

# Acronym for BAPTISTS

- The Acronym for BAPTISTS – this list is a very good teaching tool because it follows the letters of the word BAPTISTS in order to list the Baptist Distinctives.
  - Biblical Authority – the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice
  - Autonomy of the Local Church – Each local church is an independent body accountable to Jesus Christ as its head.
  - Priesthood of the Believer – Every believer, as a priest, has direct access to God through prayer and worship without the aid of a mediator.
  - Two Ordinances – The New Testament provides for only two ordinances of the local church: believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are ordinances (ceremonies ordained or ordered by God) and not sacraments (means of obtaining grace from God).
  - Individual Soul Liberty – Each individual has the liberty to believe according to the dictates of his own soul. No one should be forced to consent to any belief against this own will.
  - Saved, Baptized Church Membership – Local church membership should be restricted to those who have a personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ and who have obediently followed the Lord in believer's baptism.
  - Two Offices in the Church – The two biblically established offices of the local church are that of pastor and deacon.
  - Separation of Church and State – No church should be given authority over the state and the state should not have the authority to control the churches.

# THE ORIGIN OF BAPTISTS

- Succession of Baptist Churches
  - Teaches that Baptists have been in existence since the time of John the Baptist
  - Teaches that these Baptists have been directly connected in some way by links that go from the time of John and Christ to present-day Baptists.
  - This succession has been taught in various ways:
    - Apostolic succession – meaning a chain of ordinations
    - Baptismal succession – a chain of baptisms
    - Church succession – a chain of local churches, one started by another from ancient times to the Baptist churches of today
    - A succession of Baptistic principles – this view is so close to the spiritual kinship view that we will consider it as identical to that
  - Baptist authors who hold to the successionist viewpoint:
    - James R. Graves, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Nashville and editor of the *Tennessee Baptist* (1848-1893) and author of *Old Landmarkism: What Is It?* (1880)
    - G. H. Orchard, author of *A Concise History of Baptists in England* (1838); republished by J. R. Graves in America in 1855.
    - J. M. Cramp, Canadian author of *Baptist History: from the Foundations of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (1868)
    - John T. Christian, author of *A History of the Baptists* (1922) and professor at Bible Baptist Institute (no Seminary) in New Orleans
    - J. M. Carroll, author of *The Trail of Blood* (published in 1931)
  - This viewpoint is closely associated to the movement known as Landmarkism
    - Landmarkism was a powerful movement in the Southern Baptist Convention during the nineteenth century and still has great influence with Southern Baptists and with great numbers of independent Baptists
    - Landmark-like views can be found in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1833 and later found fertile ground in the southern United States
    - The following is a summary of the teachings of Landmarkism
      - Baptist churches are the only true churches in the world
      - Baptist churches have always existed and are connected to one another by an unbroken historical succession
      - The sum total of Baptist churches make up the kingdom of Christ on the earth
      - The only true church is the local, visible church
      - Only churches have the biblical authority to baptize believers, administer the Lord's Supper, or establish new churches
      - Baptists must have no pulpit affiliation with non-Baptists

- Questions concerning successionism
  - Can it be proven? Although some say it can be proven and they attempt to do so, their proofs are spotty and inconclusive. Historical records are so lacking and the records we have for the time of the Middle Ages are almost entirely those of the Roman Catholics. Also, succession requires continual links with no gaps at all. This is practically impossible to prove.
  - Is it essential? In other words, does the authority of Baptist churches depend on their having an unbroken link to John the Baptist? This brings up the question of the source of our authority to do the work of God? Does it come from Christ by an unbroken succession through Baptist churches or does it come through the authority of the teachings of the Bible?
  - Are there any biblical evidences of succession?
    - Some build a case from the New Testament pattern of churches sending out men, as Paul was sent out from the church of Antioch, to go and start churches in other locations. This pattern created a founding or parent church and a founded church. If repeated, lines of churches could be created.
    - Some build a case on the teaching of Christ that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18). However, this specific interpretation is still somewhat speculation.
  - Does the line of succession exist? Perhaps it does. However, it is not essential and cannot be satisfactorily proven. Our authority for existence and operation comes from Christ as the head of the church through the writings of scripture. We need to follow biblical patterns, but we are not dependent upon historical connections.
- Spiritual Kinship
  - Teaches that a spiritual relationship can be traced through the long line of Anabaptist sects, such as the German, Dutch, and Swiss Anabaptists, the Waldensians, the Petrobrusians, the Henricians, the Novatians, and the Donatists.
  - This teaching does not require a direct line of succession but accepts that much interlinking of ideas and influence between Anabaptist groups have occurred through the centuries.
  - Baptist authors who hold to spiritual kinship (though not always calling it that)
    - Thomas Crosby, author of the four-volume *History of the English Baptists* (1738-1740). He was a son-in-law to Benjamin Keach.
    - Joseph Ivemy, author of the four-volume *History of the English Baptists* (1812-1830)
    - David Benedict, author of *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (1813), wrote: "that the peculiar sentiments of that portion of Christian professors, now called Baptists, have

always lived, and been maintained among the different sects and parties which have been constantly seceding from the Greek, the Roman, and other great bodies, which may be properly denominated."

- William Cathcart, editor of *The Baptist Encyclopedia* (published 1881)
- Richard B. Cook, author of *The Story of the Baptists in All Ages and Countries* (1884).
- Thomas Armitage, ,author of *A History of the Baptists: Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices, from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1889* (1889).
- H. C. Vedder, author of *A Short History of the Baptists* (1892)
- Albert H. Newman, author of *A History of Anti-pedobaptism* (1897)
- Analysis of this viewpoint
  - Avoids the problem of proving succession or making it a necessary article of faith.
  - Conforms to the facts as we have them. Groups can be found throughout the centuries that hold to believer's baptism, separation of church and state, and other historical Baptist beliefs and practices. Certainly, modern Baptists have a spiritual kinship with these groups.
  - Many of these groups were called Anabaptists (even before the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century). This is what modern Baptists were originally called by their enemies before the name was shortened to Baptist. Certainly, early groups can be found that are Baptist in principle and practice. No one is stretching any recorded history to claim kinship with them. They are definitely part of our Baptist heritage. They searched the scriptures and came to the same basic conclusions as modern Baptists. In this sense, they are Baptists.
- Anabaptist Origin
  - Teaches that the English Baptists can trace their heritage to the Reformation Anabaptists of sixteenth century Europe.
  - Not a greatly accepted opinion by itself, but taught by A. C. Underwood in *A History of the English Baptists* (1947) and by William R. Estep
  - Comment: There are some connections the continental Anabaptists and early English Baptists. But, as in successionism, cause and effect are practically impossible to prove.

- English Separatism

- Teaches that Baptists arose solely from the Separatist English groups and that they had no existence before the seventeenth century.
- Even here, uniformity of belief cannot be found
  - Some begin the Baptists with John Smythe and Thomas Helwys in the period of 1608-1612.
  - Others, like William H. Whitsitt in a book published in 1896, say that Baptists began in 1641 because this is supposedly when immersion was renewed in England.
- This view seems to have originated in the late 1800's and is the view of most modern scholars. They include:
  - Henry M. Dexter, author of *The True Story of John Smyth* (1881)
  - W. H. Whitsitt, author of *A Question in Baptist History* (1896)
  - W. T. Whitley
    - Who wrote in 1909, "The General Baptists are an English outgrowth of the Continental Anabaptists."
    - But wrote in 1923, "Baptists are to be sharply distinguished from the Anabaptists of the Continent."
  - Robert G. Torbet, author of *A History of the Baptists* (1950)
  - H. Leon McBeth, author of *The Baptist Heritage* (1987)
- Comments
  - Almost no one questions the influence of English Separatists on the English Baptists of the seventeenth century—especially on the group known as the Particular Baptists.
  - The true question is whether or not this is the earliest limit of Baptist heritage. Did Baptists begin with the English Baptists of the early seventeenth century and have no existence in any form before this time?
  - The answer hinges on the first topic of this course. Who are Baptists? Are they those who are called Baptists by others, those who call themselves Baptists, or those who adhere to basic Baptist distinctives? If you define Baptists as those who have Baptist distinctives, then you will see Baptists (or those with Baptistic distinctives) in every century after the time of Christ. That is the approach we take in this course and that is the decision each student must ultimately make for himself. Whatever your conclusions, this is a rich and fulfilling study.

## EXAMPLES OF ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CHURCH HISTORY

**That is God's Money** – I. B. Kimbrough was born in Tennessee in 1826 and became a Baptist preacher in that state until he moved to Texas in 1879. There, he served the Lord until his death in 1902. In later years, he gave the following record of an incident he had in Tennessee when he traveled and raised money for the Carson-Newman College, a Baptist training ground for preachers. As he traveled through a secluded forest, he was met by two men who held their guns on him and insisted that he dismount from his horse and hand over all his money.

“After dismounting, he laid his money in two piles, then turning to the highwaymen he said: ‘Gentlemen, this small pile of money is mine: you are at liberty to rob me of that; the larger pile is God’s money, and I dare you to touch it. I collected it for the young preachers of the state who are struggling for an education at Carson and Newman College.’” The robbers then inquired of his work. He told them that he was a Baptist preacher and explained his mission. The older robber told him, “We will not take either your money or the money of the young preachers.”

Kimbrough then told the men, “Young men, you are in a bad business. I believe you ought to give it up. In the meantime, I will be grateful if you will help me in the work in which I am engaged.” We do not know whether or not the men gave up their occupation, but before they rode off on their horses, they each gave him \$5.00 for his offering. –from *This Day in Baptist History* (p.261-262).

**Continual Prayer** – “The Moravian Brethren were a Protestant people who had long suffered Catholic persecution in their homelands in central Europe. In 1722 a pious nobleman, Count Zinzendorf, came to their aid, and gave them refuge on his estates in Saxony. There they built a communal settlement which they named Herrnhut. In 1727 they experienced a great enduement of spiritual power, as a result of which their past differences were obliterated and an abounding new joy filled their souls. Desiring to maintain so rich a blessing, they instituted a system called *The Hourly Intercession* – a system in which there was always one of their members at prayer, an hour at a time, day and night – and this continuous praying was carried on without break for over a century.” –from *George Whitefield: Volume 1* by Arnold Dallimore (p.171).

**Proof of the Presence of Christ** – “Among the Anabaptist martyrs worthy of our remembrance is one Thomas Hawkes, who, with six others, was condemned to death on February 9, 1555... A short while before Hawkes’s death, a group of his friends promised to pray for him in the dread hour of trial and asked for a sign if he realized that Christ was with him in the torture. He agreed with their request and decided that he would lift up his hands in token that he was at peace.

“The day of his execution—June 25, 1555—arrived, and Hawkes was led away to the stake by Lord Rich where Hawkes would become a fiery sacrifice on the altar of religious prejudice. When he came to the post where he would be burned, a heavy chain was thrown around his waist, and he was secured. After bearing witness to those close at hand, he poured out his heart to God in prayer, and the fire was kindled. The sun shone brightly on those assembled to see him die, but a group of friends stood praying and straining eager eyes for the gesture of victory.

“The victim did not move and slowly the flames enveloped his body. ‘When he had continued long in it, and his speech was taken away by violence of the flame, his skin drawn together, and his fingers consumed with the fire, so that it was thought that he was gone, suddenly and contrary to all expectation, this good man being mindful of his promise, reached up his hands burning in flames over his head to the living God, and with great rejoicing as it seemed, struck or clapped them three times together. A great shout followed this wonderful circumstance, and then this blessed martyr of Christ, sinking down in the fire, gave up his spirit.’” –from *This Day in Baptist History* (p.260).

**Taking the Place of his Son** – Ezekiel Skinner (1777-1855) was a Baptist medical doctor who was called to preach and who served as pastor of a couple of Baptist churches in Connecticut. “The Skinner home surely was spiritually oriented for God and blessed with at least two sons. A son named Benjamin Skinner was born on January 7, 1803. That son grew up with a heart burdened for missions, and after being trained for Christian service in Hamilton, New York, he was ordained and was accepted as a missionary to Liberia on October 12, 1830. Before a year had passed, Benjamin, his wife and child, succumbed to a tropical disease and died.

“Doubtless the severe weather had entered into the problem, but undaunted, Dr. Ezekiel Skinner determined that the Lord would be pleased to have him replace his son in Liberia. Though the good Doctor was almost sixty years of age at the time, in 1834 he sailed for Liberia. He served in that difficult place for three years before returning to the States. He had determined to remain until a suitable replacement could be found, and he persisted in that task. Upon his return to the States, he assumed once again the role of physician and minister, and labored as such until a couple of months before his homegoing.” –from *This Day in Baptist History III* by David L. Cummins (p.14-15).

**Baptist Preacher in Slavery** – Henry Cunningham was the first pastor of the First African Baptist Church of Philadelphia, organized in 1809. However, Pastor Cunningham had been serving as the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. The story of his move to Philadelphia is fascinating. “Rev. Cunningham was invited by Rev. Henry Holcombe, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, to accept the pastorate of the First African Baptist Church of that city. There was really only one problem. Reverend Henry Cunningham was still a slave! This had been true of George Lisle and John Jaspers. But such was not the case with Reverend Cunningham. The members at the Second Baptist Church in Savannah asked his master to allow him to go North and raise the money to purchase his freedom. The request was refused unless Reverend Cunningham could furnish security.

“What could be done? There was no way he could provide security! But thank God for faithful members. Two members of his congregation, men who were free-born, bound themselves into servitude in his stead that their pastor might go to the North and raise the necessary finances. Upon successfully raising the money, Reverend Cunningham informed his bondsmen and expressed a willingness to return. This offer was refused, the money was sent, and the two bondsmen were freed. They joined their pastor in Philadelphia to assist in forming the nucleus of the First African Baptist Church of Philadelphia.” –from *This Day in Baptist History III* by David L. Cummins (p.4).

**Seditious Baptist Books** – “The year was 1664, and the young man standing before the judge for sentencing was a Baptist minister named Benjamin Keach, only twenty-four years old. A few weeks earlier he had published a little book, entitled *The Child’s Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*, to be used for the religious instruction of children. Copies of the book had sold rapidly, and one had fallen into the hands of the local justice of the peace. Horrified by Keach’s printed statement that ‘believers, or godly men and women only, who can make confession of their faith and repentance,’ were the only fit subjects for Christian baptism, the justice of the peace had Keach seized and jailed until a speedy trial could be arranged. The evidence had been placed before the jury and he was soon found guilty.

“Thus Benjamin Keach was called to the bar, and the judge passed sentence as follows: ‘Benjamin Keach, you are here convicted, for writing, and publishing, a seditious and schismatical book, for which the court’s judgment is this, and the court doth award: That you shall go to gaol for a fortnight without bail or mainprize; and the next Saturday, to stand upon the pillory at Ailsbury, in the open market, for the space of two hours, from eleven of the clock to one... And the next Thursday, to stand in the same manner and for the same time, in the market of Winslow; and there your book shall be openly burnt, before your face, by the common hangman, in disgrace to you and your doctrine.’

“The sentence was carried out to the letter, but to the judge’s surprise, young Keach used his time in the pillory to preach to the throngs in the marketplace. When he was forced to stop speaking by the sheriff, his young wife stood beside the pillory and continued her husband’s sermon.” –from *The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching* by Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr. (p.16).