

WHAT IS AN HISTORIC BAPTIST?

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The following set of beliefs and distinctives comes directly from the pages of God's infallible Word. They represent what mainstream Baptists have believed and practiced down through the centuries. The Historic Baptist Faith is synonymous with New Testament Christianity. A New Testament Christian will not just believe these truths in his heart. More importantly, he will also practice, protect, preserve, and propagate these beliefs for which his forefathers valiantly stood. In contrast to the many adjectives used to describe Baptists today, the following definition describes a Historic Baptist.^[1]

THE HISTORIC BAPTIST VIEW OF GOD AND MAN

Historic Baptists have always held a high, scriptural view of God. Their view differed substantially from the God that many preachers present from pulpits today. They saw God as the absolute Sovereign, the ruler over the affairs of men. Their voices echoed, as Nebuchadnezzar of old when his understanding returned to him, that "...*I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*" (Daniel 4:34b-35) The God they preached was "high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1b). He was the "*only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords*" (I Timothy 6:15b). In contradistinction to their view of God, they saw man as spiritually stillborn (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1), wandering aimlessly as a lost sheep (Isaiah 53:6), with no ability or desire to seek after God (Romans 3:11). Man's only hope was that the almighty God would lift him from the cesspool of sin which he so enjoys, and save him by His incomprehensible Grace. He would agree with Spurgeon who wrote "I look at everything through its relation to God's glory. I see God first, and man far down the list. We think too much of God to please this age."^[2]

THE HISTORIC BAPTIST VIEW OF BAPTIST HISTORY

Today, many undervalue the study of Christian history or Baptist history, believing it to be irrelevant to our situation today. This is a clear reflection of the inroads that Existential thought has made into Baptist circles. There are many lessons to learn from the study of history. For example, the study of history shows how Christendom has reached its present condition. It explains

the origin of many erroneous beliefs and practices so prevalent today. Often one's practice is not rooted in Scripture, but rather founded on tradition which developed over the centuries. Everyone would do well to see if what he stands for is in the Bible, or if it is based on the traditions of man. History is extremely relevant.

Part of the reason Baptists are in their present condition is because they are ignorant of their own history. They know nothing of the battles which their forefathers fought. They know nothing of the blood spent to secure equal religious liberty for all. Many Baptist preachers and laymen know nothing of John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, and Isaac Backus. Even fewer know anything of John Smythe, Thomas Helwys, Hansard Knollys, William Kiffen, and Benjamin Keach. Yet these men are our progenitors. They fought the good fight for truth and religious freedom, which is often taken for granted today. Is it any wonder that so many Baptists today cannot even explain what a Baptist is, or where the Baptists came from?

The popular view of Baptist history held and taught by many Colleges and Seminaries today is the English Separatist Theory.^[3] This view's original proponent, William Whitsett, set forth this theory in a book entitled *A Question in Baptist History*, published in 1896.^[4] Whitsett claims that the Baptists began ca. 1641. He traces their origin through the English Separatists, who came from the Puritans, who were in the Church of England, which seceded from the Roman Catholic Church.^[5]

The name "Baptist" did come into general use ca. 1641, but this was the result of the prefix "ana" being dropped from the name "Anabaptist."^[6] Through the centuries, the name "Anabaptist" was used as a term of derision toward those who practiced believer's immersion. The Greek word "ana" means "again," and was a reference to "re-baptizing" those who were subjects of the Roman Catholic dogma of "infant baptism." The anabaptists loathed this term. They correctly maintained that "infant baptism" was unscriptural, and the people they baptized had never received scriptural baptism. Thus, they were not "re-baptizing" at all, but merely scripturally baptizing the individual.

Any discerning student of God's precious Word will recognize that I Timothy 3:15 is a clear reference to the local church.^[7] In this passage, Paul writes to Timothy "*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to*

behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” In this chapter, Paul discussed the qualifications for church officers. In this verse, Paul instructs Timothy how to conduct himself in God’s house. This is clearly a reference to the local church which Timothy was presently at. Paul further asserts that this house of God is the church, and that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. This makes the local church the pillar and ground of the truth. Therefore, if New Testament assemblies ceased to exist, and then later reemerged ca. 1641, then this means that for centuries and centuries the Roman Catholic Church (with its Popes, Traditions, Apocrypha, Inquisitions, etc.) was the pillar and ground of the truth! This is the only conclusion one can reach based on the 1641 English Separatist Theory.

A Historic Baptist recognizes that history clearly affirms that there have been people who maintained New Testament principles from the first century until today (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:21; I Timothy 3:15).^[8] Many do not believe that New Testament assemblies have always existed. They would agree that history (abundantly) testifies to the existence of Baptist principles.^[9] However, one must remember that principles do not exist in a vacuum. For principles to exist, they must be held by people. Even an unbiased author, such as Frank Mead, attests to this when he reports that:

It is often heard among them that they have no founder but Christ and that Baptists have been preaching and practicing from the days of John the Baptist. That is true in a limited sense; there were certainly men and women holding what have come to be considered distinctly Baptist principles all across the years.^[10]

The author has a strong appreciation for our heritage, and the books which tell its story. This is evident by his effort to reprint Baptist classics, and to produce this *Journal*. However, one cannot place undue emphasis on history books, because they were written by fallible, opinionated men. B.H. Carroll ably described the value of history books, as well as the Historic Baptist position on church history, when he declares that:

Churches come from churches somewhat as horses come from horses. History cannot trace every detail of the pedigree showing how a certain drove of wild mustangs in western Texas are descendants of the Spanish barbs, brought here by the discoverers 400 years ago. The fact that the

mustangs are here proves the succession, since only like begets like. I do not undervalue church history, but far more important to me than fallible human records of passing events is the New Testament forecast of church history. The former may err – the latter never.^[11]

THE HISTORIC BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

There are many lists of Baptist distinctives. The following list describes a “Historic Baptist.” Briefly stated, these truths represent the New Testament teaching on Ecclesiology, and therefore the Historic Baptist Distinctives. (This treatment of the distinctives is not meant to be exhaustive. They will be dealt with individually at length in this and future issues).

1. The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice (II Timothy 3:16). Some denominations would claim this same truth, but their practice is not in keeping with the New Testament. B.H. Carroll ably expands on this distinctive, when he explains that:

All the New Testament is the Law of Christianity. The New Testament is all the Law of Christianity. The New Testament will always be all the Law of Christianity. This does not deny the inspiration or profit of the Old Testament ... It affirms, however, that the Old Testament, as a typical, educational and transitory system, was fulfilled by Christ, and as a standard of law and way of life was nailed to the cross of Christ ... when Baptists say that the New Testament is the only law for Christian institutions they part company, if not theoretically at least practically, with most of the Protestant world, as well as from the Greeks and Romanists.^[12]

This belief in the supreme authority and absolute sufficiency of Scripture has been called “The fundamental principle of the Baptists,”^[13] because it governs all other beliefs and practices of the Baptists. Baptists maintain that they have no creed but the Bible. While Baptists have through the ages drawn up several Confessions of Faith, they have never considered them as binding on another’s conscience. As Francis Wayland declares:

If several churches understand the Scriptures in the same way, and all unite in the same confession, then this expresses the opinions and belief of those who profess it. It, however, expresses their belief, because all of them, from the study of the Scriptures, understand them in the same manner; and not because any tribunal has imposed such interpretations

upon them.... We have no right to delegate such authority to any man, or to any body of men. It is our essential belief that the Scriptures are a revelation from God, given not to a Pope, or a congregation of Cardinals, or an Archbishop, or a bench of Bishops, or a General Assembly, or a Synod, but to every individual man. They were given to every individual that he might understand them for himself, and the word that is given him will judge him at the great day.[14]

2. The qualifications for membership in a New Testament church are regeneration and immersion, in that specific order (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41,47). The New Testament knows nothing of an unregenerate church member.[15] The above references plainly show that salvation precedes baptism, and that baptism is the door to membership in the local church. The church is composed of regenerate people. The New Testament plan for the local church is “church = believers.” In contradistinction to this scriptural composition of the church, the practice of “infant baptism” makes the “church = world.”[16]

3. The independence of the local church (Matthew 18:17; I Corinthians 5:4-5, 13). J.A. Smith well defined this distinctive when he wrote:

The local church ... is, in every respect, complete. Its official appointments, pastors and deacons, are all for which the New Testament rule provides. Its functions, as a Christian organism, are complete in its local and independent form. Every detail of administration, whether official, disciplinary, or in any other sense executive, is comprehended in what is assigned to the local church. There is, in short, in the New Testament conception of the church, no point at which one church can officially interpose in the affairs of another without unauthorized intrusion, nor any point at which supplementary organization can be attached, without encumbering the beautiful simplicity of New Testament order, and changing to complication and confusion what the Lord himself intended to be a unit and a harmony.[17]

That a church is independent from all other institutions and outside control, does not dictate that they cannot commune with other churches of like faith and practice. Both in England[18] and in Colonial America,[19] Baptists have often banded together in associations, for the common good of all involved. This action was voluntary, and was founded on doctrinal agreement. These

associations wielded no control over church affairs, but served to encourage, advise, and assist member churches as the need arose.

4. The priesthood of the believer, or the right of the individual to interpret Scripture privately, and to have direct access to God (I Peter 2:9).

From the Dark Ages on, the Roman Catholic Church taught (and still teaches) that a person cannot directly approach God, but must go through a priest, much like the Old Testament system. This enslaves the individual to the Roman Catholic Church, and assures control over the individual. Baptists have always believed that each individual is a priest before God, and that there is no need for an intermediary. An individual has the right to pray directly to God, and the inalienable right to interpret Scripture, as the Holy Spirit guides him.

Quite often, many people view distinctives four and five as the same. While they are similar in some respects, they each develop from a different historical setting. Also, they each have a different emphasis. The priesthood of the believer is Godward, stressing the individual's right to approach God. Soul liberty is manward, assuring the individual the right to worship unmolested, according to the dictates of his heart.

5. The right of all people to soul liberty or religious liberty, to freely worship according to the dictates of his heart.

Persecution by the Romans was rampant during the early centuries. It was not until the wedding of Church and State under Constantine in A.D. 313 that "Christians" began to persecute (true) Christians. While the Roman Catholic Church did not personally kill its opponents, the "State" to which it was wed did the work of killing those who opposed the Church's doctrines. It was this union which led to the bloodbath that ensued, and continued through the centuries. True believers were not allowed to worship and believe as the Bible taught. For their fidelity to Scripture, their reward was banishment, scourging, drowning, burning at the stake, etc. All this was because they strove to live a quiet life and follow the teachings of Scripture.

Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door at Wittenburg in 1517. History records this as the event which began the Reformation. Soon after the Reformation began, true believers surfaced from their hiding places, hoping this would lead to the right to worship openly and without persecution. This hope soon faded, when they saw that Luther, Zwingle,

Calvin and other Reformers were only interested in religious liberty for themselves. Even though *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) was the foundational watchword of the Reformation, these Reformers still retained the Roman Catholic practice of “infant baptism,” of which J. Newton Brown correctly asserts that:

Infant Baptism is an error from beginning to end; corrupt in theory, and corrupting in practice; born in superstition, cradled in fear, nursed in ignorance, supported by fraud, and spread by force; doomed to die in the light of historical investigation, and its very memory to be loathed in all future ages by a disabused Church ... In the realms of despotism it has shed the blood of martyrs in torrents; that blood cries against it to heaven; and a long-suffering God will yet be the terrible avenger.[20]

It was the error of “infant baptism” which led to the death of a countless number of our progenitors. Refusing to bend the knee to Rome’s dogmas, the Baptists continued in their struggle for religious liberty. In the face of these circumstances, the Baptists never retaliated, nor did they persecute those with whom they disagreed. History proves that Baptists have been persecuted by all, and have persecuted none. In England, when the Catholics were in power, they persecuted the Baptists and the Presbyterians. When the Presbyterians were in power, they persecuted the Baptists and the Catholics. While there were periods of toleration, they never achieved religious liberty in England. It was not until their coming to the New World, that Baptists eventually enjoyed religious liberty. However, this was not attained without great struggle and sacrifice.[21]

There are two distinctions to explain before going further.

First, there were brief periods when Baptists could worship according to the dictates of their hearts. This was not religious liberty, but religious toleration. There is a vast difference between liberty and toleration. (This will be covered in a future issue).

Second, there is a distinction between religious liberty and Christian liberty. Religious liberty is allowing anyone of any faith the liberty to worship whom and in which manner they choose. Christian liberty is between Christians. Christian liberty is the right of the individual to make Spirit-led decisions on topics like hair length, beards, clothing, meat offered to idols, etc. (This will also be covered in a future issue).

6. The church has only two ordinances,

(1) believer's immersion and

(2) the Lord's Supper,

and are to be observed only in that order (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-5; I Corinthians 11:23-30). (Foot washing as an ordinance will be dealt with in a future issue). Countless volumes have been written about these subjects. There are excellent books available which present unanswerable evidence in defense of the Historic Baptist positions on the proper mode and subjects of baptism,^[22] the meaning of *baptizein*,^[23] and the scriptural requirements for admission to the Lord's Table.^[24] Space does not allow a complete treatment of these topics now. The Historic Baptist position will be briefly presented here, and expanded upon in future editions.

The Mode of Baptism. The Greek word for baptize or baptism means 'to dip' or 'to immerse.' This holds true in Classical Greek,^[25] contemporary Greek,^[26] and New Testament Greek.^[27] The Greek language contains words for 'to sprinkle' (*rantizdo*)^[28] and 'to pour' (*ekcheo* and *katacheo*),^[29] which would have been used if either of these had been the intended mode. Historical evidence clearly indicates that immersion was the universal practice, regardless of the climate, for the first twelve centuries of Christianity.^[30] Archaeological finds prove beyond a doubt that immersion was the practice of early Christians.^[31] After His baptism, Christ "went up straightway out of the water" (Matthew 3:16a). When John baptized, he went where "there was much water" John 3:23b). The believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is only pictured by (the mode of) immersion (Romans 6:3-5). This evidence irrefutably shows that immersion is the only mode of baptism known in the New Testament.

The Subjects of Baptism. The key passage used by paedobaptists in support of "infant baptism" is Mark 10:13-16. An honest reading of this passage shows that it contains no reference to baptism. To find "infant baptism" in this passage, one must first place it there.^[32]

In the history of the development of errors in the Roman Catholic Church, Baptismal Regeneration was one of the first. "Infant baptism" was one of the next errors, built upon the foundation of Baptismal Regeneration. The reasoning was that if baptism saves (which it does not), then "baptizing" infants would save them, by wiping away their original sin. This Roman

Catholic dogma is the foundation on which all paedobaptist communities operate today. Some will deny that “infant baptism” has any saving efficacy, but still retain the practice of this Roman Catholic tradition.

When John the Baptist went about baptizing, he only baptized those who brought forth “fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8b). On the day of Pentecost, only those who believed were baptized. In every New Testament example, salvation always precedes baptism. The Paedobaptist appeals to “house-hold baptisms” are based on arguments from silence. Not one clear example of “infant baptism” is found or inferred anywhere in the New Testament.

The Lord’s Supper. At the institution of the Lord’s Supper, the only ones present were immersed believers. (A quick look at any harmony of the gospels will show that Judas was not present when the Supper was instituted). In Acts 2:42, the ones who partook of the “*breaking of bread*” were those who had previously repented, believed, and received believer’s immersion. And when Paul addressed the Corinthians concerning the Lord’s Supper, he was writing to members of a local church. Briefly stated, the Historic Baptist position on the Lord’s Supper is that the prerequisites are repentance, faith, and believer’s immersion.

These same requirements represent the universal practice of all paedobaptist communities.^[33] The key difference is that paedobaptists accept “infant baptism” as Scriptural, and make it a prerequisite to Communion.^[34] Baptists do not accept “infant baptism,” and are often condemned for not allowing their paedobaptist brethren to share the Lord’s Table with them. The Baptist position is the only consistent, scriptural position to take, since baptism precedes Communion. Despite the emotional arguments for Open Communion, there is no scriptural basis for this irregular practice. Few Baptists have ever maintained this position, and the results have been damaging. In future issues, this topic will be expanded upon.

7. The Separation of Church and State, not to exclude Christian involvement in society, to serve as a moral influence (Matthew 22:21). As noted in number five above, the wedding of the Church and State occurred in A.D. 313, under Constantine. This Church-State union, also called the “sacral system,” allowed for the practice of only one State religion in a given country or territory. It was this vestige of Rome that led to the later establishment of the

Anglican state church in England, the Lutheran state church in Germany, the Presbyterian state church in Scotland, and others.

Baptists have always believed that the Church and State were to remain separate. When they came to the New World, they encountered many of the same problems which they had experienced in the Old World. Many of the early inhabitants of America had fled Europe for religious reasons. However, most groups brought the old “sacral system” ideas with them. They set up state churches as they knew them, and taxed all the inhabitants to support their ministers. They were intolerant toward the Baptists, often placing them in prison and publicly whipping them.

The only exception to this intolerance in the New World was Rhode Island. Men and women of all persuasions could worship as they choose. Roger Williams was an early advocate of equal religious liberty for all, and author of *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*. He went to Providence in 1636, and bought land from the Indians to form Rhode Island. In 1642, he went to England and secured a provisional charter for the colony. John Clarke, a physician, came to Boston in 1637. Because of problems with the Puritans, Clarke and others were banished, and went on to settle Newport, Rhode Island, where they started a church in which Clarke served as pastor. Clarke returned to England to represent the colony, and remained there until he secured a royal charter from Charles II, in 1663. This was the first case of true religious liberty, since A.D. 313.

8. Ecclesiastical separation, or the separation of churches from other institutions which do not conform to the New Testament pattern for a church. It is a common belief that this refers to separation from apostasy. While Christians should certainly separate from apostasy, ecclesiastical separation goes much farther than this.

The terms ‘ecclesiastical’ and ‘ecclesiology’ come from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means ‘assembly,’ or ‘congregation.’ This is the word behind the English translation ‘church.’ Thus, this separation refers to separation of one ‘assembly’ from other ‘assemblies’ that do not practice New Testament ecclesiology. This obviously implies separation from apostasy. It further implies separation from those who maintain erroneous doctrine, including ‘assemblies’ which do not scripturally practice the ordinances (i.e. infant baptism).

“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (I Corinthians 11:2). In this passage, Paul commends the Corinthians for properly observing the ordinances. The Lord established the ordinances for His church while He was on earth.^[35] To practice the ordinances in any other manner (mode or subject) is contrary to Scripture. This practice is not just irregular, it is invalid. To insist on following the pattern established in the New Testament is not extreme. Acknowledging and adhering to the Authority of Scripture is never extreme. If one claims to believe in the veracity of Scripture, he will follow its teaching, regardless of the outcome.

The question of what our position leads to on separation has been the subject of much writing and discussion. Perhaps the best and most logical explanation of our position comes from the pen of a respected member of the Southern Presbyterian Church. R.L. Dabney, one of their greatest theologians, provides the following argument for a consistent immersionist position. Dabney wrote that:

The odious ecclesiastical consequences of the Immersionist dogma should be pressed; because they form a most potent and just argument against it. All parties are agreed, that baptism is the initiatory rite which gives membership in the visible Church of Christ. The great commission was: Go ye, and disciple all nations, baptizing them into the Trinity. Baptism recognizes and constitutes the outward discipleship. Least of all, can any immersionist dispute this ground. Now, if all other forms of baptism than immersion are not only irregular, but null and void, all unimmersed persons are out of the visible Church. But if each and every member of a paedobaptist visible Church is thus unchurched: of course the whole body is unchurched. All paedobaptist societies, then, are guilty of an intrusive error, when they pretend to the character of a visible Church of Christ. Consequently, they can have no ministry; and this for several reasons. Surely no valid office can exist in an association whose claim to be an ecclesiastical commonwealth is utterly invalid. When the temple is nonexistent, there can be no actual pillars to that temple. How can an unauthorized herd of unbaptized persons, to whom Christ concedes no church authority, confer any valid office? Again: it is preposterous that a man should receive and hold office in a commonwealth where he himself has no

citizenship; but this unimmersed paedobaptist minister, so-called, is no member of any visible Church. There are no real ministers in the world, except the Immersionist preachers! The pretensions of all others, therefore, to act as ministers, and to administer the sacraments, are sinful intrusions. It is hard to see how any intelligent and conscientious Immersionist can do any act, which countenances or sanctions this profane intrusion. They should not allow any weak inclinations of fraternity and peace to sway their consciences in this point of high principle. They are bound, then, not only to practice close communion, but to refuse all ministerial recognition and communion to these intruders. The sacraments cannot go beyond the pale of the visible Church. Hence, the same stern denunciations ought to be hurled at the Lord's Supper in paedobaptist societies, and at all their prayers and preachings in public, as at the iniquity of "baby-sprinkling." The enlightened immersionist should treat all these societies, just as he does that 'Synagogue of Satan,' the Papal Church: there may be many good, misguided believers in them; but no church character, ministry, nor sacraments whatever.[36]

If God's Word teaches believer's immersion (which it does), followed by the observance of the Lord's Supper (which it does), then what Dabney wrote was correct. If an assembly is not "keeping the ordinances as they were delivered," then it is not a New Testament assembly. Therefore, a true New Testament assembly should not have religious association with them. This does not mean one cannot have personal fellowship with believers of another denomination. As Dabney implies, however, to recognize them as New Testament ministers of the Gospel is wrong, because they do not observe the New Testament ordinances, and thus violate Scripture.

What is written here in no way implies that only Baptists will be in heaven. Nor does it imply that Baptists have a corner on truth. There are many good people in other denominations who are truly born from above. However, the ecclesiology they practice is steeped in tradition, not founded on the Word of God. Many groups today hold to some or most of the beliefs outlined above. It is the origin of these groups that differentiate them from the Baptists. Some of these groups are of recent origin, and others have not always believed and practiced as they do today. It is true, however, that there were some in the past and that there are some today who practice Baptist principles, yet go by

other names. It is not the name “Baptist” that is all important. It is adherence to New Testament practices that makes one a New Testament Christian.

SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

While there are many positions and practices listed in this introduction, the list is not exhaustive. Among Baptists there have been (and are) several differences, of which the writer is aware. Some of these will be discussed in future issues, by looking at both sides of the question. Many of these issues fall under the areas of soul liberty and Christian liberty. During the writer’s brief lifetime, he has been in several Baptist groups. Through the work with Baptist Heritage Press, he has become acquainted with Baptists of almost every group, to varying degrees. At this point some observations will be helpful to everyone.

First, Baptists should realize that they are closer to each other positionally than they think. It would help most preachers to interact with other Baptists of different persuasions. Most people have reasons for believing and practicing the way they do. This type of dialogue may be helpful, and could open the way to change.

Second, many Baptists want others to allow them to exercise their soul liberty and Christian liberty, while they themselves are intolerant of anyone who disagrees with them. Quite often those who desire liberty the most, are the ones who practice it the least toward the brethren. We should maintain our beliefs and practices, and maintain peace with the brethren. Many have the attitude that “he that is not for us is against us.” Yet Christ said “*he that is not against us is on our part*,” referring to those who were doing His work (Mark 9:40). This is the kind of tolerance needed today among brethren with whom there is not total agreement. Some intolerant people would be quick to remove the “candlestick” from other churches whose practice is contrary to their own. Before hastily removing another church’s “candlestick,” review the condition of the churches in Revelation chapters two and three, all who still had their “candlesticks.”

Third, regardless of age, background, education, position, affiliation, or association, everyone needs to continually “*Prove all things*” (I Thessalonians 5:21a). It is important to cling tenaciously to one’s beliefs. More importantly, though, one must remember that he was taught imperfect systems by fallible men. While maintaining our positions, the key is to

compare Scripture with Scripture, not theologian with theologian. The aim is to conform our beliefs and practices with the Word of God, not the word of men. In comparing Scripture with Scripture, if one finds his beliefs or practices to be wrong, character demands he acknowledge the error and correct his beliefs. Neither pride nor fear of man should stop someone from altering his views, or admitting that he is wrong. Adherence to men's ideas, and refusal to go contrary to a system, is the reason for so many unscriptural denominations. It also explains why Baptists are divided today. A good example of holding strong to one's beliefs, yet being willing to change, is evident in the life of Francis Wayland. In his biography, his sons point out that "He was never satisfied until he had 'thought through' every subject within the legitimate scope of his instructions."^[37] They also record that:

Whenever he became satisfied that his own positions were unsound, he was prompt to acknowledge his error.... No man was ever more free from pride of opinions, or from obstinate adherence to his recorded sentiments.^[38]

Footnotes:

- [1] This article was extracted from the Editor's Introduction to the Premiere Edition and unfortunately only issue of The Baptist Heritage Journal.
- [2] C.H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 337.
- [3] For a discussion regarding different theories of the origin of the Baptists, see Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 18-21.
- [4] William Heth Whitsett, *A Question in Baptist History* (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1896).
- [5] For a capable treatment of this position regarding Baptist origins, see H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 21-48.
- [6] Jack Hoad, *The Baptist* (London: Grace Publications, 1986), 6. Cf. Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists* (n.p.: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1907; reprint, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982), 3-4. It is interesting to note that many Baptist history and polity books written after Whitsett's time do not discuss the origin of the "Baptist" name. Presumably, this is because it would be difficult to discuss it, without connecting it to the name "Anabaptist."
- [7] Cf. F.J.A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), 116, 172-74; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 87-88; J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 86-88; and Homer Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 139-40.
- [8] A strong defense for the existence of New Testament assemblies is found in the Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. A literal rendering of the last phrase in verse twenty reads "*I am with you all the days* (i.e., every day) *until the completion of the age.*"
- [9] See W.T. Whitley, *The Witness of History to Baptist Principles* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1914).
- [10] Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 7th ed.

(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 34.

[11] B.H. Carroll, *An Interpretation of the English Bible* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1948), 15: 131-132.

[12] B.H. Carroll, *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, comp. J.B. Cranfill (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1913), 10-11.

[13] R.M. Dudley, "The Distinctive Baptist Why," in *Baptist Why and Why Not*, with a introduction by J.M. Frost (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1900), 26.

[14] Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1857; reprint, Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Press, 1988), 14.

[15] Some will argue with this point, citing Judas as an example of a church member who was not a true believer. The same may be said of some members of Baptist churches today. This is a valid point. However, it must be remembered that filling a pew, or being on a church roll, does not constitute church membership. God's Word indicates that there will be tares among the wheat. Therefore, while there may be some "in the midst" who are not believers, but are on the rolls, they are not true church members in the eyes of God.

[16] See the article on *Regeneration: God's Spiritual Requirement for Entrance into Local Church Membership* in this issue.

[17] J.A. Smith, "The Independence of the Churches," in *Baptist Doctrines*, ed. Charles A. Jenkins (St. Louis: C.R. Barns Publishing Co., 1890; reprint, Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Press, 1989), 231- 32.

[18] See J.J. Goadby, *Bye-Paths in Baptist History* (London: Elliot Stock, 1871; reprint, Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Publications, 1987), 180-217.

[19] See Jack Keep, *What is a Baptist Association?* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1989).

[20] J. Newton Brown, *Memorials of Baptist Martyrs* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1854; reprint, Watertown, Wisconsin: Baptist Heritage Press, 1989), 13. Cf. R.B.C. Howell, *The Evils of Infant Baptism* (Charleston: The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1852; reprint, Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Press, 1988).

[21] See the article on *The Baptist Establishment of Religious Liberty* in America in this issue.

[22] E.g., Alexander Carson, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects*, 5th ed., (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981).

[23] E.g., Thomas Conant, *The Meaning and Use of Baptizein* (New York: American Bible Union, 1864; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977).

[24] E.g., R.B.C. Howell, *The Terms of Communion at the Lord's Table* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1846; reprint, Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Publications, 1987).

[25] Cf. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), 305-6.

[26] Cf. James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (n.p., 1930; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 102.

[27] Cf. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 94-95.

[28] *Ibid.*, 561.

[29] *Ibid.*, 201, 338.

[30] See William Cathcart, *The Baptism of the Ages and of the Nations* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1878).

[31] See Wolfred Nelson Cote, *The Archaeology of Baptism* (London: Yates and Alexander, 1876).

[32] For a masterful treatment of this passage, see *Children Brought to Christ, Not to the Font*, in this issue.

[33] Cf. Howell, *The Terms of Communion*.

[34] Most paedobaptists are inconsistent at this point. They will “baptize” an infant, but not immediately admit them to the table. The only consistent paedobaptist community is the Eastern Orthodox Church. They practice both “infant baptism” (by immersion) and “infant communion.” Cf. Mead, 111.

[35] There has always been some question as to whether or not John's baptism was Christian baptism. This will be examined at length in a later issue. It is important to note here, however, that if John's baptism was not Christian baptism, then neither Christ nor the twelve apostles received Christian baptism, although the apostles later administered it. To say that the apostles later received Christian baptism, is an invalid argument from silence.

John Calvin, who was no friend of the Baptists, wrote concerning this issue that "we are assured that John's ministry was exactly the same as that afterward committed to the apostles. For the different hands that administer baptism do not make it different; but the same doctrine shows it to be the same baptism. John and the apostles agreed on one doctrine: both baptized to repentance, both to forgiveness of sins, both into the name of Christ, from whom repentance and forgiveness of sins came. John said that Christ was the Lamb of God, through whom the sins of the world would be taken away [John 1:29]. In this, he made Him a sacrifice acceptable to the Father, and the propitiator of righteousness and author of salvation. What could the apostles add to this confession? ... Therefore, let no one be troubled by the attempt of ancient writers to differentiate the one thing from the other." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2: 1308. It should further be stated, "be not troubled by the attempt of modern authors to differentiate between the two."

[36] R.L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 774-75.

[37] Francis Wayland and H.L. Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1868), 254.

[38] *Ibid.*, 251-52.