

# The Baptist Distinctives

The late Dr. Colon Smith thought the acrostic B-A-P-T-I-S-T is harmful in teaching the Baptist distinctive rather than helpful. For example, Dr. Smith asks, “Where is the “C” for congregational rule in the acrostic?” Dr. Smith tells of a church that changed its form of government from congregational to elder rule. The pastor sent a challenging letter to the state association, saying congregational church government is unbiblical. This pastor further claimed that our fellowship must not believe in congregational government because there’s no “C” in the B-A-P-T-I-S-T acrostic. Apparently someone actually took the B-A-P-T-I-S-T acrostic as the official definition of the Baptist distinctive, and not simply a handy artificial memory device!

The Baptist Distinctives should aid us in understanding the doctrine of the church with a logical progression. There is no logical progressive from

Biblical Authority to the  
Autonomy of the local church to the  
Priesthood of every believer to  
Two Officers to  
Individual Soul Liberty to  
Separation of Church and State to  
Two Ordinances and then by adding another “S” to  
Saved Church Membership

## ***1. Biblical Authority***

- A. Is not the same as believing the inspiration of Scripture because the RCC also holds to this doctrine. But the RCC does not believe that the Bible is the supreme authority for faith and practice. For RCC the traditions of church have greater authority than Scripture.
- B. The Bible is the supreme authority for faith and practice not the sole authority. There are other authorities such as parents, government, that God has ordained.

## ***2. Saved or Regenerate Church Membership***

- A. It is the Word of God that regenerates (1 Peter 1:23).
- B. If there is no regenerate church membership there is no Biblical authority (1 Cor 2:9-14). It is impossible to get unsaved people to love God, His Word, His people (Rom 8:1-4).

## ***3. Priesthood of the Believer***

- A. Every believer has access to God because of regeneration (Rom 5:1-2).
- B. Every believer is a Believer Priest through whom God works (2 Pet 2:5, 9).
- C. Every believer is a Believer Priest with no human high priest which calls for congregational Rule.
- D. Every believer is taught of God (1 John 2:27).
- E. Every believer offers the sacrifices of praise (Heb 13:15) praise (Heb 13:16) and person (Rom 12:1-2).

## ***4. Congregational Rule***

- A. Acts 1:26: Before Pentecost officers were chosen by lot. That was the Jewish way.

B. Acts 6: After Pentecost officers were chosen by the congregation.

**5. Two Officers**

A. Pastor 1Tim 3:1-7 Elected by the congregation.

B. Deacons 1Tim 3:8-12 Elected by the congregation.

**6. Two Ordinances**

A. Baptism demonstrates regenerated membership and union with Christ. We are first Spirit baptized into and identified with the Universal Church (1 Cor 12:13) and then water baptized into and identified with a local church.

B. Lord's Supper demonstrates regenerated membership and communion with Christ and His Church.

**7. Individual Soul Liberty**

A. We have individual soul liberty because of the priesthood of every believer.

B. Soul liberty is the truth that every believer answers only to God and his or her conscience (Acts 5:29).

C. Government does not force us to believe or practice what we believe against our conscience therefore we also believe the **separation of church and state**. You cannot have the **autonomy of the local church** without separation of church and state and you must have separation of church and state because of soul liberty.

D. This is another reason we do not practice infant baptism because the infant baptism violates individual soul liberty. The church is forcing its identity on the infant without consent.