:

Graves, Dayton, Ray and Moody all admitted they could not defend Baptist Church Succession from incomplete, uninspired, and often incorrect secular history, but nevertheless believed it on the basis of inspired, complete correct scripture. Dr. John T. Christian admitted he could not prove "succession" from history but nevertheless believed in it, and claimed that if sufficient history were made available, a good argument for "succession" could be made.

However, Baptist *Perpetuity* can be reasonably demonstrated from secular history, by asserting that various groups under various names were essentially Baptists in faith and practice, and most of them claimed to have been in succession from the apostolic times.

This is obvious to anyone who reads Graves's debate with Ditzler or reads Dayton's book on alien immersion or J.B. Moody's book "My Church." They resort to illustrations (Atlantic cable, underground river, human reproductive cycle, etc.) rather than to secular history to prove their claims of "Baptist Church Succession."

d. William H. Whitsitt is the "father" of DA.

Whitsitt was the first to present a view of Baptist history consistent with Direct Authority constitution of churches. He argued that Baptist churches had self-originated from among separatist Pedobaptist in England. His system of Baptist history is established upon a consistent view of Direct Authority. He believed that Pedobaptist by Direct Authority were self-immersed, and self-organized into the first Baptist churches in London. He argued that John Smyth and Roger Williams by Direct Authority self-instituted baptism and self-organized. Significantly, Bro. Settlemoir also uses Smyth to support the doctrine and practice of Direct Authority. Brother Settlemoir quotes Smyth with approval who says:

*Now for baptizing a man's self, there is as good a warrant as for a man's churching himself; for two men are singly not a church; jointly they are a church, and they both of them put a church upon themselves; for as both these persons unchurched, yet have power to assume the church, each of them for himself and others in communion; so each of them unbaptized, hath power to assume baptism for himself with others in communion. – Quoted by J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 18*

However, Smith is arguing that there is as good a warrant to self-baptize, as there is to self-constitute a church. We agree with Smyth's logic but reject it to be Biblical. However, Smyth's logic is consistent with the doctrine of Direct Authority.

Now, either Smyth administered self-baptism and formed a church, or he formed a church out of Pedo-baptized materials, and that Pedobaptist church administered immersion or secular history is

insufficient to make a certain determination. However, this is the kind of history necessary to support the doctrine of Direct Authority.

Significantly English Baptist historians denied they received their baptism from Smyth, as they too rejected Direct Authority to self-administer baptism, as much as to self-constitute a church out of Pedobaptist, who in turn administer baptism.

However, Direct Authority is consistent with William H. Whitsitt's view of Baptist history and essential to the universal invisible church theory in originating different denominations after the completion of the New Testament.

Matthew 28:19-20 is given to properly baptized disciples, as a church body to administer baptism, and bring baptized believers into regular church order.

e. Graves believed DA but practiced ACC.

Bro. Settlemoir ridicules the idea that Graves believed in DA but practiced ACC.

Graves defended DA to be consistent with his errant kingdom/church theory. However, when it came to identifying who had authority to administer Matthew 28:19-20, he consistently argued that it was administered under the authority of the church alone, and was inclusive of gathering churches. His theory had inconsistencies. However, in regard to practice, he regularly followed the customary practice – regular church order. For example in response to an inquiry about the necessity of ordained supervision in church constitution he affirmed that regular order was the practice of his day and that he recommended it.

An inquirer asks: *Is it indispensably necessary, in the constitution of a Baptist Church of Christ, to have two or more ordained ministers present to form a presbytery, in order to make such a constitution legal or Scriptural?*

[J.R. Graves responded] *We find no law in our code touching the forms necessary to constitute a church; nor do we find in the New Testament any example or intimation that a presbytery of ordained ministers ever acted in*

*constituting a church. Christ says the most about it, and it is but little: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them." When a company of baptized disciples, if only two or three, associate themselves as a church, covenanting with each other to be governed by the authority of Christ as indicated in the New Testament, they are, to all intents and purposes, a gospel church under the constitution. A foreign missionary and his wife would thus constitute the essentials of a church; but, as we always should send forth by twos, two missionaries and their wives could constitute themselves into a church without a presbytery. **But as churches now are associated, it is a matter of proper caution, and for a presbytery to be called to see that the organization, at the very out start, is sound and orderly.** An ounce of preventative is worth a pound of cure. [J.R. Graves. **The Baptist**. 1877. Month and date not legible but on page 661, probably Aug to Sept.; Electronic page 275]. Provided by J.C. Settlemoir by e-mail to the Author. – Emphasis mine*

Please notice the difference in what he said they *could* do versus what he ultimately said they *should* do. Here we have his interpretational theory contrasted with what he claimed was the more “*sound and orderly*” path to follow.

Proof that regular church order was the customary practice in his day is Graves response to an inquiry concerning the necessity of the ministry in constitution of churches. Graves responded that nine tenths of all inquiries about church constitution assume the need of the presence of an ordained man or presbytery in the constitution of churches:

*The ministry in one form or another is attempting to assume the prerogatives of the local church. **Nine tenths of the queries that reach us involve this assumption, just as clearly as the above involves it.** [J.R. Graves. **The Baptist**. 1-17-1880, p.486] –emphasis mine*

Every single solitary church manual among Baptists during 1800-1900 spelled out “regular church order” in the customary way as their norm in constituting churches. So, what they say “could” be done in contrast to what they say “should” be done were not one and the same. What they say “should” be done was the customary practice which expresses Authorized Church Constitution.

f. Early Particular Baptists taught ACC.

Without doubt! I documented this many times over. Thomas Patient’s account of regular order, as defined by Matthew 28:19-20, proves this was inclusive of gathering churches. Their associational minutes again spell out clearly what Patient claimed. The correction made to the 1644 Baptist Confession of Faith in regard to administration of the ordinances by qualified ordained men spell this out clearly. The testimonies by Kiffin and Knollys, as to how the early Particular Baptist churches were erected and framed spell this out.

As for the idea that baptism could be restarted again by a modern John the Baptist, Daniel King clearly stated that this was not to be understood as their practice, but only as a theoretical argument in public debate against those who claimed the lack of available history demanded they were new rather than apostolic in origin. He said “***I speak in the notionist sense, granting it by way of concession only.***” However, in regard to their practice, they spell it out in their Associational Minutes and call it “gospel order.”

*That it is **in the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth to the world and gathering churches, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660.** (Association Records of the West, Country, 1654) p. 56 – emphasis mine.*

g. Matthew 18:20 does not refer to church constitution:

We have thoroughly proven that Matthew 18:20 does not refer to church constitution in context, both in my former book and in this book. Bro. Settlemoir simply asserts it does. Those authorities whom he quotes merely assert it does, but neither provides contextual evidence to substantiate this assertion. I have provided contextual based evidence to prove it does not.

h. Jerusalem Church sent men all over the world to constitute churches:

I never said any such thing! I pointed out two specific cases where the church at Jerusalem specifically sent men to investigate the work of their missionaries (Acts 8:14; 11:22). This demonstrated that the church acted as though those who initially preached the gospel and baptized acted under their authority, and therefore they had the right to follow up any report that came to their attention. The Great Commission is not complete until baptized believers are brought into a covenant assembly according to Matthew 28:20.

Dr. J.R. Graves believed this very same thing and declared it plainly:

*I do most cheerfully endorse it as a rule that the baptized belong to the same organization with the officer baptizing until that relation is changed by subsequent action. Paul was baptized into the fellowship with the church at Damascus and the Eunuch and the Samaritans into that of Jerusalem until he was united to some other church and they were constituted into a church at Samaria. James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, “The Church of Christ” The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, p. 941*

Graves believed these things because the historic definition of Landmarkism is established on the fact that all the aspects of Matthew 28:19-20 is “***under God, from a gospel church.***”

In direct contrast, the DA position denies many of the baptisms in the book of Acts were ministerial administrations “*under God, from a gospel church.*” Instead they teach the Reformed Baptist position that they were ministerial administrations in connection with no church, but by direct authority “under God” period!

7. We believe in two sources of authority:

*EMDA men see ordained men holding one side essential authority necessary to constitute a church. The other side, they say is held up by a mother church. Thus in essence they have two sources of authority – the mother church and an ordained man. – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 77*

This is a ridiculous analysis by Bro. Settlemoir. We believe no such thing. There is but one source of authority for administration of the Great Commission and that is “*under God from a gospel church.*”

Bro. Settlemoir seems to imagine that Dr. Graves “*legal axiom*” that “*delegated functions and trust cannot be redelegated*” forbids Authorized Church Constitution.

Question 671. Has a church the right to designate one or more of her members whom she may deem fit to perform any services the cause of Christ may require?

*Answer 671. No, a thousand times no. All the powers and functions of a church are delegated powers; and it is a legal axiom, founded in eternal verities, that delegated functions and trust cannot be redelegated. [Graves. **TN Bap.** Sept. 14, 1887, p ?].*

It is quite true that no church can re-delegate its authority to any group of members within or without the church. Church authority belongs to the whole membership of the church. However, such authority may be ministered *through* any selected member or members. For example, the church authorizes one of its ordained

members to administer the ordinances in behalf of the entire congregation.

However, the church does not “re-delegate” its authority by bringing baptized believers into regular church order through its ordained ministry or through authorized letters of dismissal for that purpose, or though directly supervising the process. In all these cases, it is the church exercising its authority through its own membership.

Matthew 28:19-20 is church authority to bring baptized believers into regular church order. This exercise of authority in church constitution does not re-delegate any authority. The church authorizes baptized believers to freely enter into covenant church union with Christ by their own vote. **It is an act of church authority that allows some of its baptized members to self-organize.** The church authorizing the covenant union does not conflict with the authority of the new church any more than a minister authorizing two people to enter into covenant union conflicts with a new marriage.

The Kittery Church Organization

Bro. Settlemoir challenges the account of the Kittery Maine Baptist church constitution as reported by J.H. Grime. His challenge is primarily based upon silence.

First he challenges whether Grime believed in mother church authority even though he admits he simply does not know:

*What did Grime mean by this statement, “under whose authority they were constituted” is not so certain. It is possible Grime meant EMDA – J.C. Settlemoir – **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 60*

It would seem that no amount of evidence will convince Bro. Settlemoir that any Baptist in history believed in Authorized Church Constitution.

Bro. Grime repeated over and over again throughout his book the very language that Bro. Settlemoir condemns as EMDA (Essential Mother Daughter Authority) language. Bro. Grime repeatedly speaks of church constitution as a “mother” and “daughter” relationship between the church granting authority and the people being constituted into a church. No doubt he scoured Bro. Grime’s book, but cannot find anything said that would justify that Bro. Grime believed in Direct Authority, and so in spite of the repetitive mother/daughter church constitution language found throughout Bro. Grime’s book he sets forth the vain argument:

But even Grime (whatever he may have believed about EMDA) does not state a mother church is essential for constitution anywhere in The History of Middle TN Baptists. – J. C. Settlemoir, Ibid., p. 60.

Is this conclusion by Bro. Settlemoir true about Grimes? Let Bro. Grimes speak for Himself:

Q. Can a church, not historically connected with the one Christ constituted, and which has not been kept free from Rome through the ages, be the church of Christ?

A. No. Any church which does not connect with the apostolic churches, and have Christ as its head, has no right to claim to be a church of Christ. **To make a church legitimate, and its ordinances valid, there must be authority coming in regular line from God without any contamination from Rome, either directly or indirectly.**

J.H. Grime, **Catechism of Ecclesiastical History**,
Appendix II

Elder Grime demands **historical connection** between churches from the apostolic churches. This connection is “*in regular line*” in regard to authority. Such a description is the epitome of what others called “*chain link*” connection.

Elder Grime repeatedly uses the language of constitution by church authority throughout his history of the Middle Tennessee Baptists. Would any Direct Authority advocate use the following language - “*by the church under whose authority they were constituted*”? Since he cannot find what he wants in Bro. Grime’s book he chooses to attack the integrity of Bro. Grime as a historian. However, the real facts will justify Bro. Grime.

The Constitution of the Boston Church

Since Bro. Settlemoir cannot find any possible evidence to prove that Kittery, Maine Baptist Church believed his position, he asserts the mother church was constituted by direct authority.

Of course, he argues that if the mother church was without church authority in its organization then that invalidates Bro. Grimes description, as well as the position of Authorized Church Constitution.

However, one thing about secular church history is it is often incomplete, and lacking all details. As we shall see this is true in the case of the constitution at Boston. There are some unexplained statements that may be interpreted to overthrow Bro. Settlemoir's interpretation of the facts.

Bro Settlemoir quotes from John T. Christian the following account by Thomas Gould, the first pastor of the Boston Church:

*Now after this, considering with myself what the Lord would have me to do; not likely to join with any of the churches of New England, and so to be without the ordinance of Christ; in the meantime God sent out of Old England some who were Baptists; we, consulting together what to do, sought the Lord to direct us, and **taking counsel of other friends who dwelt among us, who were able and godly, they gave us counsel** to congregate ourselves together; and so we did, being nine of us, to walk in **the order of the gospel according to the rule of Christ**.....after we had been called into two courts, the church [protestant church at Cambridge] understanding that we were gathered into church order.....*

*The organization of this Baptist church caused a great noise throughout New England, - J.T. Christian, **A History of Baptists**, vol. 2, p. 74 – Emphasis mine*

Gould (or Goold) gives a summary of the facts, but leaves some very important things unexplained. For example, Gould and three others were unbaptized at the time of constitution. The church record

states their baptism occurred at that time, but does not state who baptized them. As an unbaptized man, he was also an unordained man, but yet was ordained and installed as the Pastor at the time of constitution. None of these statements provide any explanation how any of these things were done.

Furthermore, the history produced by this church, as well as the history of Baptists written by Isaac Backus informs us that at least two Baptist preachers had been intermittently preaching in Boston from 1650 to 1665 and that several other Baptists lived in Boston. Gould refers to Baptists who acted as advisors, but were not included in the number being constituted. Who were these advisors? Were there any ordained ministers that helped in the constitution and ordination of Bro. Gould?

Five baptized believers were organized into a church and four others were then baptized, and added to that church, including Gould. So the original number actually constituted was five persons. The history provided by the church in Boston provides the original constitution minutes listing the unbaptized persons that were afterwards added to the number of baptized persons constituting this church.

The Boston church history does not say who baptized them, only that they were baptized after the constitution. However, the author of their history, Nathan E. Wood informs his readers that two ordained Baptist preachers were well known to this group, and at times came to preach to them (John Myles and John Clark). We know Clark sent men from his church soon afterwards when Gould and others were brought into court shortly after this constitution.

Wood surmises that either Myles or Clark, who were both well known to them, may have performed the baptisms and ordination at the organization. Such may have been those that Gould described “*who were Baptists....who were able and godly, they gave us [those being constituted] counsel*” so that they were constituted “*in the order of the gospel, according to the rule of Christ.*”

Nathan E. Wood the author of the History of the First Baptist Church in Boston says:

It is not known who baptized Goold, Osborne, Drinker, and George. It is possible that Rev. John Myles, a Baptist

minister from Wales, who had located in Swansea, Massachusetts, and gathered about him a Baptist Church, might have been present. We know that he often visited Boston and preached for the church, and that some years later he might have become their pastor....Dr. John Clarke, a pastor at Newport, who at one time had been a resident of Boston, may have been present. He was widely known as a Baptist minister, for he had been in prison in Boston in 1651 for preaching the gospel and baptizing at Lynn. The after connection of this church with the Newport Church was close and continuous. – Nathan E. Wood, **The History of the First Baptist Church of Boston**, 1655-1899, p. 36 – The Baptist History Collection, Ver. 1.0

Wood's point is that the silence concerning who baptized them demonstrates all the facts have not been made available and leaves room for conjecture. How do Baptist historians treat the silence and gaps in secular church history? Graves and others came up with the Atlantic Cable conjecture to fit the other facts. Is this conjecture? Yes it is conjecture. However, it is the first choice by Wood in contrast to other possibilities listed afterward and for good reasons. The actual practice of this church later in constitution of new churches corresponds better with this conjecture than do the other theories. The first church organized by the Boston Church demonstrates how they understood *"the order of the gospel, according to the rule of Christ."*

Those baptized believers living in Kittery Maine sent a formal request to the Boston Church, of which they were members, for authority to be organized as a church:

Upon serious & solemn consideration of the Church about a motion or request made by several members that lived at Kittery, that ye might become a church & that they might proceed therein provided they were such as should be approved for such a foundation work, the church gave their grant and at ye time appointed did send several messengers to make ye strict inquiry & examination as they out in such

a case who at their return brought ye copys here inserted 26th of 7 month 1682.

The Church of Christ at Boston ye is baptized upon profession of faith having taken into serious consideration ye request of our brethren at Kittery relating to there being a church by themselves ye so they might enjoy the precious ordinances of Christ which by reason of distance of habitation they but seldom could enjoy have therefore thought to meet to make choice of us whose names are and written as messengers to assist them in ye same and coming up to them we have found them a competent number and in ye same faith with us for upon careful examination of them in matters of doctrine & practice & so finding one with us by there (we hope) conscientious acknowledgment of ye confession of faith put forth by ye Elders and Brethren of ye churches in London and ye country in England dated ye year 1682.

And they having given themselves up to ye Lord & to one another in a solemn covenant to walk as said covenant my express & also having chosen their officers whom they with us have appointed and ordained, we do therefore in ye name of Lord Jesus & by the appointment of his church deliver them to be a church of Christ in ye faith and order of ye gospel.

Signed by us in ye name of ye church the 25 of 7 month 1682. Thomas Skinner, Isaac Hull, Philip Squire – Nathan E. Wood, Ibid., p. 105 [some language modernized]

Notice the wording “*we do therefore in ye name of Lord Jesus & **by the appointment** of his church **deliver them to be** a church of Christ in ye faith **an order of ye gospel.***” – emphasis mine

The mother church did not practice Direct Authority as conceived by Bro. Settlement. Hence, either they are hypocrites who demanded of the Kittery constitution what they did not believe or practice in their own constitution, or as usual in the cases of much recorded history, the original record was simply incomplete. There is no account of who baptized the four or who ordained Gould or what role the advisors actually played in the constitution service.

One thing is for sure! Bro. Grimes is vindicated of all the charges against him by Bro. Settlemoir. The letter for church constitution does request church authority *“to be a church”* and this letter explicitly says the constitution was *“by the appointment of his church.”* Also, this is harmonious with the words *“given themselves up”* proving that church authorized constitution is consistent with the free choice to *“organize themselves”* by covenant vote. Hence, the historical definition of Landmarkism is vindicated that these baptized believers were constituted *“under God from a gospel church.”*

We know there were Baptists present in the original constitution of the Boston church that did not become members in the constitution, but acted as *“godly and able”* advisors. We know Gould was baptized and ordained at this point as well. We know they claimed it was done according to gospel *“order.”* We know that if the practice of this church in constituting churches is any indicator of what they believed, then there was an ordained minister present directing them, and baptizing Gould, and helping in his ordination.

Moreover, there is also indication that the Baptists who were constituted had been former members of existing New Testament churches who may have possessed letters of dismissal from those churches before they left England, for this very purpose. Hence, church authority behind the constitution. To deny this is to suppose that they departed from their churches abnormally or under church discipline. Is this conjecture? Yes, and there is plenty of room to make such conjectures.

Now, Brother Settlemoir really can't complain because he attempts to create doubt out of thin air concerning the personal beliefs of Bro. Grime in the face of his repeated plain and contrary language to Direct Authority. He has to explain away this clear repeated language. My explanation of the Boston Church constitution does not need to explain away anything, but simply fill in the blanks in keeping with what is stated and implied by their own later practice.

Gould explicitly states that there were Baptists present at this constitution from which they sought counsel for this constitution. The record plainly states that there were Baptist ministers which had been preaching in Boston previous to this time. The record plainly states they were organized by regular order. The record plainly states what

manner this church practiced in constitution of other churches – Authorized Church Constitution.

Is Bro. Settlemoir's interpretation correct or is mine? The unexplained assertions leave reasonable doubt, and therefore provide room for my interpretation, as much as for his interpretation. Thus secular history does not prove either case.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association

Bro. Settlemaier challenges the accounts I give of the constitution of the early churches in the Philadelphia association (which the author says is the pattern followed by these Baptists – **Great Commission Credentials**, p. 69).

I gave several precise quotations where authority in a called business meeting was requested and granted for **more** than merely two or three baptized believers to meet in order to covenant themselves into church order (GCC, pp. 70-72). Hence, these baptized believers did not interpret Matthew 18:20 to teach that if they had at least two or three baptized members they could self-authorize their own constitution. Does he deal with this fact? No!

Rather, he must appeal to a Roman Catholic writer to contradict the minutes of this association when he has criticized us for using non-Baptist sources to defend our position.

Second, he quotes definitions about church authority which are but straw men arguments.

Third, he must appeal to a couple of individual preachers in the association, thinking that is sufficient to overturn the fuller accounts of church constitution spelled out at the very beginning of which the author says all other shorter accounts were:

*....erected and constituted after the same form and order of the Gospel with those whose constitutions are more at large herein before related, it is thought needless to give a copious account of every particular, and to relate the time of their admission to the Association only. – **The Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association from 1707 to 1807**, p. 24 – emphasis mine*

One of the more lengthy versions of church constitution reads:

....the above said persons made applications to their respective churches for dismissal, and leave to form themselves into a distinct church, both which they obtained.....requested a dismissal from the church n

*Pennepeck, in order to incorporate a distinct church; which being granted (p. 12)....requested a dismission from the church at Hopewell; which, being obtained, they appointed (p. 20).....they requested the church of Pennepek to dismiss them, and to assist them to be a distinct church; **which request was granted at a church meeting, held April 5th**.....they requested dismission from that church....their request being granted (p. 21).....did make their request...for a dismission, in order to be settled a distinct church by themselves, which was accordingly granted... (p. 21) – **Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association.** – emphasis mine*

This is an associational approved history, and its editor confirms over and over again this was their customary practice in church constitution. Indeed, this is the customary practice among Baptists for hundreds of years and that is one reason it is called “regular” church order. Again, this is what they called “regular gospel order” because it was based upon Matthew 28:19-20 which they believed was under the administration of the church through its ordained representatives rather than merely baptized believers.

Bro. Settlemoir quotes two or three preachers who tell us what they theorize could be done. However, the history spells out clearly and repeatedly what they actually did practice.

The early Churches of the Philadelphia Baptist Association were composed of members who came from England where “regular gospel order” had been spelled out in the associational writings in England to be:

*That it is **in the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth to the world and **gathering churches**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them, Acts 14:23, Tit.1:5 – **Associational Records of West Country**, 1654 – emphasis mine*

Notice the scripture reference to define the power of the church – “**Acts 13:2f**”. The very text Bro. Settlemoir denies has reference to church authority.

Notice they are church sent for the “**gathering of churches.**” They included church constitution in the “power” of the church in administering the Great Commission through its ordained ministry, the very thing that Bro. Settlemoir and Direct Authority advocates repudiate.

Again, we see that the Landmark definition fits perfectly with their manner of constituting churches –

“scriptural authority under God from a gospel church.”

Brother Settlemoir’s denial rests solely upon his faulty view of “regular church order.” He simply dismisses the plain definitive language of Thomas Patient about “gospel order.” He simply ignores the Particular Baptist Association Minutes concerning the Great Commission inclusion of church constitution according to the order found in Matthew 28:19-20. He simply dismisses the repeated language of the Associational history where baptized believers requested and were granted authority to meet and organize into churches.

These Baptists did not reinvent the wheel, but followed the same practices established by Particular Baptists in England from whence they came.

Crowell's Church Member's Manual

William Crowell published his Baptist church manual in 1847 before Dr. Graves put forth his Cotton Wood resolutions in 1851. Graves put forth the resolutions because Baptists were straying from the apostolic pattern due to the influence of the universal, invisible church theory (pulpit affiliation, alien immersion, open communion, etc.).

Crowell's manual contains much profitable reading. Landmark Baptists would agree more than they would disagree with the content of this manual.

However, Crowell states some beliefs in regard to the church that very few, if any, Landmark Baptists could embrace.

Significantly, when J.R. Graves reviewed Crowell's church manual and could not recommend it. He said:

*Containing such important errors—taught partly in plain language, and partly by inference—I cannot, until these corrections have been made, advocate the circulation of “Crowell's Church Member's Manual, but should he see proper to make the necessary revisions and expunctions, I would prefer that no work should have a wider circulation than his. - J.R. Graves, **The Southern Baptist Review & Eclectic**, April, 1859, Article IV. “Church Members Manual.” pp 58-69*

Crowell openly espoused the universal, invisible church theory, as well as denied that Christ ever built any visible organized church in his earthly ministry.

*...the Savior did not, while on earth, form any visibly organized church” William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 “Manner of forming a church” – p. 57*

According to Crowell, Christ merely established the principles according to which baptized believers could constitute churches.

He enacted the principles and laws, and left his people at large to apply them by forming themselves into churches according to their circumstances, by a mutual covenant – p. 57

Let me be perfectly clear. Crowell was a big church advocate, and interpreted Matthew 18:20 consistently with the big church theory. He believed there was no church existent in Matthew 18:15-20 but only prospective. Crowell was not a Landmark Baptist.

However, Crowell did claim the basis for church constitution is outlined by the three aspects found in the Great Commission – gospel evangelized, then baptized, then assembled for teaching them to observe all things commanded.

He also claims that every church is clothed with full missionary power to carry out the Great Commission into the entire world (p. 63). He does not attribute this authority to individual baptized believers outside of church order.

Christians not united in a church capacity have no right to call each other authoritatively to account for violating the laws of Christ – Ibid. p. 65

Again, when directly dealing with how a group of people receive church authority, he lays down the process of the Great Commission as essential to prepare the materials for constitution. He then proceeds to demand the act of entering into a mutual covenant as essential to becoming a church, which he says; no church can be formed without it.

Without a mutual covenant on the part of believers to walk together in the duties and ordinances of the gospel no church could ever have been formed – Ibid. p. 65

This is covenant obedience to the Great Commission. Indeed, he claims this covenant union to obedience to Christ is the inherent principle found in Matthew 28:20:

This is evidently the import of the principle laid down by our Savior in Matthew 28:20 – p. 65

Although he is completely inconsistent with Landmarkism, as you can see, he agrees in principle that Matthew 28:20 is inclusive of church constitution. He also fully admits that Matthew 28:19-20 is the process necessary to prepare the material for New Testament constitution of churches. However, he denies the existence of any church previous to Pentecost.

If he is considered to be a Landmarker, he is extremely inconsistent with the core principles of Landmarkism. However, the finer points of Landmarkism were still being defined between 1851 and 1905, and many finer points were still being hashed out.

Moreover, when it comes to “regular” order in describing how Baptists actually constituted baptized believers into a church, it involves requesting and receiving letters for that purpose, and it involves a counsel which actually supervises and by vote declares them to be a church:

The Pastors and delegates meet them at the time and place appointed, organize an ecclesiastical counsel, and then proceed to enquire into all the circumstances connected with the origin of the enterprise, and examine the certificates of church standing of those who propose to unite in forming a new church, and of dismission from the churches to whom they respectfully belong.....The counsel then examine their articles of faith and covenant, and if all is satisfactory, they express, by vote, their readiness to publicly recognize this company of disciples as a regular church of Christ....When they have thus publicly signified their united deliberate assent, the formative union and constituting act is completed by which they become a true church of Christ. The church and counsel then unite in prayer to God, that the act may be ratified in heaven, and that the presence of Christ, their only head, may be with them.....A regular proceeding like this is needful because in ordinary cases the persons wishing to form themselves into a new church are already members of an existing

church, which have a right to watch over them till they have been regularly dismissed to some regularly constituted church. – William Crowell, **The Church Member's Manual**, Boston, 1847 “Manner of forming a church” pp. 181,182

What the reader should find significant is that Crowell uses the term “regular” and “regularly” as the consistent expression when characterizing this whole procedure of customary public church constitution. This is precisely how the term “regular” in the phrase “regular church order” is designed to convey.

Also, it should be noted that he demands that baptized believers are still under the authority of their church “*till*” they have been regularly dismissed to some regularly constituted church. Their dismissal is described in the form of letters given by their church for that very purpose. Hence, the church in a called business meeting is authorizing their members to meet for that very purpose. They remain under the authority of their church “*till*” they are brought into covenant union with “*some regularly constituted church.*”

Crowell described what “regular church order” is, and how it was practiced in constitution of churches prior to the formation of “Landmarkism” as a system of doctrine.

J.M. Carroll and the Record of Daniel Parker in Texas

Bro. Settlemoir infers that I abused the quotation by J.M. Carroll concerning the report by Daniel Parker to the church authorizing him to constitute churches. He infers that church authority being granted was merely to “assist” whatever group of people he ran into that requested help.

My quote followed the record of the church business meeting that authorized Parker. The record of the business meeting consisted of three points of agreement. Bro. Settlemoir quotes only the second point and then tells his readers what he thinks they meant.

*When one reads the whole account, as indicated in the adjacent column, the church expressly stated that this authority which it was granting was only to **assist** in constituting churches and ordaining officers! – J. C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 113*

However, if he would have quoted the third point of agreement, their real meaning would be self-evident. The third point reads as follows:

3rd, agreed, That as the scattered situation of the members of Regular Baptist Faith and order in Texas, are such, that in the Common and more proper course of order, cannot reasonably be attended to in constituting Churches, etc., and believing that Church authority is indispensable in all such work Therefore, Elders Daniel Parker and Garrison Greenwood, are hereby authorized by authority of this church Either or both of them to constitute Churches under or on the regular Baptist Faith and order, ordain Preachers and deacons to their several works, calling to their assistance all the helps in counsel, in their reach, acting particularly in all their works, and Report to this Church, all and whatever work they may perform under

this authority from time to time, as Circumstances may permit and require. – J.M. Carroll, **A History of Texas Baptists**, Baptist History Collection, Ver. 1.0 pp. 66-67 – emphasis mine

My quote in GCC which is the object of Bro. Settlemoir's criticism immediately followed after the above words, as Carroll then gives Parker's report to the authorizing church:

*Elder Daniel Parker, Reported, That on the seventeenth day of September 1837, **He exercised the authority vested in him by this Church in Constituting a Church**....- Ibid. p. 67 – Emphasis mine*

Nothing could be clearer than the words “*believing that Church authority is indispensable in all such work*” and “*He exercised the authority vested in by this church in constituting a church.*” If we use this exact language we are accused by Bro. Settlemoir that we believe in EMDA but if this church uses it, Bro. Settlemoir denies they believe in EMDA. They spelled out exactly what they meant and that is precisely why Bro. Settlemoir skipped over the third point of agreement.

The error and misunderstanding of what they said is on the part of Bro. Settlemoir. He simply does not understand what they meant by the word “assist.” Carroll explains the nature of this “assist” in regard to the mother church:

*And yet the only thing done by the church as a church was to **give permission and authority** to the Pastor and other members **to do the work.** **No other sort of assistance was rendered.** – Ibid., p. 129 – Emphasis mine.*

The church assisted Parker in constituting churches exactly as Parker assisted baptized believers in being constituted – “*permission and authority*”.

They are not forcing these believers to become a church. They are not usurping church authority; as such have no church authority to usurp until after they are organized. Parker is not participating in

the covenant vote to become a church. They are providing the authority for the constitution meeting to occur, and they are directing it. Once the church is organized they continue to “assist” by making themselves available to help ordain elders and deacons. That is how they “assist” in church constitution and it is clear from reading the whole business meeting record and his report.

If these churches believed Direct Authority, such language would have never been uttered, especially the words:

“Believing that Church authority is indispensable in all such work”

However, Carroll tells us again in regard to the organization of Hopewell Baptist Church:

*Hopewell church – organized September 17, 1837 **by Daniel Parker on the authority of Pilgrim Church** – Ibid, p. 127 – Emphasis mine*

Sometime later, Hopewell Baptist church had some trouble with Union Baptist Church pastored by Elder Bryant of the Separate Baptist order. The mother church of Hopewell Baptist church wrote them a letter telling them that they did not believe Union Baptist church was scripturally organized and the first reason they gave was:

*First, because they were organized by an **unauthorized** presbytery. – Ibid. p. 128 – Emphasis mine*

They clearly believed and practiced church authority in organizing churches! Throughout this history, Carroll consistently attributes the organization of churches to church authorized ministry. Hopewell Baptist church when ordaining a man and sending him forth stated:

*he is hereby **authorized** to exercise himself in the **several parts** of the ministerial function. – Ibid, p. 132*

By “*several parts*” they had reference to the three aspects of the Great Commission. They were not transferring authority to him but exercising church authority through this ordained member.

J.H. Grime – Baptist Historian/Editor 1851-1941

John Harvey Grime was a Baptist minister/author/editor who wrote over 30 books. His *History of Middle Tennessee Baptists* was approved by the Baptist Associations in Middle Tennessee.

He was thirty years of age when J.R. Graves wrote *Old Landmarkism, What is It?* He was over fifty when he wrote *History of the Middle Tennessee Baptists*.

The very language that Bro. Settlemoir condemns as EMDA (Essential Mother Daughter Authorization = ACC) language is used profusely by Bro. Grime throughout his history of the Middle Tennessee Baptists.

He repeatedly speaks of mother/daughter relationships between the authorizing church and the church being constituted under the authority of that mother church. He repeatedly speaks of churches being constituted under and/or by a mother church.

This EMDA/ACC language did not offend the Associations of the Middle Tennessee Baptists, as they not only approved of his history of them, but chose him to represent them on several occasions.

Here are some samples of the way he spoke of church constitutions in Middle Tennessee:

“The church of Christ on Station Camp Creek in Sumner County under the watch care of William Phipps holding the doctrines of original sin, eternal election, particular calling, final perseverance, baptism by immersion and a general judgment, being met in conference the third Saturday, in January 1800, on motion Brother James Hollis and his wife Margaret, are dismissed from our watch care, as orderly members when joined to another church of our order.

Signed by CLIFTON ALLEN”

*The above is an exact copy of the letter and from its contents it will be seen that it was given by this same church **under whose authority Dixon's Creek Church was constituted.** It was written hardly two months before Dixon's Creek Church was constituted. – J. H. Grime, **History of the Middle Tennessee Baptists**, Nashville, TN, 1902, pp. 355-356 – Emphasis mine*

by the church under whose authority they were constituted (p. 1).....under the authority of the regular Baptist Church, as organized after the model of the gospel. (p. 22)...This church is an offspring of the Knob Church (p. 50)....this mother church (p. 51)....This church is evidently the mother of Round Lick (p. 54)....This old church is an offspring...etc.

There can be no question that Bro. Grime believed in Authorized Church Constitution in direct line from the first church in Jerusalem as we have his own words:

*Any church which does not connect with the apostolic churches, and have Christ as its head, has no right to claim to be a church of Christ. **To make a church legitimate, and its ordinances valid, there must be authority coming in regular line from God without any contamination from Rome, either directly or indirectly.** J.H. Grime, **Catechism of Ecclesiastical History**, Appendix II - electronic copy*

These words “*authority coming in regular line*” joined with his specific applied language “*the church under whose authority they were constituted*” makes it crystal clear what Grimes meant.

More significantly, he was not an isolated case among these Baptists. He was selected by the New Salem Baptist Association and considered by them to be an eminent authority and representative of their Association:

In the spring of 1899 the Ministers and Deacons meeting of New Salem Association, while in session at Cedar Creek

Church, appointed a committee to memorialize Salem and New Salem Associations on the question of a History of the Baptists of this section. The committee from sickness and other causes failed to do so. In the spring of 1900 at Grant Buena Vista Church another like committee consisting of Elders TJ Eastes, JJ Carr and JH Grime, was appointed. In the fall of 1900 the matter was presented to both bodies, and a joint committee appointed by the two Associations to get up a History and put it in permanent form. That committee in connection with a mass meeting of brethren held at Round Lick Church in January 1901, asked this author to prepare said History. This was concurred in by Enon and Wiseman Associations and Deacon JM Williams was appointed to collect material for said work. – Ibid., Preface.

Moreover, this history was approved by representatives of all three Baptist Associations in Middle Tennessee. The Salem Baptist Association clerk made this remark concerning Bro. Grime:

Brother Grime, my yoke fellow in Gospel Bonds, has rendered the Baptist denomination a valuable service in collecting, and putting into book form, the organization and history of an Association which contains denominational records and events which should not be lost. I know of no man better qualified for the work than he. Years of diligent search, while living in the territory with an eye to the importance of preserving valuable denominational information, eminently fit him for the authorship of a book, which will be read with thrilling interest. Ibid. Introduction

It is clear from reading this history of these three associations in Tennessee that the normal mode of constitution of churches was under the supervision of mother churches and by appointed councils composed of ordained representatives. Of course, this is self-evident in almost all American Baptist histories.

These were strict Landmark Baptists according to Bro. Grime:

***They have been Landmark Baptists in the strictest sense of the term.** A few quotations taken from the minutes from time to time, will give an idea of the doctrinal cast of this people.*

In the minutes of 1850 we have the following:

“Resolved, That the churches be advised to receive none but those who have been BAPTIZED on a profession of their faith in Christ, by a legal administrator; and that we esteem legal only such as act under the authority of the regular Baptist Church, as organized after the model of the gospel.”

In the minutes of 1844 AD we have the following:

“WHEREAS, The Freedom Association has proposed a correspondence with us; resolved, therefore, that we send a friendly letter and delegates to inform them that we are willing to correspond with them, provided they will correct the error of one of their churches, for receiving members into their fellowship who were immersed by unauthorized administrators”

It might be remarked for the benefit of those who would brand us as, “Gravesites,” that this record was made before JR Graves: ever appeared before the public as editor. All honor to JR Graves, but he was simply a Baptist, such as he found when he came upon the stage.

These were strict Landmark Baptists before Dr. Graves formulated Landmarkism and they believed and practiced Authorized Church Constitution. They chose Bro. Grime to represent them and write their history.

Jesse Mercer and The Georgia Baptist Association

Jesse Mercer clearly stated that any church which is out of succession between the apostolic churches and present day churches is not a true church:

Our reasons therefore for rejecting baptism by immersion, when administered by Pedobaptists ministers is that they are connected with churches clearly out of the Apostolic succession, and therefore clearly out of the apostolic commission. – Jesse Mercer, **A History of the Georgia Baptist Association**, p. 126 – The Baptist History Collection, Ver. 1.0 - emphasis mine

That all churches and ministers, who originate since the apostles, and not successively to them, are not in gospel order; and therefore cannot be acknowledged as such. – Ibid, p.126

Mercer regarded the Great Commission (“Apostolic commission”) as the *modus operandi* for church succession rather than Direct Authority. He called this mode of succession “gospel order” simply because the gospel is the first step in the order found in the Great Commission.

Amusingly, Bro. Settlemoir responds to these quotes in my book by saying:

There is not even any direct scriptural authority for such an organization as an association. The church on the other hand, receives its power and authority directly from Christ.
- J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 132

I say “amusingly” because Mercer was not speaking about the succession of an “association” but of “churches.” Bro. Settlemoir simply could not respond to this statement by Mercer and so tried to

change the subject from “churches” to “associations.” Bro. Settlemoir goes on to quote Charles D. Mallary instead of Mercer. But even Mallary says that a church must be constituted according to “*rules and faith of the gospel*” which again is a reference to Matthew 28:19-20 or “*regular gospel order*” which falls under church administration rather than non-church administration by two or three baptized believers.

No one disputes that “*Church authority is from Christ, as Head and king alone*” but Mercer goes on to say:

But the commission of the Apostles, the matter, manner and majesty are which is enough to make a saint triumph, angel rejoice, and a devil tremble, caps the whole, Matthew 28:19-20 – Ibid. p. 125 – emphasis mine

Mercer believed that authority was administered through the Great Commission “ye” in regard to the “*matter and manner*” and “*caps the whole*.” Just previous to those words he said,

John....maintains an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles till the world shall end. – Ibid. p. 125

Nothing can be plainer than that Mercer believed the Great Commission contained the “*matter and manner*” through which Christ authorized to maintain an “*uninterrupted succession*” of churches till the end of the age.

No one can reasonably deny that Mercer believed in organic church succession through administration of the Great Commission. No one can reasonably deny he called that “*gospel order*.”

However, do DA advocates embrace organic church succession through the church administration of the Great Commission? No! They reject organic church succession. They don’t even believe most of the cases of baptism in Acts 8-18 were administered under church authority or administration of the Great Commission, but believe they were ministerial actions administered under Direct Authority from God.

In 1795 the following questions and answers occurred within the Georgia Baptist Association minutes:

1. *“What number of members is sufficient to constitute a church?”*

Answer: Any number containing the several officers of a church, and sufficient to carry on discipline according to the 18th of Matthew.

2. *“In what situation are those members to be, in order to their constitution?”*

Answer: They shall be so situated as not to be within the bounds of another church, except by mutual consent.

3. *“By whom are they to be constituted”*

Answer: By at least one regularly ordained minister, and other able helps from churches in good standing. – Ibid., pp. 83-84 – The Baptist History Collection, Ver. 1.0

At the very minimum this demonstrates their practice, and defines what they meant by “gospel order.” This also defines how they understood Matthew 18:20. This clearly repudiates the doctrine of Direct Authority among Georgia Baptists, as early as 1795.

The Testimony of Dr. Roy Mason

It was my great pleasure to get personally acquainted with Bro. Mason before his passing. We exchanged books. He and his wife loved my book, “*Baptist Women Exalted*” and I loved his books.

Dr. Mason was a graduate of **The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** in Louisville, Kentucky. He took classes under Dr. A.T. Robertson.

Dr. Mason wrote one of the classic books on Baptist Church History entitled, “*The Church that Jesus Built*” which was widely received among Landmark Baptists within and without the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was well respected among Landmark Baptists and considered an authority in Baptist history. He served as a Forum writer in *The Baptist Examiner* from 1975 to 1978 while Bro. Milburn Cockrell was its editor.

During that time he answered questions directly about church authority in the constitution of new churches. When he was directly asked:

Must a church be established on the consent and authority of another church, as the mother church, or is this only tradition or custom?

Bro. Mason answered:

I certainly think so. In New Testament times there was a definite link between churches. For instance, in Acts 13 we read about how the Holy Spirit designated Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries, but note that the church at Antioch also designated them and ordained them for this work. So they went out thoroughly authorized by that church. Converts were made and baptized (See Acts 14:23) and churches were formed. All of this done under the authority of the Antioch Church, and to this church report was made when the missionary journey was over (Acts 14:27)

When he was directly asked:

If we cannot trace a linkage of linked-chain of churches back to the Lord, can we hold to and require a linked chain of baptisms? And can one who has been Scripturally baptized then go out, baptize and establish new churches without specific designated church authority?

Bro. Mason answered:

Historical evidence suggests a linkage of true churches clear back to Christ. The burden of proof is on the person who denies that there were such a linked chain. Personally, I don't have to have overwhelming historical evidence of this to enable me to believe in perpetuity of Baptist Churches. I have the definite promise of Christ (Matthew 16:18), that His church will never go out of existence....

The church I belong to can be traced back for many years in a chain of orderly succession, and I believe that if I had the complete history of it, that history would take me clear back to the days of

*To throw away the need of church authority; to make baptism personal and not a church ordinance; to assert that anybody and everybody that takes a notion, may start a church on purely individual initiative, is to introduce a state of ecclesiastical chaos that can benefit no one except his Satanic Majesty - Quoted by Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, 2nd Edition, (Published by Berea Baptist Church, Mantachie, MS 2003) pp.59,60,61*

No wonder Bro. Settlemoir tried his best to cast some kind of doubt upon Bro. Mason's testimony, as Bro. Mason paints Bro. Settlemoir's doctrine of Direct Authority as only a "benefit" to "Satanic Majesty."

Bro. Settlemoir makes the "suggestion" that Roy Mason may have changed from a Direct Authority position to an Authorized Church Constitution position around 1955. The implication is that

Bro. Mason departed from DA truth, and embraced what Bro. Settlemoir claims to be the false doctrine of Authorized Church Constitution. What evidence does Bro. Settlemoir provide for this smear campaign “*suggestion*”? Nothing but his own undocumented pure speculation!

This shows the absolute desperation of Bro. Settlemoir, as well as his complete refusal to consider or deal with historical evidences objectively.

The Testimony of Dr. Rosco Brong

Dr. Rosco Brong was Dean of Lexington Baptist College in Lexington Kentucky from 1954-1979. There was no greater defender of Landmarkism in the 20th century than Bro. Brong. I attended Lexington Baptist College between 1974 and 1978. Bro. Brong and I were good friends. He not only wrote the introduction to my very first book, but critiqued it, and made some very valuable suggestions.

Bro. Brong believed in church authority, and that the authority of a true church was not derived directly from Christ, but was derived from Christ through “*succession from that first church*” and I quote:

Of course the only kind of church that can administer baptism is an organized church. And if the baptism is to be scriptural the church administering the ordinance must be the kind instituted by our Lord, deriving its authority by succession from that first church. – Rosco Brong, **The Complete Score of Rosco Brong’s Short Sermons**, p. 72

Bro. Settlemoir assumes from the testimony of one of Bro. Brong’s students, rather than from Brother Brong’s own voluminous writings, that he believed in the doctrine of Direct Authority. He did not. Bro. Brong’s writings provide a complete repudiation of the very interpretations of scripture used by Direct Authority advocates to defend their view.

1. Matthew 18:18-20

He did not believe that Matthew 18:20 was the basis for church organization. Instead he believed it was speaking of an already organized church:

Faith Savior, Matthew 18:18-20.

Jesus was speaking here to his disciples as church members, as is obvious from verse 17. Professed disciples with no church connection could not obey His instructions here given and so could have no claim on related promises.

But if we are members of the kind of church that Jesus had organized and was here speaking to, we can be sure that he will be as faithful in keeping His promises as He was in giving instructions.....

Loving Approach, 20

Jesus did not condition the promise of His presence in His church upon a big crowd or a fine meeting house. The only condition is that at least two or three members meet in His name: that is, under His authority, subject to His will, with a view to His glory. When we so come together, we have a right to claim and recognize His presence in our midst, whether our church be large or small. – Rosco Brong, Rosco Brong’s Sunday School Commentary, Volume 1, Lesson 197.

2. Acts 8-11

Neither did Bro. Brong believe the disputed cases of baptism in Acts 8-11 were administered by Direct Authority, but rather they were administered under God, from a gospel church. Responding to those who interpret these scriptures exactly as Direct Authority advocates do, he said:

*Some disputants have tried to build an argument on the fact that inspired history in Acts does not give details of church procedure in connection with recorded baptisms. So they assume that at least some of these baptisms were administered by individual disciples without church authority.....It is just as easy, and much more honoring to Christ and His body the church, to assume that all baptisms recorded in Acts with divine approval were performed with church authority, explicit or implicit, as to assume Philip or Ananias, for instance, acted without such authority (Acts 8:38; 9:10-18) just because the details are not recounted in Scripture – Roscoe Brong, **The Complete Score of Rosco Brong’s Short Sermons**, p. 328*

Bro. Brong's interpretations of Matthew 18:20 and the baptisms in Acts 8-11 are a complete repudiation of Direct Authority interpretations of these scriptures.

Moreover, Bro. Brong believed in historical continuity of Baptist churches from the first church in Jerusalem. He believed it on the basis of the Biblical principle of reproduction after its own kind, regardless if it had historical records to prove it or not:

We have no more need of validating the existence of one of Christ's churches by tracing its ancestry through human records back to the New Testament times than I have of validating my own existence by tracing my ancestry through genealogical records to Adam.

*I am persuaded by God's word, and need no further proof, that as I bear the likeness of my first father Adam, I am therefore his descendant, and no product of evolution from apes or other beasts. **So with a church:** if it is of the New Testament kind, it is no accident or freak of nature, and no product of evolution or "evolvment." It is the kind of church because Jesus promised to preserve His church and to be with it to the end of the age. Human genealogies and church histories may be interesting and valuable records and studies, but absence or loss of records cannot nullify the facts of life. – Roscoe Brong, **The Complete Score of Rosco Brong's Short Sermons**, p. 259 – Emphasis mine*

The principle of reproduction after its own kind demands organic connection through a mother/father source of origin.

However, does not the doctrine of evolution begin without mother or father? Would not a human being coming into existence without a mother be contrary to "*the facts of life*"? Isn't this exactly what the doctrine of Direct Authority demands – birth of a church without any mother church?

Recorded history often reveals more of historians' prejudices than of actual events, and the history of Christianity has been often written mostly by the enemies of

Baptists. Even so, there is historical evidence for the continued existence of what would now be called Baptist churches from the days when Jesus was on earth in the flesh down to the present time. This evidence is not beyond dispute, but it is more than sufficient if we are willing to believe the promises of God's word.

*My purpose here is to show from the Bible, APART FROM ALL HISTORICAL EVIDENCE, that we must believe in Baptist church perpetuity if we believe that God's Word is true. – Rosco Brong, **The Complete Score of Rosco Brong's Short Sermons**, p. 30 – Emphasis mine*

Bro. Brong was a competent Greek scholar. His exegesis of Matthew 28:19-20 corresponds with my own exegesis of that text. His exegetical applications of that text correspond with my applications of that text (See Sunday School Lessons 91,407, and 554).

*Subordinate authority may be explicit, implicit, or assumed. Both explicitly and implicitly Jesus committed to His church the responsibility of making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all His commandments. (Matthew 28:18-20) Attempts by other persons to exercise this authority are assumption based on presumption. – Rosco Brong, **The Complete Score of Rosco Brong's Short Sermons**, p. 328*

In other words, Bro. Brong believed a group of people must first be organized into a church before they can claim to be a church or claim the authority of a church. You cannot usurp church authority before a people become a church. Direct Authority advocates claim that two or three baptized believers prior to entering into a declared covenant agreement have church authority,(which itself is usurpation of church authority) and that church authority is usurped, if they are submitting to any existing church authority while being organized.

Even the quote from Bro. Presley is proof that Bro. Brong did not believe in Direct Authority as the rule, but only as a rare exception dictated by special rare circumstances:

....he told us, on more than one occasion, that there are circumstances where baptized believers can self-organize and form a legitimate church, even though this was not the preferred or optional arrangement. – Rick Presley, quoted by J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 32 – Emphasis mine

However, this is not the view expressed anywhere in Bro. Brong's voluminous writings on the very scriptures that Direct Authority advocates depend on for their theory. Bro. Brong and I were friends and at no time did I ever hear such an opinion expressed by Bro. Brong while I was in college or the years afterwards.

However, if Bro. Presley heard Bro. Brong correctly, it is obvious that Bro. Brong did not believe such "circumstances" should be regarded as "regular church order" but were special and rare circumstances. Bro. Brong was an historian and realized there were some rare cases where this did occur, but were not regarded as "regular church order."

If Bro. Brong's writings are any indicator of what he really believed, then, he cannot possibly be recognized as an advocate of Direct Authority. Bro. Brong repudiates the very interpretations of scripture used by Direct Authority advocates to sustain their position.

CHAPTER THREE

The Logical Defense of Authorized Church Constitution

I begin the logical defense of Authorized Church Constitution with the historic definition of Landmarkism. The historic definition of Landmarkism is based upon the presupposition that the existence of the church precedes the administration of the Great Commission. Furthermore, it is based upon the precise logical order expressed in Matthew 28:19-20.

William Cathcart lived at the same time as did the three great defenders of Landmarkism (J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton and James Pendleton), and was a Landmarker himself.

In his “Baptist Encyclopedia” under “Landmarkism” he gives the following definition of “Landmarkism.

*The doctrine of Landmarkism is that baptism and church membership precede the preaching of the gospel, even as they precede communion at the Lord's Table. The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church; that as “a visible church is a congregation of baptized believers,” etc., it follows that no Pedobaptist organization is a church in the Scriptural sense of the term, and that therefore Scriptural authority to preach cannot proceed from such an organization. Hence the non-recognition of Pedobaptist ministers, who are not interfered with, but simply let alone. – William Cathcart, **Baptist Encyclopedia** (Landmarkism) 1881*

Bro. Settlemoir comments on this definition in his first book (LUF):

Cathcart gives this biographical information concerning the unidentified author of this article: “The following sketch was written at the editor's request by one of the ablest Baptist ministers in this country. His account of the

opinions of all Landmarkers is entirely reliable.” There can be no question to the validity of this definition. – J.C. Settlemoir, **Landmarkism Under Fire**, p. 9 – Emphasis mine

Many believe that this definition was actually given to him by Dr. James Pendleton.

My position is that, according to the gospel, authority to preach [and do other ecclesiastical duties] must, under God emanate from a visible church of Christ. Hence, members of a visible church alone are eligible to do the work of the ministry; – J.M. Pendleton, **An Old Landmark Reset**, p. 310

However, one thing is certain. The whole point of this definition is to prove that “*Scriptural authority*” for the administration of the Great Commission and all that it entails “*emanates under God from a gospel church.*” Cathcart says this is “*the argument*” of Landmarkism.

According to this historical definition of Landmarkism, “Direct Authority” churches are not consistent Landmarkers. Indeed, they are anti-Landmarkers, as they consistently interpret those very things included under the Great Commission in Acts 8-18, as ministerial actions under “Direct Authority” from God, rather than “***under God from a gospel church.***” Therefore, such churches formed by unauthorized church baptism, is even condemned by their own position and practice, making their theory inconsistent with their interpretation of Acts 8-11.

Just look at their consistent interpretations of these very chapters in the book of Acts. Look at Bro. Settlemoir’s exposition of Acts 13:1-4 and Matthew 28:19-20. Their expositions are clear repudiations that ministerial preaching and baptism as recorded in Acts 8-18 were administered “***under God from a gospel church,***” but

are rather interpreted as ministerial actions under **Direct Authority** from God.⁷

Let us examine Cathcart's definition very carefully phrase by phrase. Cathcart says that

“The doctrine of Landmarkism is that baptism and church membership precede the preaching of the gospel, even as they precede communion at the Lord's Table.”

This is precisely the very same argument presented by Thomas Patient in 1654.

*It is clear that the Ordinance of the Supper is committed to a Church, yea, **a ministerial assembly gathered according to Christ's commission**, Matthew 28:19-20.*

They are interpreting Matthew 28:20 to include the observance of the Lord's Supper by no other baptized believers than existing church members. Therefore, their argument is that church administration of Matthew 28:19-20 is authority to bring baptized believers into a covenant observing assembly.

This is confirmed by Acts 2:41 where being “*added unto them*” precedes the same observations by church members in Acts 2:42. The argument is that the church is both the administrator and the termination point of the Great Commission. This is authority to bring baptized believers into church order.

There can be no doubt that they believed scriptural authority to administer the Great Commission emanates “***under God, from a gospel church***” and not by Direct Authority.

Indeed, the foremost representative of Landmarkism when speaking directly about who is authorized to administer the Great Commission says:

⁷ In Bro. Settlemoir's first book on pages 40-42 he lists many of these passages as examples of “Direct Authority” instead of Church Authorized actions – LUF, pp. 40-42

“If the church alone was commissionedthen it is certain that no other organization has the right.....to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer its ordinances and organize churches.” – J. R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What is it?** (Emphasis mine)

The argument of Dr. Graves and all Landmark Baptists was, that the Great Commission belongs exclusively to the New Testament Church, and therefore, all these listed aspects fall under the administrative authority of the New Testament Church.

Notice the particular things listed by Dr. Graves, which the church authorized when commissioning “*ministers to go forth.*”

They were commissioned to go forth to:

1. Preach the gospel
2. Administer gospel ordinances
3. Organize churches

Why organize churches? Because they realized that the Great Commission had both its authorized origin, as well as its ultimate destination with the church.

Dr. Graves was not suggesting this was “preacher” or “ministerial” authority, but it was church authority administered through its own church authorized representatives. Indeed, Dr. Graves says this explicitly in dealing with the proper administrator of baptism:

*...for it is the church that administers the rite and not the officer, per se, he is the hand, the servant of the church. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper were not entrusted to the ministry to administer to whomsoever they deemed qualified, but to the churches to be observed by them “as they were delivered unto them” (1 Cor. Xi. 2) – J.R. Graves, **The Christian Act of Baptism**, Chap. VII,*

“The Proper Administrator of Baptism” (Texarkana, Ark – Tex 1928)

Therefore, according to Landmarkism, everything included in the Great Commission comes under the administrative authority of the New Testament congregation, as Cathcart goes on to say,

“The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church.” – Emphasis mine

From very early recorded history of Particular Baptists in England, this understanding of Matthew 28:19-20 as church authority to ordain and send out missionaries, and to gather a church that repeats this same process reproducing after its own kind is clearly stated:

Answer: 1 That it is in **the power of the church** to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that **this person sent forth** to the world and **GATHERING CHURCHES**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, Ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1654)** p. 56 – Emphasis mine.

Therefore, what Graves admitted was included in the authority of the Church when commissioning its authorized representatives to carry out Matthew 28:19-20 - “*organize churches*” - is what early English Baptists also said was included in church authority when sending out church representatives to carry out the Great Commission (“*gathering churches*”). Is this accidental?

Therefore, by historical definition, “Landmarkism” is the belief and practices that only the church is authorized to select, ordain, and commission representatives to administer all aspects of Matthew 28:19-20. Not only did Dr. Graves, Thomas Patient and early English Particular Baptists give witness to this fact, but the Holy

Spirit commands the church at Antioch to “separate” Saul and Barnabas unto the ministry God had already called them to do. The Greek term translated “*separate*” can mean to “*appoint, to set apart for a purpose.*” In addition to the Lord’s calling, there is this calling by the church that sets them apart for this purpose.

Moreover, proponents of Direct Authority repudiate that it is only the church which has authority to administer baptism, as they repudiate most baptisms in Acts 8-18 were administered under church authority. Instead, they insist by their interpretations of Acts 8-18 that such baptisms were administered under Direct Authority from God apart from church authority, thus openly denying that such “***authority that emanates under God from a gospel church.***”

So who is really guilty of teaching “Episcopal” or “ministerial” authority in the books of Matthew and Acts? So, who is really repudiating Landmarkism at the very core of its historical definition?

The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church; - Cathcart

Other Logical Problems for Direct Authority Advocates

1. The Indisputable Grammatical Repudiation of Direct Authority. The Great Commission “ye” repudiates the Direct Authority theory, as “ye” is placed between Christ and “them” as the authorized horizontal instrumental administrator of this commission. That fact cannot be disputed.

Neither can it be disputed that the historical definition of Landmarkism, which states, that scriptural authority to administer the Great Commission emanates “*under God, from a gospel church.*”

Therefore, it is illogical and irrational to suggest that the authorized horizontal instrumental administrative “ye” in Matthew 28:19 is not the same “you” in Matthew 28:20 that is authorized to bring baptized believers into a covenant observing assembly. This is authority to bring baptized believers into church constitution.

Direct Authority is not only unbiblical, but irrational. It is unbiblical because it is based upon misinterpretations of scripture (Matthew 18:17; Acts 8-11). It is irrational because by its own definition it repudiates the historical definition of Landmarkism, and it repudiates the grammatical placement of “ye” in the Great Commission between Christ and baptized believers (“them”).

2. The Irrational basis for Direct Authority. According to Direct Authority advocates, in order for baptism to be scripturally administered, it cannot be administered under “Direct Authority” by “self-administration” or by unbaptized administrators, but must be administered under church authority by church authorized administrators. Indeed, they believe only those baptized under church authority can be constituted into a church under “Direct Authority.”

So, according to their logic, Direct Authority is insufficient to authorize an unbaptized man, such as John Smythe, to administer self-baptism, but is entirely sufficient to constitute the proper administrator of baptism, such as the church?

So, Direct Authority is insufficient for the constitution of the lesser ordinance but is entirely sufficient to constitute *the administrator* of that lesser ordinance.

So according to their logic, the lesser ordinance of baptism is repudiated if it is administered under the very same authority (Direct Authority) they demand is sufficient to constitute the greater authorized administrator of baptism – the church. So what is regarded as insufficient for the lesser baptism (Direct Authority) is regarded sufficient for greater church constitution (Direct Authority).

However, according to Jesus, the entire content and extent of the Great Commission is equally under church authority, which also includes assimilating baptized believers into observing congregations of Christ (Matthew 28:20 with Acts 2:41 “were added unto them”).

3. The Strain Between the Universal, Invisible Church Interpretation of Matthew 18:20 and Regular Church Order: Consider Bro. Settlemoir’s position that submission by baptized believers to any kind of external authority (elder or ecclesiastical counsels, church directed, elder directed) in church constitution would:

- a. Usurp the autonomy of the new church
- b. Builds one church upon another
- c. Delegates authority it cannot delegate
- d. Contradicts self-gathering of churches
- e. Papal in nature
- f. Ultimately usurp the authority of Jesus Christ
- g. Episcopal-stratification

If but one of these things be true, then we should find constitution only by strict self-organization without any connection with, or toleration of, or submission to such things (ecclesiastical counsels, presbytery, church directed, elder directed constitutions). Indeed they should be pronounced as evil practices by churches in all

Baptist Church Manuals and theology books, and avoided by all who would seek to be constituted as a church.

However, every single solitary Baptist Church Manual in their day defined the “customary” or “regular” practice of church constitution to be under the direction of such counsels, churches or ministers.

Bro. Settlemoir quotes William Crowell’s Manual with approval and yet Crowell says that such counsels were a necessity for regular church order:

*A regular proceeding like this is needful because in ordinary cases the persons wishing to form themselves into a new church are already members of an existing church, which have a right to watch over them till they have been regularly dismissed to some regularly constituted church. – William Crowell, **The Church Member’s Manual**, Boston, 1847 “Manner of forming a church” p. 182 – Emphasis mine*

The authority of this counsel is clearly expressed by Crowell in these significant words:

When they have thus publicly signified their united deliberate assent, the formative union and constituting act is completed by which they become a true church of Christ. The church and counsel then unite in prayer to God, that the act may be ratified in heaven, and that the presence of Christ, their only head, may be with them – Ibid. p. 182 – Emphasis mine

Brown’s Church Manual confirms that such baptized believers are still under the authority of their church until they are received into a constituted church.

*It was voted, that we cordially grant them letters of dismissal for that purpose, and when regularly constituted as a church, shall cease to regard them as under our watch care. – J. Newton Brown, **A Baptist Church Manual**, Judson Press, thirty-sixth printing, 1981 – Emphasis mine*

This was without doubt the common practice among both Landmarkers and non-Landmark Baptists alike in that day. So common in fact, that the universal, invisible church advocate Crowell (due to his universal church interpretation of Matthew 18:20) had to remind his readers right in the middle of describing this procedure that the procedure was not necessary, and yet at the same time claim it was “*needful*” for regular church order thus demonstrating the strain between his big church view with regular church order.

This was so common in fact, that J.R. Graves had to reinstruct inquirers that church constitution did not need such helps but at the same time claim they were necessary to remove confusion and confirm a new church was Biblically sound.

An inquirer asks:

Is it indispensably necessary, in the constitution of a Baptist Church of Christ, to have two or more ordained ministers present to form a presbytery, in order to make such a constitution legal or Scriptural?

In the following response to this question, you will note that Dr. Graves first gives his theoretical interpretation of Scripture, but then affirms what Baptists actually practiced in the mission field, and what he believes to be the most “sound” route for this inquirer to follow:

[J.R. Graves responded] *We find no law in our code touching the forms necessary to constitute a church; nor do we find in the New Testament any example or intimation that a presbytery of ordained ministers ever acted in constituting a church. Christ says the most about it, and it is but little: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them.” When a company of baptized disciples, if only two or three, associate themselves as a church, covenanting with each other to be governed by the authority of Christ as indicated in the New Testament, they are, to all intents and purposes, a gospel church under the constitution. A foreign missionary and his wife would thus constitute the essentials of a church; but, as we always should send forth*

by twos, two missionaries and their wives could constitute themselves into a church without a presbytery. [Graves. **The Baptist**. 1877, Month and date not legible but on page 661, probably Aug to Sept.; Electronic page 275]. Provided by J.C. Settlemoir by e-mail to the Author. – Emphasis mine

However, the two male missionaries do constitute a presbytery, as both are not only ordained men, but they were sent out by church authority to preach, baptize and organize.

So common in fact was this practice imbedded within Baptist thought, that Graves (according to his interpretation of Matthew 18:20) had to constantly correct inquirers who assumed the need for an ordained man or church called council. So the very evidence that Bro. Settlemoir claims for his position, is also a testimony of how common the customary practice permeated Baptist thinking.

However, after immediately stating his theoretical view and what missionaries practiced he went on to say this:

But as churches now are associated, it is a matter of proper caution, and for a presbytery to be called to see that the organization, at the very out start, is sound and orderly. An ounce of preventative is worth a pound of cure. [Graves. **The Baptist**. 1877. Month and date not legible but on page 661, probably Aug to Sept.; Electronic page 275]. Provided by J.C. Settlemoir by e-mail to the Author. – Emphasis mine

Dr. Graves was wise enough to know that if his theoretical position was in fact followed as the regular procedure it would open Pandora's Box to all kinds of confusion and practical problems.

Graves interpretation of Matthew 18:20, if followed, allows for any two or three disgruntled members to declare themselves a church. It opens the door to overthrow valid church discipline. In principle it promotes disorder and confusion, and God is not the author of such an interpretation that promotes disorder, chaos and confusion.

Moreover, even more shocking is the fact that Direct Authority Baptists confess that, they too still follow the customary procedure

when constituting churches rather than avoiding the very thing they condemn as mere tradition. This is absolute proof that the customary procedure was and is “regular” church order and that strict self-constitution apart from any connection with an existing church or its authorized representatives is the rare exception to the rule.

4. Organic Baptist Church Succession was embraced by Some Landmarkers during this developmental Stage:

You will never hear a Direct Authority advocate teach Baptist Perpetuity using such expressions as “*chain link*” or “*reproduction after its own kind*” or “*church succession*.” You will never hear them teach Baptist Perpetuity using the illustration the Biblical principle of Adam and how every human is connected to Adam. Yet these were the most common expressions used by most early defenders of Landmarkism.

Indeed, Direct Authority advocates repudiate the use and expression of “*chain link church succession*.” They mock the use of this expression.

However, the universal, invisible church advocate Hiscox describes Landmarkers in his day that believed in organic church succession:

Some Baptists have been courageous enough, and indiscreet to assert that an unbroken succession of visible organized congregations of believers similar to their own, can be proven to have existed from the Apostles till now – Edward Thurston Hiscox, **The New Directory for Baptist Churches**, American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia; 1894, p. 34

However, just a few paragraphs further Hiscox shows the influence of the universal, invisible church theory in his thinking:

Strictly speaking, perpetuity is predicted of the Invisible Church only – Ibid. p. 35

Indeed, the first Landmark writer to reject the use of such expressions as “*chain*” and “*succession*” in his defense of Baptist history was W.A. Jarrell. In contrast, J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton, D.B. Ray, J.H. Grime, J.B. Moody freely employed all these expressions to describe their position of Baptist Church history. True defenders of historic and Biblical Landmarkism still freely use these same expressions today.

The fact that Jarrell (church/kingdom advocate) felt a need to deny “*church succession*” proves it had its advocates among Landmark Baptists of his day. Significantly, Jarrell also held to Grave’s view of the Kingdom which necessitated the Direct Authority view.

Out of the developmental stages of Landmarkism came six variant views of Baptist History among Baptists in general. The advocates of four of these views believed their position was more consistent with the system of Landmarkism and/or the historical data.

a. Spiritual kinship view – succession of truth by various unconnected groups in history.

b. Church Perpetuity – succession of loosely overlapping groups holding Baptist essentials.

c. Baptismal succession – Baptists linked historically through the administrator of baptism.

d. Church Succession – succession of churches by reproduction after their own kind.

e. 1641 theory – English Separatist origin of Baptists.

f. Reformation Anabaptist Origin -

In regard to church constitution, these various positions are divided into two camps. There are those who embrace the Direct Authority view (Spiritual kinship, Church Perpetuity, 1641 theory, Reformation Anabaptist origin) and those who embrace constitution

“under God, from a gospel church” consistent with the historic definition of “Landmarkism.”

The W.A. Jarrell type incorporates the big church interpretation of Matthew 18:20 with a limited application of Landmarkism that totally excludes such expressions as “*succession*” “*reproduction after its own kind*” or “*chain link*.” It is a hybrid with inherent inconsistencies.

Suppose you reject “*mother church authority*.” Let’s say you reject it for the following reasons:

- (1) You say, that the historic definition of church constitution is – strictly by self- constitution.
- (2) You say that mother church authority, submission to church councils, and church called presbyteries to supervise the constitution violates the independency and authority of any church being constituted.
- (3) You say that organic church succession is unbiblical and cannot be historically proven.
- (4) You say that mother church authority delegates church authority and builds one church upon another.
- (5) You say you could list many more reasons. Therefore, you conclude that a group of properly baptized persons can constitute themselves into a church apart from any other church, and apart from any kind of ordained ministry, any place and any time they wish.

Now, you have made your case, you have stated what you believed to be true have you not? Now, to be consistent, would it not be reasonable that you practice exactly what you have stated you believe? If you believe what you say, then you should have nothing to do with any practice of church constitution that involves supervision by church councils, presbyteries, or formal constitution services. Well, this is exactly what Dr. T.T. Eaton told those people who rejected organic church succession:

If Baptist succession be the bad thing some brethren say, then certainly it ought to be given up. There should be no more of it. – J. B. Moody, **My Church**

However, if they were to be consistent and give it up, what would that include, and how would that have to occur among the Baptists of Dr. Eaton's day? What would it take to make an end of it according to Eaton? He goes on to explain what that would entail:

*When a new church is organized, it should have **no sort of connection** with other churches, or relations to them. Let churches be organized anywhere, anyhow, by anybody. Just let people be believers, and let them baptize each other and start a church. This does away with Baptist succession. And if it be the bad thing that is charged, it ought to be done away with at the earliest moment. Those who oppose Baptist Succession have no logical ground to stand on in organizing a church out of material furnished by other churches, and with those baptized by regularly ordained Baptist ministers. – J.B. Moody, **My Church** – Emphasis mine*

Eaton understood that the actual mechanics of Baptist Church Succession was inherent not only in the Great Commission, but in their actual practice of it, in how they constituted new churches.

According to Eaton, the first thing they had to do was to deny any kind of “connection” between newly constituted churches and previous existent ones at the point of constitution. Of course, this statement has no bearing on those who believe in “direct authority” does it? He would not have to say this to those who embrace Direct Authority would he?

When Eaton said, “*Let churches be organized anywhere, anyhow, by anybody*” he was asserting what he knew none of them practiced. When he said, “*just let people be believers, and let them baptize each other and start a church*” he was asserting what is consistent with the Direct Authority doctrine, but what he knew was the very opposite of what they all practiced. He did this to show the inconsistency between what they were denying and what they were actually practicing.

By saying, “**When** a new church is organized, it should have **no sort of connection** with other churches” he was referring to church councils, presbyteries, letters of dismissal, and church authority. The only way to deny Baptist Church Succession is to take the church completely out of the Great Commission, and therefore, completely out of the work of constituting churches. In other words, Eaton is telling them they must change the general practice among Baptists in order to be consistent with this denial of succession. The general practice of church constitution was according to “regular church order” which included all these things.

Conclusion: It is both Biblical and consistent with logic that the same horizontal instrumental administrator authorized to preach the gospel and baptize believers in Matthew 28:19 (“ye”), is the very same one authorized to bring baptized believers (“them”) into church relationship in Matthew 28:20! It is both Biblical and consistent with logic that the authority established in Matthew 28:19-20 to administer the Great Commission “*under God, from a gospel church*” is the very principle practiced in Acts 8-18. Direct Authority is not only unbiblical but irrational.

Did Constitution of the First Church Precede the Ordained Ministry?

*The church existed before there were ordained men, (Matthew 5:1; 10:1-4; Mark 3:14; Acts 1:21-26; Acts 14:23) – J.C. Settlemoir, **Direct Authority: Biblical & Historical**, p. 78*

Bro. Settlemoir attempts to deny any kind of church authority in constitution of churches by arguing that the first church at Jerusalem was constituted before any ordained ministry existed. Therefore, according to His argument, churches can be constituted without any preexisting church or without its ordained representatives.

First, his assertion is in direct contradiction to his own position that New Testament churches cannot be constituted apart from previous church authorized baptized materials.

Second, his assertion is in direct contradiction to the historical definition of “Landmarkism” as presented by Pendleton and Cathcart. This historical definition demands that church existence precedes ordaining and sending forth men to preach.

“The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church.” – Emphasis mine

What about his argument that no ordained men assisted in forming the first church at Jerusalem? However, according to the same rule of logic one could equally argue that unbaptized persons can administer baptism because no baptized person preceded John or baptized John before he administered baptism to others. Indeed, no preexisting church administered baptism for John or Jesus. Therefore, Bro. Settlemoir’s argument justifies baptism by unbaptized believers, as much as it does organization without any preexisting church authority. However, there are a few problems with his argument.

1. God has not given the constitution pattern of the first church by an unbaptized administrator to be our rule to follow. God gives the

pattern in Matthew 28:19-30 to be our rule to follow. It is upon this truth that the definition of Landmarkism is established.

2. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were ordained and commissioned by God before entering upon their ministry.

3. According to the logic being pursued by Bro. Settlemoir, unbaptized men directly ordained by God apart from any existing church are the pattern for administration of baptism and constitution of churches.

4. The baptized believers of John did not self-constitute, or organize themselves into any church. The first church was gathered by Jesus Christ as an ordained man, and first Pastor from baptized believers prepared by John the Baptist.

5. The constitution of the first church was unique to the institution of the church, just as an unbaptized administrator was unique to the origin of baptism. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were unique in their relationship to the church and cannot be replicated by anyone after them or used as an example contrary to the Great Commission administration given to the Church. Moreover, neither is given as the pattern for administering the ordinances or constituting churches. What is given as the authorized pattern is Matthew 28:19-20 administered by an existing church.

6. The Great Commission is designed to be a natural reproductive cycle with divine presence and the promise of success “*all the days until the end of the age.*”

However, Bro. Settlemoir’s view of church constitution is more consistent with self-administration of baptism than with the Great Commission or the historical definition of Landmarkism that “***scriptural authority emanates under God from a gospel church.***”

Bro. Settlemoir’s interpretation of baptismal administrations in Acts 8-18 repudiates church authority behind the administration of these baptisms, and thus repudiates his own system of belief, which requires church authorized baptism, as the requisite for church

constitution. It also repudiates the historical definition of Landmarkism that demands the church is the only authorized administrator of baptism.

Conclusion: Our pattern and mission is defined by Matthew 28:19-20. That pattern and model has the prerequisite of an already existent church and ministry.

How Should We Deal with Direct Authority “Landmark” Baptists?

First, one must understand the seriousness of this error.

1. The Usurpation of Christ’s Authority

If Christ has committed Matthew 28:19-20 to the church alone, as the historical definition of Landmarkism says, “*scriptural authority emanates under God, from a gospel church*,” then to claim that non-church entities composed of baptized believers can administer Matthew 28:20 among themselves is not only to usurp church authority, but ultimately usurp the authority of Jesus Christ. The doctrine and practice of Direct Authority usurps Christ’s authority, as Christ delegates the administration of the complete commission to the church alone.

2. Usurps the Biblical Checks and Balances

Secondly, Jesus has set in place a system of checks and balances to protect preserve and perpetuate the church as the pillar and ground of the truth. The doctrine of Direct Authority attacks this very system of checks and balances.

This system of checks and balances involves a particular type of church government with its administrative use of the keys of the kingdom.

The keys of the kingdom are summarized in the Great Commission command to “*make disciples*.” It involves the instructing, correcting and if necessary discipline of baptized believers in order to protect, preserve and perpetuate the church as the pillar and ground of the truth.

In regard to the nature of church government, Christ has entrusted the administrative power of the keys of the kingdom to the congregation as a whole, which includes its leadership (Matthew 18:17-18; Acts 15:22). However, as a counter balance, the Lord has entrusted the ordained office with the authority to minister the Word to the church. Therefore, the proper instruction of how to administer

the keys of the kingdom has been entrusted to the ordained ministry. Thus, a check and balance has been put in place to protect, preserve and perpetuate the church through the proper administration of the keys.

Matthew 28:20 is the transition point between the former custodian of the keys and its future custodian. The doctrine of Direct Authority removes this transition point from under the watch care of the former custodian of the keys and places it in the hands of any two or three baptized believers regardless of their doctrine and practice or disciplinary relationship with the church of Christ.

This transition point is the most vital point in the whole commission, as it qualifies and approves the character of the custodian who assumes the authority of the keys.

The Direct Authority doctrine allows for any kind of custodian to assume the keys, regardless of moral or doctrinal fitness, just as long as they are baptized believers (Acts 20:29-30). This doctrine throws off the custodian oversight of the transition of the keys, thus making it possible for apostates to claim the power of the keys, and assume the role of a church of Christ.

However, the system of checks and balances instituted by Christ over the administration of the Great Commission is designed to prevent the assumption of these keys by just any two or three baptized believers. It is designed to protect this very transition point, and thus protect, preserve and perpetuate the church as the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

Matthew 28:20 is not committed into the hands of “*them*” or merely two or three baptized believers but into the hands of the former custodian who was qualified by its former custodian and so forth. This custodial watch over the transition point of the keys protects, preserves and perpetuates the church as the “*pillar and ground of the truth.*”

The DA position opens the Pandora box for error and confusion, and is the fundamental premise upon which every false church and denomination is founded. It gives ecclesiastical license to those about whom Paul warned:

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. – Acts 20:30

The doctrine of Direct Authority is the fundamental and necessary doctrine embraced and assumed by every apostasy in history.

In essence, it is the complete usurpation of the authority that belongs to Christ through administration by the church. It wholly usurps church authority.

3. The Response by Landmark Churches

How do sound churches deal with those who teach and practice Direct Authority?

To be fair, these churches cannot all be lumped into one category. There are some who in spite of what they teach were formed according to regular church order. Hence, these churches actually practice church authorized constitution in spite of their theological repudiation of it. Therefore, they must be regarded as regular constituted churches in error on that specific point of ecclesiology.

Moreover, their view demands organic church succession connected through baptism. This is undeniable as their view states a new church cannot be constituted apart from materials prepared by a previous existing New Testament church, which in turn was constituted out of the very same materials, etc.

Therefore, this is nothing but organic church succession where churches are directly connected with each other through baptism. Their difference from other Landmark Baptists is that they shift the basis for authorization from the Lord's Church to individuals and the ordinance of baptism

They cannot deny organic church succession without also denying what they demand is necessary for their own church constitution.

Unfortunately, some have been constituted due to rebellion against authorized church discipline, and so, the whole line of churches originating with this unbiblical origin must be dealt with just as one would deal with any other false denomination that originated as a rebellion against the truth (Acts 20:30).

Moreover, those who were not organized according to "*regular church order*" but actually were self-organized without having been

dismissed from a preexisting regularly organized Baptist church for that purpose, or were not organized by an ordained representative of a regularly organized Landmark Baptist Church ought not to be recognized as true churches of Christ any more than non-Landmark churches. Their ordinations and ordinances are null and void.

Those irregular churches with their ministers who embrace this error should not be invited to our conferences or fellowshiped with on a church basis.

To recognize as valid churches, meaning, those which were organized in rebellion to church authority (church discipline; regular church order) is to partake of their sins and oppose valid church authority. They had no authority from heaven to bind what they did, and so it is not bound in heaven, and therefore we should not recognize it.

Finally, it ultimately repudiates church authority in administration of the Great Commission, as it transfers Matthew 28:20 from the authority of the church to the authority of a non-church entity. Matthew 28:20 is authority to assimilate baptized believers into a ministerial instructive observing assembly covenanted together to observe all things Christ commanded.

The doctrine of Direct Authority essentially overthrows the whole system of checks and balances. It removes the custodianship over the Great Commission.

Conclusion: Ultimately the difference between the positions of Direct Authority and Church authorized constitution, is the administration of Matthew 28:20 by a non-church entity versus the church. The historical definition of Landmarkism affirms the latter but denies the former, as it states “*scriptural authority emanates under God from a gospel church.*”

Summary Conclusion

The whole thesis of this book is founded upon three primary premises.

1. The first premise is Scriptural.

Matthew 28:20 is authority to constitute baptized believers into church order whether it is by (1) receiving them into an existing church, (2) forming them into a new church by its ordained representative, (3) dismissing them by letter to join another church or (4) dismissing them for the purpose to be constituted into a new church. All four are expressions of church authorized administration of Matthew 28:20.

Matthew 28:19-20 is the basis for the historical definition of Landmarkism and especially the phrase “*scriptural authority emanates under God from a gospel church.*”

Matthew 28:19-20 is the historical basis for how Baptists defined church constitution by *regular church order* or *gospel church order*.

Matthew 28:19-20 inherently demands organic church succession by reproduction after its own kind from the point it was committed to the church, as an institution, until the end of the age. The divine promise guarantees that such reproduction will be successful “*all the days until the end of Age.*”

Both the historic definition of Landmarkism and the historic practice of *regular church order* agree that Matthew 28:19-20 was given exclusively to the New Testament congregation as an institution.

Therefore, Matthew 28:19-20 is positive law for church authority to reproduce after its own kind. Reproduction is impossible apart from actual constitution of a church. Matthew 28:20 is church authority for constitution of baptized believers into regular church order.

Our opponents may ridicule this interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20 and its contextual based application, however, let them demonstrate that my application either contradicts or extends beyond

the exegetical basis of this text. Let them demonstrate my exposition is based on improper exegesis of the text. If they cannot overthrow the exposition, they cannot overthrow the application, because the application is merely an extension of the exposition.

Finally, and most significantly, the Direct Authority position is founded squarely upon two erroneous misinterpretations of scripture. It is founded squarely upon the universal, invisible church misinterpretation of Matthew 18:20. It is founded upon misapplied passages concerning the kingdom of God (Daniel 2:43-44; John 3:3-5; etc.).

2. The second premise is historical.

What Baptists defined and characterized as *regular church order* or *gospel order* can be historically traced to the precise order commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. This order begins with the gospel and concludes with baptized believers brought into church membership. This is authorized church constitution.

Requesting letters of dismissal from a church, and granting such letters by a church, is the practice of authorized church constitution.

The submission to church councils, church directions and/or ordained representatives for constitution is the practice of authorized church constitution.

It is exceedingly difficult to find any constitution of Baptist churches in history that is not characterized by the above practices of authorized church constitution.

Those rare exceptions to this rule are treated as rare exceptions by historians. However, many of these exceptions may be pure assumptions simply due to insufficient historical evidence.

There are several clear historical evidences of the belief and practice of Authorized Church Constitution.

3. The third premise is logical.

The position of Direct Authority is completely inconsistent with Matthew 28:19-20 and the historic definition of Landmarkism.

This can be easily seen by the interpretative model followed by Direct Authority advocates in dealing with Acts 8-18. Their

interpretation of Acts 8-18, in regard to baptism, directly contradicts their own position that the only proper material for church constitution is material prepared under the authority of an existing church. However, their interpretation of baptism in Acts 8-18 denies such baptism was church related or authorized.

While the historical definition of Landmarkism is founded upon a strict church administration of Matthew 28:19-20 in contrast to a ministerial administration directly under God, the Direct Authority advocates interpret Matthew 28:19-20 administrations found in Acts 8-18, as ministerial administrations under Direct Authority, rather than ministerial administrations under Church Authority. Hence, the Direct Authority model is pro-episcopal/ministerial administration or the Reformed Baptist position.

Furthermore, it is a self-contradictory position in another area of consideration. They claim that a preexisting church and its authorized administration of baptism are essential to obtain the proper materials for church constitution, but are not essential for church constitution. Therefore, what they claim is essential (church authority) for the lesser ordinance (baptism) is non-essential for the constitution of the administrator of the ordinance (church).

Another inconsistency or self-contradiction is their use of historical sources that defended self-baptism and the universal invisible church theory. Those Baptists in history who were consistent advocates of Direct Authority (John Smyth, Roger Williams, William H. Whitsitt, etc.) were universal, invisible advocates and self-administered baptism advocates.

Bro. Settlemoir represents the inconsistent position of Direct Authority or the result of a mixture between big church interpretations of Scripture with Landmarkism.

Dr. Graves' was not consistent between what he believed *could* be theoretically practiced, in keeping with his errant interpretation of Matthew 18:20 (based upon his kingdom/church concept) versus what he believed *should* be practiced, in keeping with what he acknowledged "*is sound and orderly*" and was the normal practice of his day:

But as churches now are associated, *it is a matter of proper caution, and for a presbytery to be called, to see*

that the organization at the very out start, is sound and orderly. An ounce of preventative is worth a pound of cure. [Graves. **The Baptist**. 1877. Month and date not legible but on page 661, probably Aug to Sept.; Electronic page 275]. Provided by J.C. Settlemoir by e-mail to the Author. – Emphasis mine

However, Bro. Settlemoir's whole thesis is that Authorized Church Constitution was never the rule, but the rare exception, and is not "sound" but is tradition that transgresses the commandments of God. More importantly, Bro. Settlemoir argues that such a practice usurps not merely the authority of the new church, but ultimately usurps the authority of Jesus Christ. So, not only our position must be regarded as the worst of heresies by consistent Direct Authority advocates, but the customary practice recognized in all Baptist Church manuals must be equally considered as the worst of heresies, because it actually acknowledges and approves of placing these councils in a supervisory position over church constitution.

However, our position is irrefutable if three concessions are admitted. (1) Admission that Matthew 28:19-20 falls solely under the authority of the New Testament church, and (2) admission that Matthew 28:20 is authority to bring baptized believers into a covenant relationship with others and with Christ for the purpose of observing all things commanded, and therefore, (3) admission that the historic use of "regular gospel order" is based upon the order found in Matthew 28:19-20.

So our challenge to Direct Authority advocates concerning Matthew 28:19-20 is the very same challenge issued by Dr. J.R. Graves concerning the very same text:

Has Christ given a law for the constitution of His church and the administration of its services, or left it to float upon every shifting tide of opinion?.....Is it not contained in the commission? If not, Where?..... - James Robinson Graves, Jacob Ditzler. **Graves-Ditzler, Or, Great Carrollton Debate**, "The Lord's Supper" The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1876, pp. 815, 816 – Emphasis mine

Our position is the very same position provided in the definition of what historical Landmarkism really is:

“The argument is that Scriptural authority to preach emanates, under God, from a gospel church” – Cathcart

Our interpretation of the authority given in Matthew 28:19-20 is the very same interpretation of the earliest English Baptists from whence came the Philadelphia Association of Baptists in America.

*Answer: 1 That it is in the power of the church to ordain and send forth a minister into the world, Acts 13:2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth to the world and **GATHERING CHURCHES**, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 – B.R. White, Ed., **Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. (Association Records of the West Country, 1654)** p. 56 – Emphasis mine*

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