

Why I'm A Baptist

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Here are a few of the reasons why, in the midst of the dissolution of the basic institutions of civilization, being a Baptist increasingly gives me a feeling of spiritual and intellectual anchorage.

Baptists are a people. They have a historical identity. They have an historical image. Their continuity is the longest of any Christian group on earth. Their doctrines, principles, and practices are rooted in the apostolic age.

I am not a Pharisaical sectarian. But I don't confuse Baptists with the Reformers. The Reformers wanted to reform the Roman Catholic Church; the Baptist were against the church. Because it was not a New Testament church, Protestantism originated in the Reformation. Protestantism is protestism. That's negative. Negativism has within it the seed of its own disintegration.

The Baptists were not reformers. They were not protestors. They were positive. Freedom of conscience is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine. Religious liberty is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine. Believer's baptism is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine. Baptism of the believer by immersion in water, symbolizing the believer's death, burial and resurrection with Christ, is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine. The local, visible, autonomous assembly, with Christ as its only head and the Bible as its sole rule of faith and practice, is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine.

Worldwide missions is not a Reformation doctrine; it is a Baptist doctrine. The Reformers had no missionary vision and no missionary spirit. For almost two hundred years after the Reformers, the Reformation churches felt no burden to implement the Great Commission.

What kind of a world would the Western world have been had Protestantism become its master?

Who but the Baptists kept Protestantism from becoming master?

The general attitude today is that truth is determined by the passing of time; that there are no eternal, abiding truths. "You can't turn the clock back. Time invalidates all truth. Time invalidates one set of truth and fastens another set upon us."

Baptist history repudiates this philosophy of fatalism. Baptists today are believing, teaching, preaching, and practicing the truths that were believed, taught, preached, and practiced two thousand years ago.

It gives me a feeling of stability to reflect that I, as a Baptist, am in the stream of this long continuity of faith and practice.

The Baptist people are a great continuity. They are a great essence. They are a great dignity.

The world never needed them more than it needs them today.

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