

stood. It is true that many who call themselves "Baptists" today have forsaken the historical Baptist position. There are some professed Baptists whose principal loyalty is to a human organization rather than to the truth of God. This unbiblical viewpoint does not represent by any means, the true Baptist conviction. The corruption of a position by some does not necessitate the abandonment of the position by all.

It is evident from a study of church history that there have been Baptists since apostolic days. Called by various names (Paulicians, Albigenses, Bogomils, etc.), they have maintained a steadfast witness to the truths of God's Word.

VIII. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT LOCAL CHURCHES SHOULD HAVE SUCH FELLOWSHIP IN THE LORD'S WORK AS WILL RECOGNIZE NOT ONLY THEIR INDEPENDENCE, BUT ALSO THEIR INTERDEPENDENCE. Every local church is completely autonomous according to the New Testament. The constitution of the Conservative Baptist Association recognizes this truth and states: "We believe... that each church is independent and autonomous and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority..." (Article III, paragraph 7). There is, and must be, no authority except Christ Himself over the local church.

In addition, however, to the independence of the local church, the New Testament also teaches the interdependence of local churches. Apostolic churches had fellowship with one another, engaging in profitable spiritual endeavors without sacrificing in the least their sovereignty.

There are some things that churches can do better together than they could ever do alone. A fellowship of individual ministers is helpful but inadequate in itself for the great tasks that confront the church. Only in a fellowship of churches committed to a common theological position and dedicated to a common evangelistic mission, is there to

be found that strength and Biblical authority for accomplishing the necessary objectives.

IX. BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN AN AGGRESSIVE EVANGELISM BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. The tremendously-expanding population of our country demands an immediate effort to establish new churches. There must be careful planning and discussion, but out of such meetings for planning must arise concrete proposals and methods to carry them out. Definite, Scriptural, practical plans must be implemented for reaching unreached areas with the Gospel. Both at home and abroad, Conservative Baptists have been characterized by evangelistic zeal.

In conclusion: The Conservative Baptist movement is not perfect. If one were looking for a perfect movement, he would join nothing until he got to heaven. There are weaknesses in the CBA with which it must deal. There are dangers against which it must guard. This is true of any movement, and such things will increase as the movement increases in strength and outreach.

No guarantee can be made of the future of Conservative Baptists, for deterioration may overtake any movement no matter how godly its founders nor how pure its original motives. Conservative Baptists must remain true to God or become a lifeless monument of a Spirit-empowered movement of God.

At present, the Conservative Baptist movement offers a wonderful fellowship and a Biblical channel for the activities of fundamental Baptist churches. For this reason, the writer is glad to be a part of it.

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WHY I JOINED THE

Conservative Baptist

MOVEMENT

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Since many have inquired as to my reasons for leaving the independent movement of which I have been a part in order to find fellowship with Conservative Baptists, I have undertaken to summarize my reasons for so doing. These conclusions were reached after almost a year of Bible study, prayer, and reflection. For one to move from one sphere of service into another is not always an easy task. Especially is this true when there is danger of misunderstanding on the part of many beloved brethren in the Lord whose friendship is valued highly. However, no better expressions could be found than those of the hymn writer who says:

"I'll go in the strength of the Lord
to paths He has marked for my feet.
I'll follow the light of His Word,
nor shrink from the dangers I meet,
His presence my steps shall attend:
His fulness my wants shall supply.
On Him till my journey shall end,
my unwavering faith shall rely."

In the assurance of these truths I present the reasons for my decision.

I. BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN A FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES BOUND TOGETHER BY A SOUND DOCTRINAL CONFESSION, SEPARATED FROM APOSTASY, AND UNITED IN MISSIONARY EFFORT. The Conservative Baptist movement is grounded upon a solid, Biblical confession of faith. It represents an effort to maintain the purity of the church by separating from organized apostasy. It not only bears a witness against religious unbelief, but it marches forward with a strong, positive missionary program.

II. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE CENTER OF GOD'S PROGRAM IN THIS AGE. The New Testament teaches that the local church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (I Tim. 3:15). All agencies and missionary efforts should be properly related to the local church. Unfortunately, organizations are legion today which have no such relationship. The local church is the divinely-appointed center for missions, evangelism, teaching, preaching, giving, and worship.

III. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT A LOCAL CHURCH IS A BODY OF IMMERSUED BELIEVERS GATHERED IN ONE PLACE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD, THE STUDY OF HIS WORD, THE OBSERVANCE OF THE ORDINANCES, AND THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL. The divine sequence is given in Acts 2:41-42—salvation, baptism, church membership and church fellowship. The New Testament never offers a believer a choice between various kinds of "baptism," nor does it anticipate an unimmersed believer being received into full and active fellowship within a local church.

IV. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES ARE GIVEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. God has not left each church to do "what

is right in its own eyes." The important matter of church organization is clarified by God in Scripture. Two offices are specified within the local church—elders (pastors) and deacons. Other arrangements are human in origin. This order is divine.

V. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT MISSIONARY AGENCIES SHOULD ESPOUSE THE POSITION OF THE CHURCHES WHICH SUPPORT THEM. Many churches are committed to the support of missionary agencies which do not profess to accept all the Scriptural principles for which their supporting churches stand. Many missionary agencies take no position on such questions as water baptism, ecclesiastical separation, and the place and organization of the local church. These truths are often spoken of as "non-essentials." However, no doctrine of Scripture is "non-essential." If God has commanded it, He intends for us to obey it. We are not to discover a least common denominator of service. We are to preach the "whole counsel of God."

Because many Baptist churches tend to support Baptist efforts, accusations are often made that such Baptist churches are not truly independent but are compelled to support their own missionary agencies. While it is true that in some Baptist groups (i.e., American and Southern Conventions) "unified budgets" rob the local church of freedom in missionary giving, this is certainly not true among Conservative Baptist churches. Each agency within the Conservative movement is independent of the other, and each local church is free to support whatever missions it feels led of God to support. Baptist churches historically have supported Baptist endeavors not by coercion, but by conviction.

VI. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT A FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES REQUIRES THE EXISTENCE OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS FOR THE TRAINING OF ITS MINISTRY. No movement can be perpetuated without adequately-trained personnel. A church requires a minister who is

thoroughly grounded in the particular theological position which the church occupies.

Without any question, the primary requisite for a minister of the Gospel is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Without this, education is vain. Accompanied by this, education can make a man a sharpened tool in God's hand.

The complex problems of the modern day require well-trained ministers. Both college and seminary work are desirable. The Conservative Baptists have recognized the need for high standards of ministerial education and several schools are engaged in meeting this need.

VII. BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE HISTORIC BAPTIST POSITION IS A SCRIPTURAL ONE, AND THAT CHURCHES PRACTICING BAPTIST PRINCIPLES HAVE EXISTED SINCE APOSTOLIC DAYS. At least six principles are generally listed as historic Baptist distinctives: namely, (1) separation of church and state, (2) individual liberty of the believer, (3) the Bible alone as a rule of faith and practice, (4) the sovereignty of the local church, (5) immersion of believers as the only Scriptural baptism, and (6) a regenerate church membership. Since every one of these principles is conclusively taught in the Scriptures, Baptist theology rests squarely upon the revealed Word of God.

To some, the name "Baptist" is carnal and divisive because it denominates one group of Christians from others. However, it is not a mark of carnality to maintain what one believes to be an accurate theological position. Actually, every Christian falls into some theological category whether he wishes to assume a title ("denominator") or not. Men may fiercely deny "denominationalism" and yet themselves be "denominational," being categorized by the principles to which they subscribe.

The name "Baptist," therefore, simply denotes a theological position embracing certain truths for which Baptists have historically