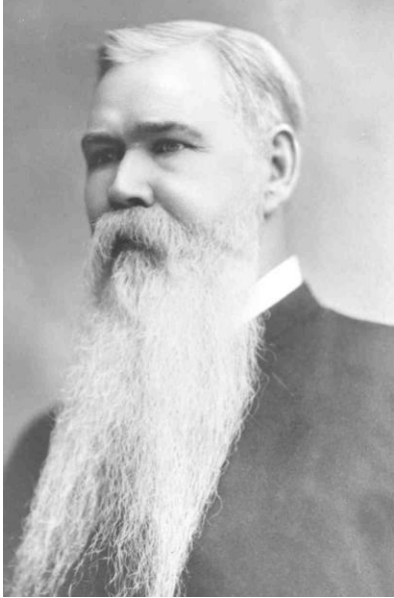


Distinctive Baptist Principles

Dr. B. H. Carroll



Introduction

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"A declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us."—[Luk 1:1](#). "It was needful for me . . . to exhort you that ye should ye should earnestly contend for the *faith* which was once delivered to the saints."—[Jud 1:1](#).

THE distinctive principles of the Baptists are those doctrines or practices which distinguish it from other Christian denominations. It is held *by* some that no doctrine or practice should be classed as *distinctive* which has at any time been shared in whole or in part, by any other denomination. But this limited sense of the word distinctive is too narrow for ordinary speech or common sense. For example: The Greek church and the Baptists both practice immersion, but their doctrine of baptism is widely different from ours. Authority, subject, and design all enter as much into the validity of this ordinance as the act itself. More than mere immersion is necessary, to constitute New Testament baptism. Again, the Congregationalists agree with Baptists in the form of church government, but their doctrine of the church is widely different from ours. Yet again, the statement of Chillingworth. "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the religion of Protestants." is widely different from the Baptist principle, "The New Testament, the only law of Christianity."

Moreover, this entire subject has an historic aspect, which may not be ignored. There has been great progress in Baptist principles since the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Throughout the Protestant world there has been steady approximation by nearly all other denominations to many Baptist principles, very materially narrowing the once broad margin dividing us from other people. So that the distinctive in history is much more marked than the distinctive of the present day. *Notable among* the Baptist doctrines towards which there has been this steady approximation are "Freedom of Conscience" and "Separation of Church and State." It is one of the best established facts of history that Protestants equally with Romanists once held to the unchristian and horrible maxim: "Whose is the government—his is the religion." Geneva, Germany, Holland, Old England and New England shared it with Italy, Spain and France, as Baptists found to their cost. While, therefore, the more recent approximations towards our principles are warmly welcomed, and while the hope of still greater approximation is fondly cherished, we are not thereby stopped from entrance into the domain of history in discussing distinctive principles.

Before coming to affirmative statements allow me to clear away the brush obstructing a fair view by disclaiming as *distinctive* the only two doctrines which in the world's estimation constitute the sum of our distinctive principles:

(1) Immersion is Baptism

Immersion is not disclaimed as a Baptist doctrine, but it is disclaimed as a distinctive tenet. Think of it. For the first thirteen hundred years all Christendom held this belief. Even today other Christian denominations, aggregating nearly one hundred million people, believe and practice it as the only baptism. How, then, can it be our most distinguishing tenet? If, indeed, it be distinctive of our people, it is the least distinctive and the least important of all our principles. In this discussion it will not even be named as a distinctive principle.

(2) Baptism is Essential to Salvation

So far from being distinctive, this is not now and never has been a Baptist doctrine. More than all other people do they repudiate it. Indeed, on the contrary, the Baptists are the only people in the world who hold its exact opposite: *Salvation is essential to baptism*.

On these premises and disclaimers we may now announce in order the distinctive Baptist principles:

I. THE NEW TESTAMENT—THE LAW OF CHRISTIANITY

Doubtless many of my fellow-Christians of other denominations may be disposed to smile at the announcement of this as a distinctive Baptist principle. But let us not smile too soon. Patiently await the development of the thought. To expand the statement: 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, nor that the New is a development of the Old. 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 and so taken out of the way. The principle teaches that we should not go to the Old Testament to find Christian law or Christian institutions. Not there do we find the true idea of the Christian church, or its members, or its ordinances, or its government, or its officers, or its sacrifices, or its worship, or its mission, or its ritual, or its priesthood. Now, when we consider the fact that the overwhelming majority of Christendom today, whether Greek, Romanist or Protestant, borrow from the Old Testament so much of their doctrine of the church, including its members, officers, ritual ordinances, government, liturgy and mission, we may well call this a distinctive Baptist principle. This is not a question of what is the Bible. If it were, Baptists would not be distinguished from many Protestants in rejecting the apocryphal additions incorporated by Romanists in their Old Testament. Nor is it a stand with Chillingworth on the proposition, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the religion of Protestants." If it were, Baptists would not be distinguished from many Protestants in rejecting the equal authority of tradition as held by the Romanists. But 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.

We believe that the church, with all that pertains to it, is strictly a New Testament institution. We do not deny that there was an Old Testament ecclesia, but do deny its identity with the New Testament ecclesia. We do not deny the circumcision of infants under Old Testament law, but do deny their baptism under New Testament law. We do not deny that there were elders under the Mosaic economy, nor even deny the facts of uninspired history concerning the elders of the Jewish synagogue. We simply claim that the New Testament alone must define the office and functions of the elder in the Christian church. Christ himself appointed its Apostles and its first seventy elders. We not only stand upon the New Testament alone in repelling Old Testament institutions, in repelling apocryphal additions thereto, in repelling the historic synagogue of the inter-biblical period as the model of the church, but to repel the binding authority of post-apostolic history, whether embodied in the literature of the ante-Nicene fathers or in the decisions of councils, from the council at Nice, A. D. 325, to the Vatican Council, A. D. 1870. We allow not Clement, Polycarp, Hippolytus, Ignatius, Irenaeus Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Jerome, Eusebius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Erasmus, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Henry VIII., Knox or Wesley either to determine what is New Testament law or to make law for us. In determining the office and functions of a bishop, we consider neither the Septuagint *episcopos*, nor the Gentile *episcopos*, nor the developed *episcopos* of the early Christian centuries.

We shut ourselves up to the New Testament teaching concerning the bishop. But recently the Christian world has been invited to unite on the historic episcopacy of the

early Christian centuries. We made no response to this unscriptural invitation. Yet more recently, the eccentric, and I may add, the heretical, higher critic, Dr. Briggs, seeks, it seems, to unite the Christian world on the word *katholikos* (universal) as applied to the church and as defined in these same early Christian centuries. We utterly disregard this invitation, not only because his word *katholikos* is found nowhere in the Greek of either Old or New Testament, but because the idea of catholicity must not be learned from post-apostolic fathers, but from the inspired New Testament, and because it was this word, *katholikos*, which led to the idea of the church as an organized general body having appellate jurisdiction over the particular congregations, and led to the union of church and state under Constantine. We are willing enough to enter the domain of uninspired history as a matter of research, and ready enough to concede all its fairly established facts, whatever sound proof may show them to be, but we recognize as the only ground of union, now or hereafter, the impregnable rock of the New Testament.

And mark you the first form of the expanded statement: All the New Testament is the law of Christianity. To apply this thought: One Christian denomination, in determining the law of pardon, would shut us out of the four Gospel narratives up to the resurrection of Christ and shut us up to the latter half of the New Testament. Here we say, give us all the New Testament. The cases of forgiveness of sin, at the mouth and hand of our Lord himself, must be considered in determining the law of pardon.

The New Testament is the law of Christianity. All the New Testament is the law of Christianity. The New Testament is all the law of Christianity. The New Testament always will be all the law of Christianity, Avaunt, ye types and shadows! Avaunt, Apocrypha! Avaunt, O Synagogue! Avaunt, Tradition, thou hoary-headed liar. Hush! Be still and listen! All through the Christian ages—from dark and noisome dungeons, from the lone wanderings of banishment and expatriation, from the roarings and sickening conflagrations of martyr fires, there comes a voice—shouted here, whispered there, sighed, sobbed, or gasped elsewhere—a Baptist voice, clearer than a silver trumpet and sweeter than the chime of bells, a voice that freights and glorifies the breeze or gale that bears it. O Earth, hearken to it: ***The New Testament is the law of Christianity!*** Let the disciples of Zoroaster, Brahma, Confucius, Zeno and Epicurus hear it. And when Mahomet comes with his Koran, or Joe Smith with his book of Mormon, or Swedenborg with his new revelations, or spirit-rappers, wizards, witches and necromancers with their impostures, confront each in turn with the all-sufficient revelation of this book, and when science—falsely so called (properly speculative philosophy)—would hold up the book as moribund, effete or obsolete, may that Baptist voice rebuke it. Christ himself set up his kingdom. Christ himself established his church. Christ himself gave us Christian law. And the men whom he inspired furnish us the only reliable record of these institutions. They had no successors in inspiration. The record is complete. Prophecy and vision have ceased. The canon of revelation and the period of legislation are closed. Let no man dare to add to it or take from it, or dilute it, or substitute for it. It is written. It is finished.

II. INDIVIDUALITY

This New Testament law of Christianity segregates the individual from his own family, from society with all its customs and requirements, from race and nationality, from caste, however exclusive, from all governmental control or intimidations, from all the bonds of friendship, though dear as the tie between David and Jonathan or Damon and Pythias, then isolates him from every external influence, strips him of every artificial distinction arising from wealth or poverty or social status, and then shuts him up in an exclusive circle alone with God, who is no respecter of persons, and there demands of his naked and solitary personality a voluntary surrender of his will to God's will and an immediate response of obedience to all its demands. There are no sponsors, or proxies. Enforced or insincere obedience counts nothing at all. The sole responsibility of decision and action rests directly on the individual soul. Each one must give account of himself to God. This is the first principle of New Testament law—to bring each naked soul face to face with God. When that first Baptist voice broke the silence of four hundred years it startled the world with its appeal to individuality: "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father. Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Do thou repent. Do thou confess thy sins. Do thou be baptized. It was the first step of Christianity, and what a colossal stride! Family ties count nothing. Greek culture nothing. Roman citizenship nothing. Circumcision nothing. O soul, thou art alone before God! The multitude shall not swallow thee up. "If thou shalt be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." Family relationship intruded upon our Lord's busiest hour. "Behold, thy mother and thy brothers seek thee." Once before he had said: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and now like a flash of lightning comes his scathing reply: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Whosoever doeth the will of my heavenly Father, the same is my mother, my brother, my sister."

Another time it intruded upon him to call forth his crucial statement: "If any man hate not his, father and mother and brother and sister he cannot be my disciple."

In his dying hour, on the way to the cross, he heard its voice once more: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which gave thee suck," and once more he replied. "Yea, rather blessed is she that doeth the will of God." Superiority for the twelve over Paul was claimed because they had known the Lord in the flesh. But Paul rejoined: "Where henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

How often in history has the question been propounded by some wishing to shun personal responsibility! May I not refer this matter to the magistrates? May I not consult the customs of my country? May I not seek the guidance of my priest and put on him the responsibility of interpreting this book? Nay, verily. Do thou interpret. It is God's letter to thy soul. Thy right of private judgment is the crown jewel of thy humanity. Sometimes even Baptists falter on this point. I have heard one of them excuse himself from an acknowledged duty of co-operation in missions, because his church was opposed to the mission work. Not even thy church can absolve thee from individual duty. Churches are time organizations and are punished in time. They do not stand before the great white throne of judgment. But thy soul shall appear before the judge. Well did our Lord know that there could be no evangelization of the world if ancestors, families, customs, government, commerce and priests could stand between the individual soul and God.

Thy relation to God is paramount. His law takes precedence of all and swallows up all. In giving emphasis to this doctrine of individuality our Baptist fathers have suffered martyrdom at the hands of the heathen, the Romanist, the Greek, and the Protestant alike.

III. FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

This follows from individual responsibility. If one be responsible for himself, there must be no restraint or constraint of his conscience. Neither parent, nor government, nor church, may usurp the prerogative of God as Lord of the conscience. God himself does not coerce the will. His people are volunteers, not conscripts. As has been stated, the prevalent theory in the days of the Reformation was: "Whose is the government—his is the religion." Louis XIV. revoked the Edict of Nantes, signed by his grandfather, the great Henry of Navarre. Calvin burned Servetus at the stake. Luther loosed all the hounds of persecution upon the Baptists in his day. Holland, the little republic that tore her lowlands from the ocean flood, and for eighty years, by pike and dike, repelled the Spaniard with his Inquisition, did herself destroy her greatest statesman, John of Barneveldt, and banish her great historian Grotius for conscience' sake. Henry VIII., in England, and his successors, delighted to persecute for conscience' sake. John Knox, of Scotland, so tarnished his great name. The Congregationalists of New England and the Episcopalians of Virginia alike denied freedom of conscience to their fellowmen. There was not a government in the world that allowed full liberty of conscience to all men until a Baptist established the colony of Rhode Island.

At a great dining in England John Bright asked a Baptist statesman beside him: "What special contribution have your people made to the world?" "Civil and religious liberty," replied the statesman. "A great contribution," replied John Bright. Bancroft, in his history of America, declares: "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was from the first the trophy of the Baptists." On November 5, 1658, these Baptists thus instructed their agent in England: "Plead our case in such sort as we may not be compelled to exercise any civil power over men's consciences; we do judge it no less than a point of absolute cruelty." In their petition to Charles II. they thus urged: "It is much in our hearts to hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil state may stand, and best be maintained, with a full liberty of religious concernments." And so when their charter came it provided: "**No person** within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted or called in question, for any difference in opinion in matters of religion; **every person** may at all times freely and fully enjoy his own judgment and conscience in matters of religious concernment." And the charter of their great school, now Brown University, has a clause of equal import, a thing unknown at that time in the chartered schools of the whole world.

Freedom of conscience in our day, especially in this country, is a familiar thing. It was not so in earlier days. Pagan, Papist and Protestant ground liberty of conscience into powder under the iron heel of their despotisms.

IV. SALVATION IS ESSENTIAL TO BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Here, if nowhere else, Baptists stand absolutely alone. Thee foot of no other denomination in Christendom rests on this plank. Blood before water—the altar before the laver. This principle eliminates not only all infant baptism and membership, but locates the adult's remission of sins in the fountain of blood instead of the fountain of water. When the author of the letter to the Hebrews declares: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," he bases the impossibility on the lack of intrinsic merit. Following the precise idea Baptists declare: "It is not possible that the water of baptism should take away sins." There is no intrinsic merit in the water. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, alone can cleanse us from sin. True, the water of baptism and the wine of the Lord's Supper may symbolically take away sins, but not in fact. "Arise and he baptized and wash away thy sins." "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." Both declarations are beautiful and impressive figures of antecedent fact.

A brother of another denomination once objected: "You Baptists have no method of induction into Christ. My people baptize a man into Christ." The reply was two-fold: (1) It is not enough to get a man into Christ; you must also get Christ into him, as he says, "I in you and you in me." If you insist that baptism really, and not figuratively, puts a man into Christ, how will you meet the Romanist on the other half of it, "Eating the wafer of the Supper really puts Christ into the man. He eats the flesh of the real presence"? You must admit that the words are stronger for his induction than yours.

(2) Baptists have a method of double induction: "We have access *by faith* into this grace wherein we stand." Faith puts us into Christ. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." "Christ in you the hope of glory." "Ye are manifestly declared to be an epistle of Christ, . . . written with the Spirit of the living God . . . in fleshly tables, of the heart." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus the Holy Spirit puts Christ in us. We get into him by faith. He gets into us by the Holy Spirit, thus fulfilling his words: "I in you and you in me."

This great, vital and fundamental Baptist principle, ***Salvation must precede ordinances***, does, at one blow, smite and blast those two great enemies of religion, sacramentalism and sacerdotalism. If ritualism saves, priests are a necessity. If my salvation is conditioned on the performance of a rite, then also it is conditioned on the act and will of a third party who administers the saving rite. The doctrine of salvation by rites is the hope of the priest who alone can administer the rite. This gives both importance and revenue to his office. He multiplies the sacraments. "Two are too few. Let us have seven. The more, the better for us, and thus we will control our subjects not only from the cradle to the grave, but from conception in the womb to eternity."

Not only does our great principle destroy both sacramentalism and sacerdotalism, but it alone draws a line of cleavage between the church and the world. To perpetuate the baptism of the unsaved, whether infant or adult, tends to blot out from the earth the believer's baptism which Christ appointed. It is a question of discipleship. John the Baptist made disciples before he baptized them. Jesus made disciples before he

baptized them. ([Joh 4:1](#).) John made disciples by leading them to repentance and faith. ([Act 19:4](#).) Jesus made disciples by repentance and faith. ([Mar 1:15](#).) Jesus commanded: "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations, baptizing them (the discipled)." Draw a perpendicular line. On the right of it write the words, Believers in Christ, Lovers of Christ. On the left of it write the words, Unbelievers in Christ, Haters of Christ. Now, from which side of that line will you take your candidates for baptism? Will you baptize the hating and the unbelieving? You dare not. If from the other side you take them, then already are they God's children, for what saith the Scriptures: "Whosoever believeth has been born of God. Whosoever loveth is born of God."

Baptists do not bury the living sinner to kill him to sin. But they bury those already dead to sin. For devotion to this principle you may trace our people back by their track of blood, illumined by their fires of martyrdom.

V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The church is not the expression of one idea, but of many. Only the most salient and distinctive ideas are here cited:

(1) *The church is a spiritual body.* None but the regenerate should belong to it. It is not a savior, but the home of the saved. I once heard a preacher say: "Join the church if you have no more religion than a horse. Join the church to get religion." When my own soul was concerned about salvation, a preacher urged me to partake of the Lord's Supper in order that I might be converted thereby.

(2) *Separation of church and state.*

The state, a secular body for secular ends, can never be united to the church, a spiritual body for spiritual ends, without irreparable injury to both. United with the state, the church can never obey Christ. "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers, What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Come out from among them and be ye separate." There cannot be union of church and state without persecution for conscience' sake. There cannot be a pure and converted ministry when politicians appoint the preachers. There cannot be free speech by the church against national sins when the state holds the purse, See the awful consequences of Luther's mistake on this point in Germany. There, today, the owner of all licensed sins, gambling houses, race tracks, saloons, houses of prostitution, must exhibit certificate of church membership. The blackest pages of American history are those which record the evils of the union of church and state in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia. And in everyone of them Baptists were persecuted unto blood, stripes, imprisonment and confiscation of property. Massachusetts whipped Obadiah Holmes, imprisoned Clark and banished Roger Williams. At Ashfield, in Connecticut, our Baptist fathers had the choicest parts of their farms and gardens sold under the sheriff's hammer to raise a fund for building a house of worship for another denomination and for the support of its preacher, who had virtually no congregation in that community. In Virginia, Craig, Lunsford, Waller and others were imprisoned. The products of Baptist farms were seized to support a cock-fighting, horse-racing, hard-drinking Episcopal ministry.

In England and on the continent of Europe time would fail to tell the story of their wrongs, scourgings, cruel mockings, imprisonment and bloody death at the hands of the state church. In every age of the world they have testified for a free church in a free state. From its spiritual nature the church cannot rightfully become a political factor. Its members, indeed, as individuals and citizens merely, may align themselves at will with political parties according to each several judgment. On this very account the politician does not court the Baptist church. But any general organization called the church that becomes a mighty political factor, controlling the vote of its members through its clergy, they will court. They censure that church only with hated breath and in confidential whispers. They laud it from the housetops and often make occasion for public eulogiums.

(3) *The church is a particular congregation and not an organized denomination.*

This idea of the church is fundamental and vital and yet least of all understood by the rest of the world—even the religious world. Here, therefore, I would make everything clear and plain. With Greeks, Romanists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and many others the church is an organized denomination having appellate jurisdiction over

its particular congregations. In history, the church as an organized general body, or denomination, has assumed the following forms:

(a) Papistical or autocratic.

It starts with the idea of an earthly head. This autocrat must be the successor of some apostle, himself a primate. Inspiration must rest upon him. All Christendom must be under him. Commencing with the union of church and state under Constantine, the idea reached its final development in the Vatican Council, A. D. 1870, which declared the Pope infallible.

(b) Practical or episcopal.

That is, the church is a general body, governed by the bishops, bishop now having lost its New Testament meaning.

(c) Presbyterian.

That is, the church is a general body or organized denomination, governed by its presbyters, through synods and general assemblies.

In all of these the particular congregation is under the appellate jurisdiction of the higher power, the General Assembly for the Presbyterians, the General Conference for the Methodists, the Bishops for the Church of England, the Pope for the Romanists. It follows that all these general organizations must have a graded series of courts, ending with a supreme court whose decisions bind all the denomination. And of course these higher courts provide for regular trials, with all necessary forms of law. And also, of course, the sessions of these high courts must last quite a long time in order to attend to all these trials. With all of them the church is an organized denomination having appellate and final jurisdiction over all particular congregations.

Now, in opposition to all these, the Baptists hold that the New Testament church is a particular congregation and not an organized denomination. According to the New Testament: "In Christ, each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into holy temple in the Lord." Each congregation is complete temple in itself, and has final jurisdiction over all its affairs. This is the church, to which grievances must be told, and whose decision is final. ([Mat 18:15-18.](#)) The most forceful and popular objection urged against this idea of the church is that it will be powerless to secure unity of faith, uniformity of discipline, and co-operation in general work among the churches. This objection comes from the viewpoint of human reason. And we frankly admit that whatever theory of the church fails necessarily and generally to secure these great ends discounts itself in probability as scriptural in favor of any other theory which does secure these great ends, simply because we cannot conceive of God's wisdom failing. On this account, once in the Northern States of our Union, and more recently in the Southern States, there have been tendencies among Baptists which if they had been successful and followed to their logical consequences would have resulted in this idea of the church:

(d) A federation, like the United States. In this the representative system prevails. Each state selects its representatives, delegates powers to them, projects its sovereignty into the general body, and there merges it into a supreme government for national affairs. These mistaken brethren, North and South, started out with the contention that a Baptist general body, whether district association, state convention or national convention, must be *composed of churches alone, represented by delegates having delegated powers.*

But a Baptist church cannot project or merge its sovereignty into a general body of any kind, nor delegate its powers. There is not and cannot be a Baptist federal body.

Read again Dr. Wayland's great book, *The Principles, and Practices of the Baptists*, and there see how the unscriptural idea perished before the wisdom of the brethren. As the good doctor says, "we now wonder that anybody ever supposed that there could be a representative Baptist general body." In like manner, in the South, all attempts to reduce our Southern Baptist Convention or state bodies to this basis have failed for similar good reasons. Our general bodies are purely voluntary, and composed of individuals, not churches. They are solely for counsel and co-operation. They cannot have trials, seeing they possess no ecclesiastical powers. Their sessions have no time for trials, lasting only three or four days. In considering the one question of eligibility for membership in the body they must necessarily act in a summary way on account of time. Their declining to seat any man in no way affects his ecclesiastical status. To ask for regular trial before a Baptist general body, or to claim all the legal forms of procedure in regular courts, whether ecclesiastical or civil, is all absurdity on its face and betrays ignorance of fundamental Baptist principles.

It is just upon this point the world, with its graded courts, and other denominations, with their graded courts and regular forms of trial, fail to understand Baptist principles. They look upon any decision of our general bodies touching membership as similar to the decision of their courts and marvel at our lack of regular forms of trial. The average man thinks of the Methodist Conference and of the Presbyterian Assemblies or of the courts of the country in deciding upon the merits of a decision on membership by a Baptist general body, and wonders why we do not observe the usual forms of regular courts. They fail to see that a Baptist general body, unlike a Methodist Conference or Presbyterian Assembly, is not and cannot be a court, because with Baptists the church is a particular congregation and not an organized denomination. The particular church is a court and does have its regular forms of trial. No Baptist general body could complete one trial, according to forms of law, in ten years, considering the time at its disposal and the multitude and magnitude of legitimate work that must be considered in its short sessions.

The supreme question then arises, can we with our ideas of the church secure unity of the faith, guard against hurtful schisms, bring about substantial uniformity of discipline, and, above all, secure co-operation in the great departments of work beyond the ability of a single church, namely, missions, education, religious literature and philanthropy?

It is simply stated as all historical fact, without argument here, that Baptists come nearer to uniformity of faith and discipline and have fewer hurtful schisms than the denominations which seek to secure these results by their iron general organizations. With history before us we are willing to compare results. As to the success of co-operation by our simple methods, we may here in Texas point to a denomination. Since our session in San Antonio in 1897, which eliminated non-cooperation and obstruction, this State Convention has raised more than a million dollars in cash for education, missions, orphanage, Church building and other departments of work. We can find no building that will hold our Convention when assembled. Spiritual power, mighty faith, melting prayer and marvelous unanimity characterize our assemblies. While the world stands this demonstration will avail for justification of our theory of the church.

(4) *The church is a pure democracy.*

Indeed, it is the only one in the world. There is no disbarment of franchise on account of race, education, wealth, age or sex. In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, bond or free, man or woman or child. All its members are equal fellow-citizens, and the majority decides. It is of his people, for the people, by the people. This democracy receives and dismisses its members, chooses or deposes its own officers, and manages its own affairs.

(5) *It is the supreme court in Christ's kingdom.*

All cases of discipline come before it, and its decisions are final and irreversible by any human power apart from itself. Of course, it is under law to Christ. It possesses judicial and executive but no legislative powers. Christ is the only lawmaker and the New Testament is his law. Its judicial powers cover all cases of grievances and fellowship. It is Christ's court. Our Lord foresaw the inadequacy of secular courts to adjudicate religious differences. The very atmosphere of secular courts is adverse to the religious spirit. Our Lord himself was a victim before the courts of Pilate and Herod. He warned his people that, in every age, they would be dragged before these courts, and clearly foretold what they must expect at the bar of these tribunals.

One of his most impressive lessons of the New Testament is the recital of the trials of his ministers before them. Nearly every one of his apostles was put to a violent death by their decisions. Who has not thrilled at the story of Paul before the magistrates at Philippi, before Gallio, Felix, Festus, Agrippa and Nero? Our Lord carefully provided for the settlement of religious differences before his own court. Hear the indignant protest of his apostle against the violators of his law in this respect: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before his saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life! If then ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are at least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

(6) *The officers of the church are bishops and deacons,* the first charged with spiritualities and the second with temporalities. The idea of a metropolitan bishop, having charge of all the churches of a great city, or of a diocesan bishop, having charge of a province, or state, is of post-apostolic origin and subversive of the scriptural idea of the bishop.

(7) *The ordinances of the church are but two, baptism and the Lord's Supper,* neither as a means of grace, but both purely figurative and commemorative. The elements of validity in baptism are: (a) it must be by proper authority; (b) its subject is a penitent believer or saved person; (c) the act is immersion; (d) the design is a declaration or confession of faith, symbolizing the cleansing from sin and commemorative of the resurrection. The Supper is a festival observed by the church as a body, and commemorates the atoning death of our Lord and anticipates his second advent. Who may deny that this doctrine of the church is a distinctive principle of the Baptists? Allow me to sum up in one sentence the complex idea of the church: It is a spiritual body; it must be separated from the state; it is a particular congregation and not

an organized denomination, whether Papistical, Episcopal, Presbyterian or federal; it is a pure democracy; it is Christ's executive and judiciary on earth; its officers are bishops and deacons; its ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

And now, brethren, allow me to put before you a mental diagram embodying the most of what has been said and which itself as a whole is distinctive of the Baptists. We will call it

VI. GOD'S ORDER IN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON

Conceive of a circle; in it a man on his knees is reading the New Testament. Both the open book and the man's heart are illumined by the shining of the Holy Spirit. Outside the circle are the man's family, kindred and friends, society and the government. That illumined book is the law of Christianity. The man is individuality, isolated from family, kindred, society and government and shut in with God the Holy Spirit. His conscience is free to decide without embarrassment or hindrance from all external forces or influences. By the Spirit, through the book, his free conscience leads him to an opening in the circle which leads him to salvation. Conviction, changing of his mind, giving of faith on the Spirit's part; the exercise of contrition, repentance and faith on the man's part. These are the constituent elements of regeneration from both divine and human sides. The man is now justified—saved—a child of God. Here is Christian fellowship.

Across the saved man's path runs a river, called baptism. Up through its waters he comes to a door in another circle. This circle is the church, Christ's executive and judiciary. In the center of this circle is the Lord's table. Here is church fellowship and communion. This church is a single congregation, a spiritual body, a pure democracy. Here is the elder or bishop, a simple pastor chosen by the church, and the deacons, who attend to temporal matters. Here is the church conference or court to which brethren bring their grievances for final settlement. Outside in the outlying world are the secular courts. All along the windings of that river of baptism and its tributaries are other church circles, each complete in itself, each with the Lord's table, and the conference, and the bishop and the deacons. Comity prevails among these churches. There is one law, one Lord, one baptism. A brother in one church, aggrieved against a brother in another church, must carry its case to the church of the offending brother. There is no way to arraign the offending brother before the world's courts without breaking down God's barriers of law and putting religion to open shame. Out here in territory filled with churches is a convention, state or national, It is a purely cooperative and advisory body. It is composed of individuals, not churches. It is a method, without an iron organization which would swallow up the churches, to elicit, combine and direct the energies and resources of the willing-hearted in all the churches in order to push great movements of evangelization, establish Christian schools, eleemosynary institutions and devise agencies and means for filling the world with Christian literature, all these mighty enterprises lying beyond the power of a single church.

One successful demonstration that all these great things can be done by a simple and harmless agency of voluntary co-operation of individuals refutes forever the idea of the church as an organized denomination or general body. There is no necessity for it. There is tyranny in it. There is the subversion of Christ's church in it. There is hierarchy in it. My heart exults! My soul leaps for joy that this Convention has furnished proof beyond all successful contradiction that there is no necessity for a hierarchy in order to promote harmony, secure unity of faith and discipline, and to obtain cooperation broad enough and strong enough to do anything God's people ought to do. That demonstration lifts itself up like a granite mountain. Transient clouds of angry criticism hang around its outskirts and splinter their petty lightnings on its adamant sides. Foul aspersion and misrepresentation may spatter their mud and slime around its base. In the caves of its foothills a few skulking wolves of prejudice may make their dens and render night hideous by their howlings. But the mountain itself stands immovable and serene. No mists gather about its summit, far above the range and rage of storms. By night the stars

silver its crest and by day its halo of sunlight is like the smile of God. This is God's order in the gospel of his Son, and the order is itself a distinctive Baptist principle.