

*Distinctive  
Baptist Principles*  
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*CARTER.*



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DISTINCTIVE  
BAPTIST PRINCIPLES:

A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE WESTERN BAPTIST CONVENTION  
OF NORTH CAROLINA, AT ENON CHURCH, TRANSYL-  
VANIA COUNTY, OCTOBER 20TH, 1883.

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BY JOSEPH E. CARTER.

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*"We are His witnesses of these things."*—Acts 5:32.

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## NOTE.

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It is thought best not to encumber these pages with marginal references to chapter and page of such quotations as are made. The author holds himself in readiness and will furnish, if desired, to any candid inquirer, the book and page from which he quotes. Mention of the names of certain religious denominations is made, not to bring them conspicuously or unpleasantly before the reader, but simply to make known the ecclesiastical complexion of those to whom such reference is made.

HENDERSONVILLE, N. C., Oct. 30th, 1883.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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What do we mean by *Distinctive* Baptist Principles? We mean those principles of religious belief which have distinguished Baptists from those of all other ecclesiastical persuasions in the ages past, and which do now distinguish them. But we hear one say that he—and his church he thinks—believes that the “Bible alone is the rule of faith and practice;” another declares that his people believe in “church independency;” another, that he does not believe in infant baptism and that many of his church are fast giving up the practice; and a third asserts that, in this country in particular, all religious denominations are as much in favor of religious liberty as the Baptists themselves. To the first respondent the answer is that *he* may believe in the “Bible alone” as a rule of faith and practice, but, perhaps, if he will investigate he will find that his church does not, and that when the test comes, what is known as “Church Authority” is resorted to, as well

as the Bible, in the matters of the faith and practice of his people. To the other respondents let it be said, the very fact that religious denominations have sprung up in these latter days, who have espoused some of the distinctive principles of Baptists, makes a good showing for the Baptists' side. Still better is it to know that some of them have dropped, now and then, one and another of the old errors against which Baptists have always contended; and better still to believe that the influence of Baptist principles is gradually bringing the world to the truth, and that these principles are, in God's own way and time, destined to conquer the whole earth. Be it known that there were times, in the past, when the principles set forth in these pages were held by no people on earth but the Baptists. Because some of them are *now* held by others, it is no less true that they are *Distinctive Baptist Principles*.

## Distinctive Baptist Principles.

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*We are His witnesses of these things.*—Acts 5:32.

No one should undertake to set forth the faith and practice of Baptists who will not do it in a kind and Christian spirit. Asperity in controversy on religious subjects, rather than closing, generally widens the breach between those who differ on such questions. Whenever a religious teacher undertakes to convince those who are not of his faith, of the truthfulness of his own doctrines, he errs to no little degree when he fails to observe this.

I trust that I am before you, on this occasion, with this spirit. Should I fail in the good intention, it will not be because that good intent is *now* wanting.

Should I be pardoned for expressing my feelings personally in this connection, I will substitute as my own, the words of the great and good Alexander Carson, with which he prefaced his great work on Baptism: "I hold myself as much under the law of God in embracing all the children of God, as in

forming the articles of my creed. My recognition of all Christians, I found upon the authority of Jesus.— To set at naught the weakest of Christ's little ones, I call not illiberal, but unchristian."

While this is true, we must claim our right and privilege of setting forth those views of Scripture truth which have distinguished Baptists from all other denominations of professing Christians in the past ages, and which, to-day, are more or less the lines of separation between our people and those of all the world beside.

#### **I. The Bible Alone the Authority for all Faith and Practice.**

Baptists have been distinguished in all their history as having no creeds, catechisms or decretals which bind them by authority.

Our churches usually have "Articles of Faith," which are simple statements of what they believe the Bible teaches. These, however, have not been put forth by an ecclesiastical authority which is over the churches, or which binds the consciences of its members. Some of our churches have no such "articles," because they find no need for

them, referring, whenever called on, to the New Testament as their rule of faith and practice.

What danger threatens the least departure from this principle? History testifies beyond all doubt and cavil, that, by the use of tradition and adherence to the syllabi of Popes, the decrees of councils and synods, the acts of civil government—when the King is called “defender of the faith,” and such like—the world has been deluged with false doctrines.

In this connection there is something remarkable, that those “Fathers” of the early centuries from whom false teachers so often quote in latter days, were themselves opposed to tradition, and consequently held our views on this particular subject.

*Cyprian*, a Latin Father of the third century, said: “God has testified that we are to do those things that are *written*; whence have you that tradition? If it be in the Gospels or the Epistles, then let us observe it.”

*Cybil*, of the fourth century, said: “It behooveth us not to believe the very least thing of the sacred mysteries of faith without the Holy Scriptures.”

*Jerome*, of the fifth century, declared: "Those things which without the authority and testimony of the Scriptures, men invent of their own heads, as from Apostolic traditions, are smitten of God."

You could not better put the views of the Baptists on this question than, in the language of one of the olden time martyrs, who said: "I had rather follow the *shadow of Christ* than the *body* of all the general councils or doctors since the death of Christ."

This is not the time to refer, more than incidentally, to the great evils which have grown out of a practice, contrary to Baptist principles, upon this subject. It will be enough to refer to the facts that the Jews encumbered the written law of God with their traditions, and filled their land with false doctrines; that since Christ came and fulfilled the written law, the earth has been flooded with the false teachings of tradition, and of the decrees of great ecclesiastical bodies who have assumed authority to declare what are the doctrines of God's Word.

The words of the distinguished William Jay, who was not a Baptist, are very forci-



ble in this connection. He says: "A Jew admits the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be of God, and could you lead him to these only, you might easily convert him to Christianity. But in his case they are surrounded with Talmudical and Rabbinical appendages, the errors, falsehoods, follies and absurdities of which can scarcely be conceived. These render Moses and the Prophets almost inaccessible, or pervert their meaning; and little can be done unless you separate the vile from the precious, and lead them at once to *the* law and *the* testimony. A Papist admits the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament to be divine; and could you contend with him upon this ground only, a victory would be easily obtained. But he admits, along with these, the Apocrypha, tradition, the decrees of councils, and the word of truth is approached, if not through these, yet in full company with them, and can only "speak as they approve. And there are Protestants who invite you into the temple of Revelation, but you must enter leaning on Calvin, or Arminius, or some other interpreter, who is to tell you how the responses of the sacred

oracles are to be taken, for you cannot be trusted alone."

Note this sentence: "Hence articles and creeds and systems are drawn up by fallible men, who have no other sources of information than ourselves, and these are to be taken as including all the faith once delivered to the saints."

It has been a wonder to those who are not Baptists, to know what a united people they have been upon Scripture doctrines in all ages of the world. And also the greatest wonder, that while they have had so many of the plain and unlearned people with them, they have preserved the doctrines of God's Word, and have held it in such purity up to the present day. The question has been asked us: "How can you ascribe this more perfect knowledge of the Word of God to yourselves?" And the answer has been, "Our fathers were, for the most part, plain, unlearned men. Having nowhere else to look, they looked up in humility to the Holy Spirit to teach them the meaning of the Word of God. They had no learned authorities to lead them astray. They min-

gled in no aristocratic circles whose overwhelming public sentiment might crush the first buddings of earnest and honest inquiry. As little children, they took up the Bible, supposing it to mean just what it said, and willing to practice whatever it taught. Thus they arrived at truth which escaped the notice of the learned and the intellectually mighty."

## II. Private Interpretation of the Scriptures.

This is a part of our faith which necessarily grows out of the principle which we have just discussed. And as it involves much which the other question comprehends, we need not dwell at length upon it. Let us be careful to understand what we mean by "private interpretation of the Scriptures." We do not mean that men are at liberty to think of the Bible what they please, and obey or disobey its precepts as they choose. But that each man is bound to use his judgment, and to govern it according to the teaching of the Bible as he understands it. The right to investigate the truth for himself does not carry with it the right to disobey it or to doubt it. God gives

every man the right to interpret his Word for himself, and then to act upon it from an honest conviction. No general church council can come in and interpret it, and dictate it to him.

A cardinal principal with Baptists is, that a man is responsible to God, and to God only, for his faith and practice, and not responsible to Popes or councils, or decrees, or ecclesiastical "standards," or to civil governments. If he errs and mistakes in his understanding of God's Word, there is no power to force or compel him to renounce his errors, or to punish him for not conforming to an established creed, although heretics may and should be excluded from the Churches of Jesus Christ for holding false doctrine.

### III. Religious Liberty.

From the second principle, just announced, grows a third, which has been, and is to-day, in a great measure a distinguishing principle of Baptists—Religious Liberty. Because this foundation principle of Baptist faith was not held by those who were in control of ecclesiastic and civil gov-

ernment, the world has witnessed in the centuries past, and *history has written indelibly upon its pages*, the disastrous effects of the false idea that the cause of religion demands what is known as a union of Church and State.

The Greek, Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopalian, as well as the Roman Catholic, and every other Church organized previous to the eighteenth century, were governed upon the principle that the State governments should by taxation or otherwise, support the church, and should enact laws to punish those who would not adopt the State religion, and should otherwise exercise authority and control with the church. As a striking and illustrious example, witness the celebrated Concordat which was concluded between the great Napoleon and the Pope, in 1801. Some of its provisions were:

“That Bishops shall be named by the First Consul and instituted canonically by the Pope; and that before entering on their functions they shall take an oath of fidelity to the Republic of France; and that Bishops are to nominate the under clergy; but

these nominations shall not take effect until approved by the government.”

Baptists have fought this monstrous error and evil wherever their feet have trodden this earth. Those who are not of them testify that Baptists have been the champions of *Liberty of Conscience*, the boon and boast of the Nineteenth Century.

In all countries and among all people, wherever the civil arm has been raised to cramp the conscience in matters of religion, Baptists have said: “*We are free-born,*” as Paul declared when he asserted his Roman citizenship. They have looked into the faces of kings and parliaments, and responded to the edicts of rulers and councils, with the flames of persecution looking them in the face, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

When the great reformation broke upon the world in the sixteenth century, it did not throw off this terrible scourge. Luther himself scouted the doctrines of religious liberty, at that time announced by the despised Baptists. “Had Baptists then been listened

to," says one of our able thinkers, "the Reformation would have swept all Europe." Freedom of conscience was not accepted by any of the leaders of the Reformed churches. Its only defenders were those persecuted and maligned Baptists.

The first published confession of faith in all ages asserting the right of all men to religious liberty was by the Baptists of England in A. D. 1611.

What Baptists have done and suffered for these principles in America, is told by the history of the Colonial days; by the old jails of Virginia; by the whipping posts of Massachusetts; by the fines and imprisonments of the courts of law; when, like the "*royal people*" from whom they have descended, *they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.*

Gen. Washington, John Locke, Judge Story, Chevalier Bunsen, George Bancroft and a host of others, patriots, statesmen, philosophers and historians have left their record on the pages of history as to this great distinguishing principle of Baptists, and as to their grand achievements for the *soul lib-*



erty of the world. The glory of all this is that while this boon is now so prized over great portions of the earth, and while many other religious denominations are the advocates of it as much as we are, we are free to confess, it is nevertheless the *outgrowth of Baptist principles, and to those principles the world is indebted for its existence to-day.*

#### IV. Church Independency.

No principle has more distinctly marked a difference between Baptists and other persuasions of Christians than that of the independency of the churches.

There can be no such thing as "the Baptist Church of England" or the Baptist Church of America, or of any other nation or country. Baptist *churches* may be any and everywhere, but such a thing as a general church, as is the nature of other Christian denominations, is simply an impossibility with Baptists.

With us each church or congregation is entirely independent of each other, in all that concerns its government. Each church calls its own minister and other officers, receives and dismisses or excludes its own



members, makes its own rules for its government and is a sovereign under Christ as its head throughout.

Our churches, of their own accord, organize into associations, conventions and such like, but these are only for fraternal and missionary purposes.

Such a thing as a Convocation, Council, Synod or Conference *clothed with legislative, judicial or executive powers*, would be an unheard of thing as well as an utter impossibility among Baptists.

Our position on this is based on many teachings of Scripture. We find Jesus in the 18th chapter of Matthew, and Paul in the 5th chapter of 1st Corinthians, laying down the principles upon which the individual church is to act in matters of corrective discipline. In both these instances the *whole* church is the body which is to act, and the body to whom final appeal is to be made.

When the question of the bearing of circumcision upon the converts to Christianity was to be settled, and wise heads were to be consulted, after the apostles and elders came together at Jerusalem with the church to

consider the matter, we are told that the decision was by the "apostles and elders and *the whole church.*" Even here the independent church sent its letter of advice to the *church* in Antioch in connection with the advice and counsel of the apostles and elders.

Paul tells the Romans of the character of a church of Christ when he shows it to be a body made up of many members, putting the prophet, the exhorter and others all on the same level.

There were no bishops or councils or assemblies to govern the church at Corinth, for some of them wanted to follow Paul, some Peter and some Apollos.

The independent church government of the Galatians is seen when the apostle exhorts them to "restore" any who might be "overtaken in a fault" among their membership.

No one then, need be surprised that *Mosheim*—a Lutheran—the celebrated Church historian, speaking of the first century of the Christian Era, should put upon the pages of his standard work the following: "The churches in those early times were entirely independent, none of them being

subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each governed by its own rulers and its own laws; for, though the churches founded by the apostles had this particular deference shown to them, that they were consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no judicial authority—no sort of supremacy—over others, nor the least right to enact laws for them.” Observe how, in another chapter, he shows the origin of the centralizing power, and how it went to seed in the outcome of the first Pope of Rome: “These *councils*, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this (the second) century, changed the whole face of the Church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming, all at once, the power with which they were afterward invested. At their first appearance in these general councils they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and they acted in the name and by the ap-

pointment of their people. But they soon changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion and their counsels into laws, and openly asserted, at length, that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people *authoritative rules of faith and manners*.

“ Another effect of these councils was the gradual abolition of that perfect equality which reigned among all bishops in the primitive times. \* \* \* In the meantime the bounds of the Church were enlarged, \* \* \* and the universal Church had now the appearance of one vast republic, formed by a combination of a great number of little states. This occasioned the creation of a new order of ecclesiastics, who were appointed, in different parts of the world, as heads of the Church. \* \* \* At length, ambition, having reached its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop of Rome and his successors with the title and authority of Prince of the Patriarchs.”

Had Baptist principles been maintained and the New Testament church govern-

ment thus preserved, the world would never have witnessed the encroachments on church independency and the "lording it over God's heritage" by bishops and popes and ecclesiastical councils, such as the history of the past and exhibits of the present display.

#### V. Church Membership to none but the Converted.

No less do Baptists show their distinct line of difference from others than in their great distinguishing doctrine of the *spiritual nature of the churches*. No person is qualified to be a member of a Baptist Church who is not regenerated by the Holy Spirit. At least that person must profess to have found the pardon of sins by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We baptize one, not in order that his sins may be remitted, but because he professes that those sins are already remitted. We can find no precept or example anywhere in God's word where any but those who were convicted of sin and born again were considered eligible to church membership. The commission we have, is: "Go ye into all the world and *preach the gospel* to every creature; he that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved, but he that be-

lieveth not shall be damned." Those after whom Baptists feel they should look for church members are those who, after they are made disciples, can be taught "to observe all things whatsoever" Christ has "commanded." Unless this great principle of ours is adhered to, membership in the churches must be made by *baptismal* regeneration or by hereditary membership. In such cases, a jumble and confusion of inconsistent and contradictory doctrines occurs, which bewilder the mind. It has already set the whole Pedobaptist world in a muddle. In the times of President Edwards, in our country, quite a hitch was brought about in New England. The children of those who were church members and the children of those who were not church members were admitted to membership by infant baptism. Then persons who had been baptized and were of moral life and *desired to be converted* were admitted to the church; so that it was expected that every respectable man in the town would join the church. It was said that at that time, among the Reformed Dutch Churches of this country, "every young man at the age

of twenty-one was married and joined the church as a matter of course."

It is well known that the Quakers of the United States, who claimed so much for the spirituality of their Church, have just about been rent in twain by getting their churches filled with hereditary members, who never knew what it was to experience the grace of God in the heart.

If you could draw infant baptism aside for awhile, this great truth of the Baptists would shine more clearly, even in the churches of those who so widely differ with us.

Dr. Lyman Beecher, one of the great men among the Congregationalists, in a public meeting said: "The requisite qualifications for membership in a church of Christ are, personal holiness in the sight of God and a credible profession of holiness before men." At this another minister arose, and was heard to say: "If you *deny the church membership of baptized infants your Baptist brethren have you on the hip.*"

In the articles of faith of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is said that "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of



faithful (meaning converted) men," and yet the creed of that Church requires that "the baptism of young children be retained in the Church."

#### **VI. The Baptism of Believers only.**

Baptists believe honestly, and with all due deference to the opinions of others, that an infant cannot discern the object and meaning of the Lord's Baptism any more than it can the Lord's Supper, and that consequently the infant is not a subject for either ordinance. They believe that there is no precept or example for infant baptism in the word of God from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. They believe that infant baptism is an outgrowth of the views of baptismal regeneration which obtained in the early centuries of the Christian era. They hold that the traditions of men in connection with those false views of the design of baptism are the foundation stones on which infant baptism is built. They believe that infant baptism necessarily demands infant membership, and that infant membership destroys the spirituality of the church. They further believe that a church formed in part



of those baptized in infancy has produced an unconverted and ungodly membership which has allied itself with the State, has torn from the people their religious liberty and lighted the fires of persecution in different parts of the world.

These and other things honestly believed by them on this subject, they feel can be sustained by the word of God and the pages of history.

To their support on this question men of ripe scholarship and piety are fast flocking in different parts of the world, those, too, who are not Baptists and never expect to be.

A Pedobaptist writer of great distinction has said in a published essay, "*Scripture knows nothing of the baptism of infants. There is absolutely not a single trace of it to be found in the New Testament.*"

One of the great scholars of this century, a native and resident of Europe, who is also not a Baptist, has said: "*Would the Protestant church fulfill and attain to its final destiny the baptism of infants must of necessity be abolished.*"

Dr. Jacobi, a pupil of Neander, said, "Infant baptism was introduced neither by Christ nor his apostles. \* \* \* Now, how-

ever, that infant baptism has been introduced it is best that it should be retained."

Rev. A. T. Bledsoe, one of the distinguished men of the Southern Methodist pulpit, said in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* a few years ago: "It is an article of our faith that the baptism of young children (infants) is to be retained in the church as most agreeable to the institutions of Christ. But yet, with all our searching, we have been unable to find in the New Testament a single express declaration or word in favor of infant baptism. We justify the right, therefore, solely on the ground of logical inference, and not on any express word of Christ and his apostles."

One of the latest candid confessions of this sort has been made by an English Churchman, the Bishop of Salisbury. He says: "I must candidly and broadly state my conviction that there is not one passage nor one word in Scripture which directly proves it, not one word the undeniable and logical power of which can be adduced to prove, either in any way of fact, that in the scriptural age, infants were baptized, or of doctrine that they ought to be baptized."

Nor I believe is there any such direct statement to be found in any writings of the fathers of the church before the latter end of the second century after Christ."

Baptists are so strenuous in their opposition to infant baptism because they *know* there are precepts, examples and commands in the Bible in favor of believer's baptism and none in favor of infant baptism, and that the tendency of infant baptism is *to supplant believer's baptism, and banish it from the world*, since the universal baptism of infants would leave none to be baptized upon becoming believers.

They appeal to church history without fear of failure, to prove that nothing but believer's baptism was known for more than two hundred years after Christ, as the Bishop of Salisbury has testified. And they are equally as sure that infant baptism did not begin until baptism began to be regarded as essential to salvation.

#### VII. Immersion only is Baptism.

Baptists believe that the immersion of a believer in water, into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is absolutely

essential to the performance of a valid act of baptism, and that the use of water in any other way, as a sacred rite, is without the sanction of the Scriptures. Among our many reasons for this will be found : 1. The meaning of the original Greek word ; 2. The example of Christ ; 3. The practice of the apostles and early churches ; 4. The truths taught by baptism as a symbol ; 5. The almost universal consent of the scholarship of the world ; 6. The concessions of those who practice otherwise ; and 7. That immersion was the practice of all the churches until the thirteenth century. These, all, *compel* to our position and leave on our minds not a trace of doubt that we are right, and that our position is simply *impregnable*. As we read the history of the past we understand that the original ordinance was first changed in the third century, by pouring water over a sick man, lest he die without baptism ; that then they poured the water over him *so copiously that it was looked upon as a substitute for immersion*. The same history tells us, in the light in which we read it, that after the sick man was thus baptized an

effort set in to substitute "pouring and sprinkling" for the good old way, but that it was long withstood by both Popes and councils; that it gained in popularity through the dark ages, and that in the thirteenth century the Pope finally yielded to the popular clamor and authorized sprinkling in all cases. We also know that since those days, *even down to this day* regret after regret has been expressed by good and great men that the "old mode" was ever changed. We also know that the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church will tell any one who inquires of them *now* that *immersion* is the real meaning of the word, and that immersion was the original way of performing the rite, but that "the Church, in Her wisdom, saw fit to change the mode, and that this *she had a right to do.*" We also learn from the pages of history that the great Luther insisted on a return to the old mode, offering as an argument that "baptism is a Greek word and may be translated immersion, as when we immerse something in water, that it may be wholly covered. And, although it is almost wholly abolished (for they do not

dip the whole child, but only pour a little water on it), they ought, nevertheless, to be wholly immersed, \* \* \* for that the etymology of the word seems to demand." Baptists know that the scholarship of the Church of England, at this time, is almost altogether united in the belief that New Testament baptism was immersion only, notwithstanding their practices to the contrary.

Upon the fundamental doctrines of Baptists' belief, they cannot find place for anything else than immersion. Their doctrine of a converted church membership, and the profession which the converted member makes when he is baptized, binds them against anything else. We believe that in the act of baptism the believer symbolizes his spiritual death and his spiritual resurrection; that he also symbolizes his total defilement and his total purification; and, in addition to this, we believe that the same act of baptism symbolizes the power and the agent by which he receives his cleansing and his new life. And this we believe because we have in our New Testament

a book called "Romans," and in that book a chapter, and in that chapter verses, which are as follows: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

This beautiful and striking symbolism of baptism has impressed itself on the minds of reading and thinking men, in all ages of the world. As late a writer as the distinguished Dr. Philip Schaff, who is not a Baptist, tells us how any other view of this Scripture than immersion obscures the meaning and destroys the whole beauty of its speaking symbolism. And this is but a re echo of the old writers in the first centuries. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, said: "For as Jesus assuming the sins of the world died that, having slain sin, he might raise thee up in righteousness; so also thou, going down into the water, and in a manner buried in the waters,



as he in the rock, art raised again, walking in newness of life.”

Baptists believe that Christ intended, in the institution of this ordinance, to show forth in symbol these great fundamental truths of Grace, just as he symbolized other truths in the Lord's Supper. They believe that this ordinance of the Lord's House is so simple that the “wayfaring” may not err in the way; and they honestly feel that the errors which have sprung up, and are conscientiously believed by many now, are on account of the uprising of false doctrines; that, with the New Testament *only* in one's hand, no one would ever make a mistake about the “mode” of baptism.

Baptists believe that baptism is one of those simple teachings of Jesus, which is easily understood, both in the precept and the example. They join Mr. Albert Barnes, one of the most superior of Pedobaptist commentators, when he says, speaking of baptism:

“If it were an element or first principle of religion—if it were presumed that any one



who entered the church could understand it—can it be believed that it was then so perplexing and embarrassing as it is often made now? *Can it be believed that a vast array of learning, and a knowledge of languages, and a careful inquiry into the customs of ancient times were needful in order that a candidate for baptism should understand it?* ”

Baptists could not more strongly speak on this line than this able commentator has. They asked a similar question a few years ago *with double emphasis*, when Dr. Dale, the distinguished Presbyterian brother of Mr. Barnes, wrote his “four ponderous volumes,” entitled “*Judaic Baptism*,” “*Johannic Baptism*,” “*Classic Baptism*,” and “*Christian Baptism*,” all to convince the world at large that *immersion* is not the baptism of the New Testament.

What an impression is made in witnessing the baptism of a believer, especially on one who understands its symbolic import! A new convert, fresh in his first love, may tell us of his putting off the “old man” and putting on the “new man;” of what Christ has done for him, and of what he expects to

do for Christ; of his buried sins and of his resurrection hopes; but when we see him, silently going down into the water, his hands folded across his breast, in the image of death, while his body passes under the water of his liquid tomb; and when we see him rise from the flood, the water dripping from his garments, as the cerements of the grave are to fall away in the "morning of the resurrection," *then* He speaks to us in eloquent language, which can be understood in all the tongues of the peoples of the whole earth, which cannot change with the flight of years, and which "no oratory can rival." For this, as for other reasons, Baptists will "go down into the water," and they will "come up out of the water" until Jesus shall greet them in the glories of his Second Coming.

Who ever heard of a person who left a Baptist church to join any other because of dissatisfaction with his baptism? Who ever heard of a person living in the fellowship of a Baptist church and in mortal misery for fear he had not been properly baptized? Who ever found a church, of any religious

persuasion, which would not accept immersion for *valid* baptism? Where was a Baptist church ever found which would not willingly say to an inquirer for the way of baptism, "*Take the New Testament and see for yourself.*"

### VIII. Restricted Communion.

What is commonly known as "close communion" is a subject on which Baptists are more grievously misrepresented, more uncharitably thought of, and more severely spoken against, than all things else. Sometimes the most scathing words of denunciation are spoken against us, and the most unkind references to bigotry and Phariseeism are hurled at us with unsparing tongues. This is done, too, we honestly believe, by some who, were they to listen long enough to *understand* our views, would respect us for our integrity and self-consistency rather than denounce us so bitterly.

Baptists hold, as a fundamental article of belief on the question of the Lord's Supper, the same as is held by the great body of those we call "evangelical churches." That is, that

the Supper is to be administered only to those who have professed conversion and have been baptized. - We have no idea that the Supper or the act of baptism has anything to do with the bestowment of "sacramental" grace from God. These two ordinances, according to our faith, have equal authority, are of equal benefit, and are both symbolical in their nature. Baptism, to us, preaches Christ's burial and resurrection, and the Supper "shows forth" the Lord's death "till he come."

We do not believe that a place together at the Lord's table is the test of Christian character, but that regeneration is that test. A true Baptist believes that there are thousands and tens of thousands of converted men and women in all the various religious denominations, many of them, it may be, better men than he is. On this account it is a great injustice to a Baptist to say that he "unchristianizes" those whom he does not welcome to the Lord's table. According to our faith we neither christianize a Baptist when we sit down with him to the table—for there are many Baptists who partake of the

supper unworthy of their name—neither do we unchristianize those with whom we will not sit down. Christian unity is what God's Word calls "unity of the faith," and not unity of the table.

But, we are told, the world's great preacher, Mr. Charles Spurgeon, is an open communionist, and that there are many followers of Robert Hall and other open communion Baptists in England now. This is true, but it is not *against us*, as far as argument is concerned, *nor is it in favor of the side of our Pedobaptist friends*. Because the open communion Baptists defend their practice on grounds that both ourselves and our Pedobaptist friends reject, namely, *that baptism is not prerequisite to the Lord's Supper*. While we deplore the existence, among a few Baptists, of open communionism—a *very few*, however—who need be surprised that in our denomination, numbered by millions over the world, there should not be, at some time, a difference of opinion? We feel sure that those few Baptists are wrong in the principle on which they defend themselves, because we have our great denomination *almost a*

*unit* upon the question of the principle, and almost the *whole Pedobaptist world agreeing, also, with us.* That I may not be rash, but speak to the record, I quote from the *Interior*, an able Presbyterian organ, published in Chicago: "Close communion, in our judgment, is a more defensible position than open communion which is justified *on the ground that baptism is not prerequisite* to the partaking of the Lord's Supper." He is right. It is clear that the grounds of defence of the few open communion Baptists *proves too much* for our Pedobaptist friends.

The testimony of our open communion friends, that the unbaptized have no Scriptural right to sit down at the Lord's table is voluminous. We select some. Dr. Wall, of the Church of England, in his "History of Infant Baptism," says: "No church ever gave the communion to any persons before they were baptized. Among all the absurdities that ever were held, none ever maintained that any persons should partake of the communion before they were baptized."

Dr. Doddridge, Independent, says: "As far as our knowledge of primitive antiquity

extends, no unbaptized persons receive the Lord's Supper."

Dr. D. E. Griffin, claimed by both Presbyterians and Congregationalists as one of their great men, says: "I agree with the advocates of close communion in two points: 1. That baptism is the initiatory ordinance which introduces us into the visible church; of course, where there is no baptism there are no visible churches. 2. That we ought not to commune with those that are not baptized, and, of course, are not church members, even if we regard them as Christians. Should a pious Quaker so far depart from his principles as to wish to commune with me at the Lord's table, while he yet refuses to be baptized, I could not receive him; because there is such a relationship established between the ordinances, that I have no right to separate them. In other words, I have no right to send the sacred elements out of the church. The only question, then, is, whether those associations of Evangelical Christians that call themselves Churches, and practice sprinkling, are real Churches of Christ; in other words, whether baptism by sprinkling is valid baptism."



Dr. Hibbard, good Methodist authority, in his work on "Christian Baptism," says: "Valid baptism, they (Baptists) consider as essential to constitute visible church membership. This also we hold. The only question that here divides us is, what is essential to valid baptism?"

Now, while all the above is admitted by those who are not of us, we poor Baptists are still berated, and have to receive and bear, for truth's sake, hard blow after hard blow, because we do not recognize the baptism of our brethren who differ with us, and *then* admit them to the table. We do not propose to argue this phase of the subject here, but to let those who are not Baptists argue it for us. One of the leading minds in the Pedobaptist pulpit of the United States has published these words to the world:

"A Pedobaptist who believes that baptism is a prerequisite to communion has no right to censure the Baptist churches for close communion. On this question there is a great deal of pulling out of motes by people whose own vision is not clear. Their course, on this question, however mistaken,



is certainly consistent, and we must yield them the respect due to all who adhere firmly to their conscientious convictions."

The great Presbyterian preacher of New York city, Dr. John Hall, speaking of those who would heap censure on Baptists for being close communionists, says: "It is a course of doubtful catholicity to raise a popular cry against a most valuable body of people, who honestly defend and consistently go through with what they deem an important principle."

The Chicago *Interior*, already referred to, says:

"The difference between our Baptist brethren and ourselves is an important difference. \* \* \* Their views compel them to believe that we are not baptized and shut them up to close communion. \* \* \* *To chide Baptists with bigotry because they abide by the logical consequences of their system is absurd.* We think they are wrong in reference to the mode and subjects of baptism, and should not hesitate to take ground against their interpretation; but we would not be silent about the interpretation

and then charge them with bigotry for a consistent adherence to their interpretation.”

#### Conclusion.

We solemnly believe that God has given Baptists a special mission to uphold and preach their distinctive doctrines, so that, in addition to the other great truths which they propagate, they shall, by maintaining the gospel order of, first, faith, then baptism, and then communion, continually and perpetually bear a solemn protest against infant baptism and against every mode of baptism which does not symbolize burial and resurrection ; and that they shall, *through the symbolism* of baptism and the Lord's Supper, preach, till the world shall end, that *whole* gospel which Jesus intends those ordinances of His House shall symbolize.

As another has said: “ We yield to no other denomination in our love for all Christians, and in our desire to unite with them in all Christian labors ; but the honest truth is, we do differ from them in our views of the ordinances of the visible church—not from ignorance, not from bigotry, not from

a spirit of exclusiveness—but because we cannot help understanding our Master Jesus to teach that none but a believer ought to be baptized; that baptism must symbolize his death and resurrection, and that baptism must precede communion.”

God save us from a spirit of boasting. It is a fact that despite all the contempt and the charges of “Phariseeism” and “bigotry” which have been put upon Baptists, God has wonderfully honored and blessed them. Notwithstanding in the early history of our country they were few in numbers and were fined, whipped, imprisoned and banished by the persecuting colonies, they now number, in these United States alone, over two million members of as good and true people, as a class, as ever walked the earth.

As I began, so I close, with expressions of kindness and good will to the brethren of other religious persuasions. They are, most of them, conscientious and honest in their convictions. Though we believe them to be in error, we respect and esteem them for their love to Christ and for their Christian character. I believe I can speak for every

true Baptist when I say we love the image of Christ when seen in any feature in a child of God, by whatever name he may be called. We wish them well in their efforts to love and serve our Lord. And we hope to meet them in "THAT DAY," when, as face answereth to face in water, heart shall answer to heart, and we shall cast our crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power."—Amen.















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