

Why I am a Baptist

- I. New Trends Away from Denominational Name Tags
 - A. Some churches seek to mask their denominational identity by deleting it or downplaying it in their church names.
 - B. Some evangelical/charismatic churches have no confessional heritage and use generic names, presumably to attract those who feel disenfranchised from traditional denominations.
 - C. Some churches have changed their names in order to divorce themselves from some perceived stigma carried by their denomination.
- II. What's in a Name?
 - A. Honesty—A church that practices subterfuge by masking its identity is not being completely honest with its community.
 - B. Clarity—A church's name should indicate the general drift of its doctrinal teachings. While not all churches with a given name subscribe fully to the historic principles of their given denominations, a denominational name allows outsiders possessing even a cursory knowledge of Christianity the ability to generally identify the leanings of the church.
 - C. Heritage—Each denomination has a history that is echoed in its name. Baptists in particular have a glorious heritage of standing for truth in the midst of persecution and even death. To delete the name is to deny the heritage.
- III. Some Cautions
 - A. No one denomination or church name possesses the keys to eternal life.
 - B. One's name on the membership roll of a Baptist church does not indicate the spiritual condition or eternal destiny of the individual.
 - C. There is no Scripturally provable principle of Apostolic succession (Roman Catholic) or church succession (Landmark Baptist). The only "succession" is doctrinal—the kinship of doctrine and practice existing between true Christian churches throughout the ages.
 - D. Denominational names are a tool of identification. When denomination abandons its historic principles, a new name for identification may be chosen. (United Methodist Church—Bible Methodist Church; Presbyterian Church USA—Presbyterian Church of America—Bible Presbyterian)
 - E. Non-denominationalism has added to the confusion, especially in a time when many charismatic churches have adopted generic names.
- IV. Biblical Principles Historically Held by Baptist People
 - A. The Bible Is the Only Rule for Faith and Practice (II Tim. 3:15-17)
 1. Most churches rely upon something in addition to the Bible to augment their doctrinal position or practice. Some examples include:
 - a. Religious books—*The Book of Mormon*; Watchtower publications; etc.

- b. Human founder—Martin Luther; John Calvin (their writings)
 - c. Ecclesiastical authority figures—pope, bishop, cardinal
 - d. Reason or psychology—Scientology
 - e. Emotional thrills—Charismatic movement
 - 2. Historically, Baptists have accepted the Bible as the final authority for the church. While perhaps differing on points of interpretation, it has been commonly agreed among Baptists that the Bible alone is sufficient and authoritative for faith and practice.
- B. A Regenerated Church Membership
 - 1. Acts 2:41, 42—Note the order: “...received his word-baptized-added unto them...”
 - 2. I Cor. 1:2—the church is made up of sanctified people, not a mixed multitude of saved and lost.
- C. Believer’s Baptism by Immersion
 - 1. Only believers are to receive baptism. Unbelieving adults and infant children are not suitable candidates for Bible baptism (Mt. 28:19, 20).
 - 2. Baptism is accomplished by full immersion, not sprinkling or pouring (Acts 8:37, 38; Col. 2:12).
 - 3. Believer’s baptism by immersion is a requisite to church membership (Acts 2:41).
 - 4. Protestant Leaders Admit Immersion as the Custom of the Ancient Church:
 - a. John Calvin—“The very word ‘baptizo’ means to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church.”
 - b. Martin Luther—“Baptism is a Greek word and may be translated ‘immersion.’ I would have those who are baptized to be altogether dipped in water.”
 - c. John Wesley—“Buried with him by baptism—alluding to the ancient method of immersion.”
- D. A Separated Church
 - 1. Four Possible Relationships of Church to State
 - a. The church over the state—formerly practiced in some Catholic countries, historically in the Holy Roman Empire.
 - b. The church along-side the state—practiced in church-state countries such as Norway and Sweden.
 - c. The state over the church—practiced in totalitarian countries.
 - d. The state and church utterly free—intent of America’s founders
 - 2. “Civil governments, rulers and magistrates are to be respected, and in all temporal matters, not contrary to conscience and the word of God, to be obeyed; but they have no jurisdiction in spiritual concerns, and have no right of dictation to, of control over, or of interference with, matters of religion; but are bound to protect all good citizens in the peaceable enjoyment of their religious rights and privileges.” (Hiscox: *The New Directory for Baptist Churches*)

- V. The Priesthood of the Believer
 - A. Christ is our High Priest (I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:17)
 - B. All believers are priests (I Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10)
 - 1. No need to go to “sacred” persons for Bible interpretation (John 14:26; I John 2:27)
 - 2. No need to go to “sacred” persons for confession (I John 1:9)
 - 3. No need to go to “sacred” places for prayer (Acts 7:28)
 - 4. The Lord’s Table does not occupy a position above the people, but is located on the level with the people. The pastor and deacons are servants of the people, not intermediary priests for the people.
 - VI. The Autonomy of the Local Church
 - A. The local church is a self-governing body and cannot be part of another governing body. While churches may fellowship together and cooperate together for mission and ministry work, each church remains self-governing and independent of the others.
 - B. The Local Church’s Self-Determination
 - 1. SELF-JUDGMENT of its membership (I Cor. 5:13)
 - 2. SELF-ELECTION of its officers (Acts 6:1-6)
 - 3. SELF-PROTECTION of its ordinances (I Cor. 11:23)
 - 4. SELF-SETTLEMENT of its internal affairs (I Cor. 6:1-5)
 - 5. SELF-DETERMINATION of its relationship to other churches (Acts 15:1-30)
 - 6. SELF-GOVERNMENT as the only government for local churches (Mt. 18:15-17)
 - 7. SELF-POSSESSION of its own property (Acts 15:1-30)
 - C. While New Testament churches frequently cooperated with each other in order to accomplish missionary work or relief of the poor, all such cooperation was voluntary and was based upon doctrinal unity and agreement. Examples of such voluntary cooperation abound in the New Testament:
 - 1. Missionary endeavor—II Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15
 - 2. Member exchange—Acts 18:27, 28; III John 5-8
 - 3. Shared church servants—II Cor. 8:13, 19
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Please see reverse for Dr. Roger Peterson’s *Baptist Distinctives among Other Denominations*