

# Case Study: Baptist Polity among the Seven Asian Churches

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## Introduction

The Scriptures teach that the Lord's churches are autonomous, self-governing immersionist assemblies with the magnanimous purpose of carrying out His Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). Their autonomy is based on several lines of biblical evidence. The Bible gives both precept in declaration and practice in demonstration of the self-governing polity of New Testament (NT) assemblies. For instance, the Lord Jesus Christ declared the precept of self-government when He asserted that His assemblies had divine authority to practice their own respective church-discipline (Mt. 18:15-17). He laid out the order in church discipline so that the trespass could be handled privately, semi-privately, and then corporately, expounding this third step by saying, "*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*" (v. 17). No one from outside the NT assembly may step in and help in handling internal self-discipline! The demonstration of the practice of self-government is replete in the *Book of Acts*. For instance, the Jerusalem church held a business meeting and appointed the replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26). The Jerusalem church received three thousand converts into membership via baptism on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-47). The Jerusalem church appointed her first and own group of deacons (Acts 6:1-6). The Antioch church sent out her first and own missionary team for Gentile missions (Acts 13:1-4). The Jerusalem church decided on her own response to the problem of works salvation among the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-29). The Ephesian church elders understood that they had the exclusive privilege to feed their church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, as one reads the NT Scriptures, it becomes apparent that the immersionist assemblies (i.e., Baptist churches) are autonomous assemblies. Since "polity" refers to the form of government that an entity practices, "Baptist polity" refers to the government of Baptist churches.

Nevertheless, although Baptists have the biblical exemplar to follow, they have quite often opted for Protestant polity which weakens their churches. Baptist polity now seems to include confused notions about the offices and authority of pastors and deacons, the legitimacy of parachurch organizations, the place of women in the assembly, business meetings, etc. This confusion has come as Baptists have embraced the movement of "fundamentalism." Fundamentalism was a Protestant movement in the 1920's in America to counter the Modernist (anti-supernatural, liberal) movement sweeping through Protestant denominations. This Protestant movement claimed a non-biblical moniker to denote that the battle lines over the Bible with Modernists were a handful of "fundamental" doctrines (most lists had five to twelve fundamentals) and everything else was non-essential to the fight. The fundamentals included important doctrines such as the inspiration of the Bible, the deity, miracles and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the pre-millenarian Second Coming. Everything else seemed to be non-essential, including the doctrines of the mode of baptism, the practice of the Lord's Supper, church polity, the underlying Greek texts and consequent translations, etc. Later, when Baptists joined with Fundamentalism, the lists grew to include some Baptist doctrine. Nevertheless, Protestant Fundamentalism weakened the Baptist movement by bringing into Baptist churches the non-biblical perspective that not everything in the Bible is essential for sanctification, and thus

Fundamental Baptist churches have become “protestantized.” Although Fundamental Baptists may claim that “fundamentalist” means “Bible believer,” that is not what the historical name means obviously, and receiving the whole counsel of God is not what is practiced because the “lists of accepted fundamentals” are paramount over the Scripture itself. Furthermore, the common doctrine within Fundamentalism that unites Protestants and Baptists is that of the universal, invisible, church/mystical Body of Christ heresy.<sup>1</sup> Fundamentalism teaches that there is the “greater cause of Christ” beyond the local assembly, and the ecclesiology that fuels Fundamentalism is the mystical Body of Christ<sup>2</sup> teaching that is at the core of all Protestants and of all Fundamental Baptists!

Because of the influence of Protestantism on independent Baptist churches, primarily through Fundamentalism, it behooves the Lord’s assemblies to examine Scripture for their respective church polity. Of course, the entire NT is directed toward Christ’s assemblies, but certainly the Lord’s last revelation to the seven churches of Asia merits careful scrutiny. The following is an effort to glean teachings concerning church polity as an authoritative standard for Baptist Polity among independent Baptist churches.

### Summary of the Seven Churches (Rev. 2-3)

#### I. They are not Church Ages.

Contrary to popular interpretation, the seven churches in Rev. 2-3 do not represent “seven church ages.”<sup>3</sup> Several biblical reasons refute this unwarranted sentiment. 1) The Lord gave the inspired interpretation that the seven candlesticks “*are the seven churches,*” period! 2) The “seven church ages” are the ages of the Roman Catholic Church and then of Protestantism (i.e., the universal, visible church), evincing an unbiblical ecclesiology. 3) The “seven church ages” view undermines the imminent return of Christ, since He apparently could not return until the ages are played out. To counter this objection by superimposing the “ages” on the first century causes other problems for this view, such as why name them “ages”? 4) The lack of general agreement among Protestant dispensationalists on when the various ages begin and end defeats this view.

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<sup>1</sup>The teaching that the Spirit baptizes all believers into the mystical Body of Christ at salvation cannot be sustained scripturally (I Cor. 12:13 notwithstanding). Spirit Baptism as predicted by John the Baptist and fulfilled exclusively in Acts was temporary. If there is no mystical Body of Christ, there is no need or mechanism for placement into a non-existent entity. Without any contemporary Spirit Baptism and no scriptural teaching of a mystical Church, there is no divinely authorized ecclesiological movement outside of the visible assembly to carry out the Great Commission, and alas, no “greater cause of Christ” movement of Fundamentalism. The Kingdom of God is universal (Jn. 3:3, 5) and invisible (Lk. 17:20), but it is in no sense the NT church.

<sup>2</sup>Entrance into the mystical Body comes through the alleged but fallacious notion that the Spirit baptizes all believers, simultaneously at their respective salvation, into Christ’s mystical Body. This feckless view rejects John’s prediction of Spirit Baptism (Mt. 3:11), Luke’s revelation fulfillment (Acts 2; 8; 10-11; and 19), Paul’s call for unity in the ordinances (I Cor. 12:13), and the divine declaration of “*one baptism*” (Eph. 4:5).

<sup>3</sup>Seiss fallaciously states, saying, “‘the seven Churches’ are the *one Holy Catholic Church*, in all the amplitude and completeness of its being and history, from the time of the vision to the end...These seven Churches, then, besides being literal historical Churches, stand for the entire Christian body, in all periods of its history...Then followed the *Pergamite* period, in which true faith more and more disappeared from view, and clericalism gradually formed itself into a system, and the Church united with the world, and Babylon began to rear itself aloft.” J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ with Revised Text* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible, 1865), pp. 137, 142-143.

## II. They were seven visible NT Assemblies.

His audience was “*the seven churches*”<sup>4</sup> (ταῖς ἑπτὰ<sup>5</sup> ἐκκλησίαις)<sup>6</sup> in Asia.<sup>7</sup> The last message of the Lord Jesus Christ was to His NT immersionist assemblies or Baptist churches (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). Of the twenty-three times the Lord Himself employed ἐκκλησία,<sup>8</sup> He referred to it as a visible assembly of baptized believers in all references. In Matthew’s Gospel, He promised to build up His assembly (Mt. 16:18),<sup>9</sup> which He did with church discipline (Mt. 18:16-18), and addressed this movement of NT churches with the Ἀποκάλυψις (cf. 2:1 *et al*).<sup>10</sup> In *Revelation*, the Lord Jesus referred to either individual churches or to the seven churches twenty times (cf. Rev. 1:4, 11, 20[2x]; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 22:16).<sup>11</sup>

Some characteristics of these churches are the following: 1) they were seven literal churches in Asia Minor, forming a semi-circle facing Patmos; 2) they were Baptist churches, being the product of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20); and 3) they were typical churches representing NT churches in any age,<sup>12</sup> either remaining in or on the verge of losing “candlestick” status.

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<sup>4</sup>This expression occurs four times in *Revelation* (1:4, 11, and 20[2x]).

<sup>5</sup>*Hepta* (“seven”) occurs 85x in the NT with 52x in the Ἀποκάλυψις.

<sup>6</sup>The *Tyndale* translation (1534) gave the sixteenth century rendering of ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις as “the .vii. congregacions.” Luther (1545) rendered the audience as *den sieben Gemeinden*. Cf. *septem ecclesiis* in the Latin *Vulgate*.

<sup>7</sup>“Asia” (Ἀσία) occurs 19x and refers to most of modern day Turkey. The name comes from the Hebrew word for “fire” (עֵשׂ = ‘ash) since it was the fiery orb that came up every morning from the east of Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup>The word ἐκκλησία occurs 115x in the TR. The CT omits it in Acts 2:47.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas M. Strouse, *I Will Build My Church: The Doctrine and History of the Baptists* (Newington, CT: EBP, 2008), pp. 28-38.

<sup>10</sup>If Christ believed in or taught about some sort of universal, invisible, mystical church/Body, now would have been the time to address it. He did not address “the saints of Asia” or “the Church of Asia” for good reason. His NT Scripture addresses His immersionist assemblies. If there were a mystical Body of Christ, why did He never refer to it? Did He build something He never addressed? Did He address something He never built? If there is no mystical church/Body, it is blasphemy to teach that Christ is the “Head” over something that does not exist! Even Henry Morris recognizes this basic ecclesiological truth, stating, “Christ’s message is to be conveyed to and through local churches, with real, visible members and activities, not to an invisible illusory body called ‘the church universal.’” Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publ., Inc., 1983), p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>John MacArthur is typical of theologians who interject their eisegesis into the Ἀποκάλυψις with imprecise and unbiblical sentiments, such as the following for his definition of “Church.” He states, “God’s people, the universal body of believers as well as the local group of believers. The church is the ‘body of Christ’ (Rom. 12:5). This metaphor depicts the church not as an organization but as a living organism composed of mutually related and interdependent parts.” John MacArthur, *Revelation, the Christian’s Ultimate Victory* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), p. 16. In the fundamentalist camp, David Cloud perpetuates the erroneous “fundamentalist” ecclesiology, stating, “The church of Jesus Christ [*sic*] will not be conquered by the world and will not die. In spite of apostasy and persecution, the Philadelphian church exists in the last days and is Raptured [*sic*]. Compare Matthew 16:18.” David W. Cloud, *Revelation, Advanced Bible Study Series*, (Port Huron, MI: Way of Life Literature, 2007), p. 81; also pp. 199, 221.

<sup>12</sup>This is not to say that John prophesied “seven church ages” to represent 2000 years of “Church” history (i.e., “the Laodicean Church Age”). There is no biblical warrant for this Catholic/Protestant interpretation, as the assignment of a church to a particular age is subjective, and destroys the doctrine of the imminent Return of Christ. This interpretation would have no meaningful benefit to the first century unless the meaning of “age” was extremely short, but then why call it an “age” if all ages could occur in any century?

For the first time, the Lord Jesus Christ declared the audience of His last revelation to Christianity (Rev. 1:4). Unequivocally He addressed seven NT assemblies, representative of the movement He began—the “*my church*” movement (cf. Mt. 16:18). He began to build up His ἐκκλησία in Mt. 16:18, He gave it church discipline in Mt. 18:17-18, and the Great Commission in Mt. 28:19-20, authorizing His ἐκκλησία to convert, baptize,<sup>13</sup> and instruct the world. The Lord Jesus continued with what He began, giving to the movement of the Baptist assembly concluding exhortations and future revelations. It is theologically significant that the word ἐκκλησία does not appear in the Tribulation passages of the *Apocalypse* (chapters 4-19), since the Lord promised that His churches would miss the Tribulation via the Rapture (Rev. 3:10; cf. I Thes. 5:9).

The seven assemblies were churches planted in seven cities in Asia Minor (western modern day Turkey). This apocalyptic letter to the churches probably went in the order of mention (“*Ephesus*” literally “permitted” [18x], “*Smyrna*” literally “myrrh” [2x], “*Pergamos*” literally “height” [2x], “*Thyatira*” literally “odor of affliction” [4x], “*Sardis*” literally “red ones” [3x], “*Philadelphia*” literally “brotherly love” [2x], and “*Laodicea*” literally “justice of the people” [6x]). The cities were in a somewhat semi-circle order with the closest to Patmos being Ephesus, and no doubt the messenger from John would begin with this city, and move north to northeast to east, ending in Laodicea. Each city had its own history and geography, which in some cases seemed to have been the backdrop for various admonitions. The histories of some of the churches are unknown other than what is recorded in *Revelation*.<sup>14</sup>

### III. They were Seven Candlestick/churches headed up by their respective Star/Angel/Pastor.

Having given John the inspired outline of the Ἀποκάλυψις, the Lord Jesus Christ gave him the divine interpretation of “*the mystery*” (τὸ μυστήριον)<sup>15</sup> of the seven stars (v. 16) and the seven golden candlesticks (v. 12). The seer received mysteries two other times in *Revelation*, namely “*the mystery of God*” (10:7) and “*the mystery of the woman*” (17:7, *vide* v. 5). In the current passage, the Lord stated the mystery and then gave His interpretation, using the εἰμί verb εἰσί (“*are*”) to indicate the equivalent truth (“*seven stars*” = “*angels*,” “*seven candlesticks*” = “*seven churches*”). It is noticeable that Christ did not number the “*angels*”<sup>16</sup> as seven<sup>17</sup> and did not use the definite article for them, suggesting that their number and class are not important, but that their office as representatives is

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<sup>13</sup>One should not ignore the biblical fact that the Christian era began with a great deal of Baptist activity (cf. Mt. 3:1-17).

<sup>14</sup>The Lord was not concerned with these churches’ historical pedigree, or who started them and which was their respective “mother church.” He was concerned with their current spiritual and theological status, and dealt with them accordingly. Apparently, the Lord Jesus Christ did not countenance the “Landmark Successionist View” of Baptist history.

<sup>15</sup>The NT writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul) employed μυστήριον 27x, referring to some theological truth hidden until the Lord revealed it, as Paul stated, saying, “*Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints*” (Col. 1:26). Christ used parables to reveal/conceal heavenly mysteries (cf. Mk. 4: 11). The root noun comes from the Greek μύω meaning “to shut the mouth.” The *Vulgate* unwisely translated μυστήριον as *sacramentum* in Eph. 1:9; 3:3; 5:32; I Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:20 and 17:7.

<sup>16</sup>The *KJV* translated ἄγγελος as “*angel*” (179x) and “*messenger*” (7x). The Greek verb root is ἀγγέλλω meaning “to bring a message.”

<sup>17</sup>The Apostle did use the expression “*seven angels*” in nine different verses later in Revelation (8:2, 6; 15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; and 21:9).

important. John employed the singular or plural use of ἄγγελος / ἄγγελοι seventy-six times in *Revelation*, using it symbolically with several different meanings. In the NT, the ἄγγελος is symbolic for a messenger, whether an angel (e.g., Mt. 1:20), a demon (e.g., Mt. 25:41), or a man (Mk. 1:2;<sup>18</sup> Lk. 7:24; 9:52). In the present passage ἄγγελος refers to the human representative (the messenger to the ἐκκλησία in each locale) of the assembly for the following reasons. 1) The Scripture identifies men with the term ἄγγελος (*vide* above). 2) The human representative for the Lord's assembly is the pastor/elder/bishop (cf. I Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7, 17).<sup>19</sup> 3) In what practical way could a heavenly messenger reveal the demands of Christ to His assemblies (Rev. 2-3)? 4) Since the Lord addressed the messenger in masculine singular verbs and pronouns as He admonished every church (cf. 2:1-2 *et al*), in what way would or could a heavenly angel identify with expressions such as “*I know **thy...poverty***” (1:9) or “*be **thou faithful unto death***” (1:10)?<sup>20</sup> 5) In Daniel, the “teachers” (“wise”) are likened unto “stars” according to the marginal rendering of חַמְסַלִּימַי (hammascilym) in the *KJV* (9:3).

These stars (= angels = pastors) were in the Lord's right hand, John recorded. The right hand of God represents His authority, judgment, favor, and protection (cf. v. 16). The Great Shepherd gives divine authority, judgment, favor, and protection to His assembly leader, the shepherd or pastor. Although other Scriptures reveal that the Lord God has believers in His right hand (cf. Ps. 139:10; Isa. 41:10; 49:16), the current promise is a special ecclesiological relationship that no other assembly member has with Christ. As the following passages will reveal (Rev. 2-3), the Lord Jesus Christ holds the star/angel/pastor of the congregation responsible for its doctrine and practice, and condemns or commends the pastor accordingly. The pastor must employ his heavenly authority, using biblical judgment “*for the perfecting of the saints*” (Eph. 4:12), ministering in this favored office (I Tim. 3:1), while experiencing divine protection (cf. I Tim. 5:19).<sup>21</sup>

The seven “golden” (χρυσᾶς)<sup>22</sup> “candlesticks” (λυχνίας) represent the seven churches of Asia (cf. v. 11), the Lord revealed. As the candlestick was the holder for the candle in the ancient world, so

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<sup>18</sup>It is significant that the *Gospel of Mark* (1:1-2) starts off with its first ἄγγελος as the man John the Baptist (cf. Mal. 3:1), preparing the rest of the NT with this possible interpretation.

<sup>19</sup>Leon Morris questions the viability of the “pastor” interpretation, saying, “This would be a good solution except that we do not know whether the churches had bishops or individual pastors as early as this,” Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1979), p. 57. His objection is feckless since the qualifications for bishop were expressed by Paul much earlier in I Tim. 3:1 ff. (*vide* also Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1).

<sup>20</sup>Caird is as convoluted as he is dogmatic in rejecting the “pastor” interpretation, saying, “The angels are not to be identified with bishops or pastors. The Jews had long since become accustomed to the idea that each nation had its angelic representative in heaven, who presided over its fortunes and was held accountable for its misdeeds, and John is simply adapting this familiar notion to a new situation. We must not confuse John's apocalyptic way of thinking with Platonic idealism and suppose that the angel symbolizes the perfect heavenly pattern of which the earthly church is only a shadowy and imperfect reproduction. For John addressed his letters not to the earthly churches but to the angels, and holds them responsible for the faults of the communities they represent,” George B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (NY: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 24. Since the Asian churches were primarily gentile rather than Jewish, it is unlikely that they would have comprehended John's supposed allusion to “national angels.”

<sup>21</sup>It behooves the church member to submit to his/her Spirit-filled pastor who ministers within the parameters of the Scriptures in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did not Paul demand, saying, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you*” (Heb. 13:17).

<sup>22</sup>The adjective “golden” denotes the special value that the local church has to the Lord Jesus Christ. See note on 1:13.

is the assembly the “holder” of Christ (the light) for the dark world.<sup>23</sup> If and when a NT assembly compromises with error and darkness in precept and/or practice, its light becomes dimmer until it ceases to provide any light. The Lord’s glory departed from Israel in Eli’s day (I Sam. 4:21), giving the appropriate name to Phinehas’ son—*I-chabod*<sup>24</sup> (literally “no glory”). The Lord departed from the Solomonic temple immediately prior to the Babylonian overthrow of Jerusalem, which devastation was prompted by apostasy (Ezk. 8:9 ff.; 10:4, 18-19). Likewise, the Lord warned the assemblies of His departure if repentance for sin was not forthcoming (Rev. 2:5). Therefore, the only remedy for theological or practical compromise and resultant apostasy is repentance by the pastor and people.

#### IV. The Lord used a Seven-fold pattern in addressing each Church.

The Lord addressed the angels of churches in seven locations in western Asia Minor. He employed a seven-fold pattern with the following features: 1) greeting, 2) description, 3) acknowledgment, 4) analysis, 5) response, 6) exhortation, and 7) promise. Christ **greeted** each church in the various locales through the angelic representative. He **described** Himself with various attributes. The Lord revealed His **knowledge** of each church’s situation.<sup>25</sup> He gave a spiritual and theological **analysis** of each assembly. The Lord Jesus rendered the expected **response** to the degree of spirituality in each individual church, usually with a warning or commendation. Then He gave an **exhortation** to them with spiritual hearing.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ gave a **promise** to overcomers within each ἐκκλησία. Of the seven churches, four were in danger of losing their candlestick status (Ephesus, Pergamos, Sardis, and Laodicea), one needed to rid herself of heresy (Thyatira), and two received commendation (Smyrna and Philadelphia). The issues and status of each of the churches have relevance to all NT churches in the world at any time in this local church dispensation.

#### V. Outline of Baptist Polity among the Seven Churches.

##### A. Baptist Polity concerning the Pastor.

1. His titles of great prestige (see above)
  - a. Star—bright, shining, important
  - b. Angel—messenger with heaven’s revelation
2. His position of great power
  - a. The “*ecclesiological right hand*” of the Lord
  - b. The right hand signifies several biblical truths.
    - 1) Direction (Dt. 33:2; Isa. 63:12)
    - 2) Authority (Ex. 15:6; Isa. 41:10; Isa. 45:1; Mt. 22:44)
    - 3) Protection (Job 40:14; Ps. 16:8; Ps. 18:35; Ps. 60:5)
    - 4) Blessing (Gen. 48:13-18; Ps. 16:11)

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<sup>23</sup>Vide Ps. 104:2; Rev. 21:23.

<sup>24</sup>The compound Hebrew word אִי-כָבוֹד (*icavod*) has as its components the *aleph* as a negative along with the noun *cavod* (“glory”). The Hebrew *aleph* negative is foundational to the Greek *alpha*-privative (negative).

<sup>25</sup>He employed the expression of His omniscience, “*I know.*”

<sup>26</sup>Cf. “*He that hath an ear.*”

c. No one else has this divinely-given authority in the assembly, not even finance committees, boards, or deacons (who are never mentioned in Rev. 2-3).

1) The Origin of Deacons (Acts 6:1-4)

2) The Role of Deacons

a) They are not leaders (cf. Eph. 4:11)

b) They are not assistant pastors (Acts 20:28)

c) They are to assist with church widows (I Tim. 5:3-16)

3) The number of Deacons (the large church at Jerusalem of 20,000-40,000 members had SEVEN deacons!

3. His responsibility of great performance (“*thy*” [17x]; “*thou*” [32x]; many verbs and imperative are second person singular [e.g. “*thou canst not*—οὐ δύνη])

a. He must repent (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19)

b. He must oversee (I Pet. 5:1-3)

c. He must exhort, teach, and rebuke (II Tim. 4:2)

d. He must evangelize (II Tim. 4:5)

#### B. Baptist Polity Regarding the Responsibility of the People

1. Church members have the responsibility of reading, hearing and keeping all the words of Scripture (Rev. 1:4).

2. Church members have the responsibility of hearing what the Spirit says through the word of God in their respective churches and obeying (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, and 22).

3. Church members have the responsibility to hold the truth (Rev. 2:25; 3:11).

4. Church members have the responsibility to overcome and claim promises to overcomers (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, and 21).

#### C. Baptist Polity Regarding Women in the Church

1. Women are not to be given a platform to express doctrine, practice, experience, or sentiment before the assembly (Rev. 2:20 ff.).

2. Women should not ask public questions in the assembly teaching time (I Tim. 2:11).

3. Women should not teach men the Bible or doctrine in the public assembly (I Tim. 2:12)

4. Women should not be in any public forum speaking/teaching with men present, which would apparently include giving testimony, praying, etc. (I Cor. 14:34-35).

5. A Woman needs to have biblical/theological questions answered by the biblical man in her life (father, or husband, or pastor).

#### D. Baptist Polity Regarding Lording over People

1. Two heresies arose which had the propensity to enslave church members.

a. The “*Nicolaitans*” (τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν) movement. Literally, the compound noun means “people conquerors” (Rev. 2:6).

b. The doctrine of “*Balaam*” (Βαλαάμ) belief system. This compound noun means “lord of the people” (Rev. 2:14).

2. The content of the heresies.

- a. *“The deeds of the Nicolaitans”* (τὰ ἔργα τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν) included similarity with Balaamism by promoting liberty to church members in idolatry and fornication (Rev. 2:14-15).
  - b. *“The doctrine of Balaam”* (τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ) taught idolatry and immorality based on covetousness (Rev. 2:14-15; II Pet. 2:15; Jude 1:11).
3. The reaction to these heresies.
- a. “Nicolaitanism”—repent and receive Christ’s commendation or else be opposed by the Lord and lose candlestick status (Rev. 2:5-6; 16).
  - b. “Balaamism”—repent or else be opposed by the Lord and lose candlestick status (Rev. 2:16).
4. The Application of the heresies.
- a. The watchword for Fundamentalism: *“In Essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love”* (Augustine [AD 354-430]).
  - b. Protestant Fundamentalism and Protestant Baptist Fundamentalism controls Christians by dictating to them which doctrines are fundamental and which are non-essentials through its lists of “fundamentals of the faith” and “non-essentials.” Fundamental Baptists supposedly are to agree to disagree on “non-essentials.”

**VI. Conclusion**—Baptists must derive their doctrine and polity from the NT Scriptures, honoring the office of the star/angel/pastor, encouraging church membership to hear the Spirit through the Scripture, forbidding the public “teaching” ministries of women in the official services of the assembly, and resisting leadership’s efforts “to lord over” the church membership.