

# BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

## **B - Biblical Authority**

The Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself. Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true. No human opinion or decree of any church group can override the Bible. Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture's inherent authority.

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." - 1 Thessalonians 2:13

## **A - Autonomy of the Local Church**

The local church is an independent body accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. All human authority for governing the local church resides within the local church itself. Thus the church is autonomous, or self-governing. No religious hierarchy outside the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices. Autonomy does not mean isolation. A Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests and in an associational tie, but a Baptist church cannot be a "member" of any other body.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." - Colossians 1:18

## **P - Priesthood of the Believers**

Every born-again believer has direct access to the throne of God. Therefore, since every child of God shares in the priesthood of the believers, all have the same right to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ's name. This is first and foremost a matter of responsibility and servanthood, not privilege and license.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." - 1 Peter 2:5

## **T - Two Ordinances of the Church**

We practice only believer's baptism by immersion, which is the only acceptable mode for baptism because it alone preserves the picture of saving truth. No other form pictures the death, burial, and

resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:1-5). We believe that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic ordinance, picturing Christ's body broken for our sins and His blood shed for our redemption. It is not a saving ordinance, but helps us remember His death, and inspires us while looking forward to His coming. It is to be observed by regenerate, obedient believers.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." - 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

## **I - Individual Soul Liberty**

Every individual Christian has the liberty to believe, right or wrong, as his/her own conscience dictates. While we seek to persuade men to choose the right, a person must not be forced to into compliance, realizing that it is not always the larger group who holds the truth when, in fact, our heritage as Baptists has demonstrated the worth of every individual believer.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. - Romans 14:12

## **S - Saved and Baptized Church Membership**

Local church membership is restricted to individuals who give a believable testimony of personal faith in Christ and have publicly identified themselves with Him in believer's baptism. When the members of a local church are believers, a oneness in Christ exists, and the members can endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."...Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." - Acts 2:41&47

## **T - Two Offices of the Church**

The Bible mandates only two offices in the church--pastor and deacon. The three terms--"pastor," "elder," and "bishop," or "overseer"--all refer to the same office. The two offices of pastor and deacon exist within the local church, not as a hierarchy outside or over the local church.

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. "...For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." - 1 Timothy 3:1-13

## S - Separation of Church and State

God established both the church and the civil government, and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1-7 and the church's purposes in Matthew 28:19 and 20. Neither should control the other, nor should there be an alliance between the two. Christians in a free society can properly influence government toward righteousness, which is not the same as a denomination or group of churches controlling the government.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:" - Romans 13:1-3<sup>1</sup>

### **AFFILIATIONS**

**Local Association** - The Arkansas River Valley Baptist Association

**State Convention** – The Arkansas Baptist State Convention

**National Convention** – The Southern Baptist Convention

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<sup>1</sup> Information provided from "allaboutbaptists.com/distinctive.html"