Biblical Distinctives held to by BAPTISTS

Doctrines held to by the Baptists which differentiated them from Romanism.

In the days when the Roman Catholic Church ruled politically and religiously, many acquired Bibles against Rome's wishes, read them and became convicted that they must NOT seek to "reform" Romanism, but come out of her (II Cor.6:14-17). They saw that the Bible taught Believer's Baptism so they were rebaptized by immersion. Their enemies gave them the name "Anabaptists", indicating that they were *baptized again*. With time these groups of Anabaptists, who sought to follow only the Bible, dropped the prefix from their name and called themselves Baptists.

Biblical Authority

II Timothy 3:16, 17 – "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

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Priesthood of all Believers

I Peter 2:5, 9 – "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ…But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"

Two Ordinances in the Church

Acts 2:41- "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

I Cor.11:23-25 – "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

Individual Soul Liberty

Romans 14:5-12 – "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind . . . for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Saved, Baptized Church Membership

Acts 2:41, 47 – "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls…And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Two Offices (Pastors & Deacons)

I Tim.3:1-13 – "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop (overseer), he desireth a good work." (1 Tim. 3:1) (Note: The words "Elder" "Pastor" and "Bishop" are three terms describing the same office. Acts 20:17, 28) "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. (1 Tim. 3:10)

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Excursus

A Historical look at: BAPTISM

By: Erwin Lutzer - "The Anabaptist Controversy"
(Excerpts from the Tape: Origins of Infant Baptism)

Michael & Margeretta Satler - Michael had been a priest, but left the priesthood after he found there was no Biblical evidence for celibacy. So he left and was married. More than that, they joined a group called the Anabaptists. The prefix "Ana" means again. The again-baptizers; more easily said, re-baptizers. The Anabaptists were people who believed that their infant baptism didn't count, because they said it's not found in the Bible; therefore, we need to be re-baptized as adults upon profession of faith. And so they went ahead as adults, having professed faith in Christ, and they baptized one another as part of a little group way back in Germany in 1526. When they were coming back from a little town called Schlicime, they were arrested while walking through the forest and captured and on May 17, 1526, they were tried, and after 1 1/2 hours, the judges came back with this verdict, "Michael Satler shall be committed to the hangman who shall take him to the square and there first cut out his tongue and then chain him to a wagon, tear his body twice with hot tongs and five times more before the gate, then burn his body to powder as an arch-heretic." He was brought to the place, and just before he died, he cried, "Almighty eternal God, thou art the truth, and because I have not been shown to be in error [he had asked if he could debate the point from the Bible, but his prosecutors said "No."], I with thy help on this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood." With a sack of powder tied around his neck to hasten the death, Satler was thrown into the fire. When the ropes on his hands burned through, the dying man raised his hands in a sign of triumph and prayed, "Father, I commend my spirit into thy hands." His wife was persuaded to recant, but she did not. Eight days later, she was forcibly drowned in the Necar River.

*Infant baptism has no Biblical support at all - It is a doctrine of men, not God.

Ancient history - the practice was that the church (religion) and state (government) were one and the same. Pagans killed true Christians because they would not worship the pagan idols (EX: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)

But Jesus came along and taught something different. That His kingdom was not of this world. Put your sword away, my kingdom will not be advanced that way. Render to Caesar what is Caesars, and to God what is God's -- i.e. keep church and state separate.

Christians were thrown to the lions because they would not bow and say Caesar was Lord. Worshipping the emperor was not just a religious experience, it was a political expression of your loyalty to the Roman Empire.

One day a Christian man named Origin thought, "Wouldn't it be great if the Christians were in power? Then we could use the power of government to advance Christianity, and the tables would be turned."

That's exactly what happened. One day an emperor was "converted". Constantine was coming to conquer Rome and he saw a "sign," which said "In this sign conquer." He believed it was the sign of the Christian God - the cross. And he said, this is the religion I'm going to use to advance my political ambitions. And it was. I don't believe that Constantine was converted / born again, he just decided the Christian religion would be the most profitable one in that it would help him advance his kingdom.

The very first thing that Constantine did was to take Christian crosses and he welded them to his soldier's shields. From now on Christianity would be spread by the sword. The same swords that spread paganism would now begin to spread the doctrines of Christianity, and that would become the unifying force in the Roman empire. After Constantine became the emperor, he called the Council of Nicea, one of the most important councils in church history, to discuss the deity of Jesus Christ. What in the world is an emperor doing calling a theological council? Was it because he was so interested in the fine points of doctrine, that he wanted to really find out the truth? No. Historians tell us that Constantine was bored with the discussions, he was confused with them, he didn't' really care what the council came up with. But what he really did want was unity. In his opening speech he said that these religious discussions and debates were as bad as war, that they hurt unity. Why was he interested in unity? So that he would be able to use Christendom as the basis now to unify the empire so that his political ambitions could be more acutely and actually realized. After his death, Christianity was made officially the religion of the empire.

A question for you: Do you think that when the Holy Roman Empire was suddenly Christianized, that it increased the number of true born-again Christians? Of course not. They were still the minority, among all those who were members of this big church/state. All you had to do to be a member of the state church was be born. Now the pagans found themselves being put to death because they were not "Christian."

Infant baptism is NOWHERE in the New Testament. First references to it are found in 200 B.C. North Africa, where Tertullian, one of the great theologians of the church, wrote a document <u>against</u> it. He was against it, but this shows that it was practiced.

A few scattered references to infant baptism before , but after the time of Constantine, infant baptism suddenly became the accepted practice everywhere. Why? Before Constantine, infant baptism, the sacraments, was a religious issue -- a question of whether they imparted grace. But after Constantine, infant baptism became a political issue. You were not just born a citizen of a country, you were born a Christian, and so you were "christened" so that you would religiously be in line with "Christendom."

People opposed the notion that the Church could embrace everyone. The Donatists said that the church was a minority, those who put their faith in Christ and were baptized as adults. Everyone could not be made Christian, but rather those who could prove that they believed in Christ and lived holy lives as evidence of it. Along came the sword. The Donatists were persecuted, massacred, and stamped out.

Why did the Empire persecute those who re-baptized? Were they so concerned for the souls of infants of these Anabaptists who might not be baptized? No, they saw re-baptism as insubordination. Here is a group within society not cohesive with the society, and that broke up the Holy Roman Empire. Children were forcibly baptized against the wishes of their parents.

Zwingli's thoughts on the Anabaptists:

"Nothing grieves me more than at the present I have to baptize children, for I know it ought not to be done. I leave baptism untouched. I call it neither right nor wrong. If we were to baptize as Christ instituted it, then we would not baptize any person until he has reached the years of discretion, for I find it nowhere written that infant baptism is to be practiced." Zwingli studied this with some other scholars; however, when they went on to become Anabaptists because of their convictions, Zwingli went back on his. He felt infant baptism had to be supported, for the sake of the empire.

Luther:

"There is not sufficient evidence from Scripture that one might justify the introduction of infant baptism at the time of the early Christians after the apostolic period. But so much is evident that no one may venture with good conscience to reject or abandon infant baptism, which for so long a time has been practiced." Wait a minute, Luther, didn't you teach us "Sola Scriptura" (the Bible only); yet now you say although there is not sufficient Biblical evidence, yet it's been practiced so long...tradition, Luther? There was fear of what would happen to society if there developed two groups of people - those truly saved and baptized after and those baptized but not believers. Luther knew that salvation only comes from faith, yet he had to reconcile infant baptism, so he taught that infants are born sinners, then on the eighth day when they are baptized, God gives them faith, although he did not hold that every person baptized as an infant was truly saved. He believed the infant was made a Christian, but that it eventually wore off and later (through Confirmation) one had to accept Christ personally.

Calvin:

Saw a parallel between circumcision and infant baptism. Saw the baptism as a sign of a covenant. And many meanings have been attached to this statement.

All these men were part of the medieval notion that the church and state should be united, and that as a result of that unity, the sword could be used to promote the doctrines of Christianity, or if not to promote it, at least to take care of the heretics.

During this medieval period, infant baptism was used by the state to unify the empire, to make everyone a part of that over-all state church.

Baptism

What the Bible says about the ordinance of Baptism

1. The institution of baptism

a. Baptism was Christ's first public act

(Mt. 3:13-17 - *"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.")*

b. Baptism was Christ's last command

(Mt. 28:19-20 - *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*)

c. Baptism was an early church practice

(Acts 2:41 - *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*; 8:38 - *"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."*; 10:45-48 - *"And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost...Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..."*)

2. The Mode of baptism

Biblical baptism is immersion into water

Proof:

a. The meaning of the Greek word - "baptisma" (noun); "baptizo" (verb)

1) In classical Greek - immersion (Liddel & Scott lexicon)
2) In Septuagint Greek - immersion (II Ki. 5:14 - Naaman)
3) In the New Testament every passage requires or allows the meaning of "Immerse"

b. The syntax of the Greek

1) In relation to "water"
   a) Water is never the subject of a passive verb -
      EX: Water (subject) was poured (passive) on him
   b) Rather, water is always the object of a preposition.
      EX: He was baptized in water

2) In use with prepositions
   The prepositions (eis; en) that follow the word baptized specifically mean "in" or "into" never "by."

c. The context of the baptisms. Circumstances in contexts describing baptisms support immersion.

EX: "Coming up out of the water" (Mk. 1:10)
EX: "Went down into...came up out of" (Acts 8:38, 39)

3. The <u>subjects</u> of baptism: only <u>believers</u>

a. Only those who <u>repent</u> can be baptized

EX: "<u>Repent</u> and be baptized"

(Mt. 3:2-6 - *"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."*; Acts 2:38 - *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,a nd ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*)

b. Only those who <u>believe</u> can be baptized

Mark 16:16 - *"He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

Acts 2:38 - ***"Repent** and be **baptized**..."*

Acts 2:41 - *"Then they that gladly **received his word** were **baptized**: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*

Acts 8:12 - *"But when they **believed** Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were **baptized**, both men and women."*

Acts 9:36 - *"And Philip said, If thou **believest** with all thine heart, **thou mayest*** [be baptized]. *And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

Acts 16:14, 15 - *"Lydia ... **attended** unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was **baptized**..."*

Acts 16:31, 33 - *"And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...and [he] was **baptized...**"*

Acts 18:8 - *"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, **believed** on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing **believed**, and were **baptized**."*

c. Only those who have the <u>Holy Spirit</u> can be baptized

(Acts 10:47 - "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?")

d. Only those who are <u>disciples</u> can be baptized

(Mt. 28:19-20 - *"Go ye therefore, and teach* [lit. make disciples] *all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . ."*)

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4. The symbolism of baptism

a. Baptism symbolizes the believers union or identification with Jesus Christ.

Baptism is the believer's way of showing others "whose side he's on."

EX: Christ identified with John's righteous message
(Mt. 3:12-17 "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*)

EX: The disciples of John identified with John's message of repentance (Mt. 3:1-6 - *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."*)

EX: The New Testament believer identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. He is picturing his spiritual union into Christ
(Rom. 6:1-6 - *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."*)

b. Water baptism is the outward expression of what spirit baptism is the reality of - namely, union to Christ

(Acts 10:47 - *"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"*; I Cor. 12:13 - *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*)

c. Since a believer is picturing a once and for all union or identification with Christ, baptism never needs repeating, whereas the Lord's Supper is repeated since it illustrates continual fellowship.

Conclusion:

This doctrine like no other has been attacked, twisted, confused, and misused by Satan.
Some say there is no Baptism for the NT Church: Ultradispensationalists
Some say Baptism saves: United Church of Christ
Some say Baptism (ie sprinkling) washes away original sin: Roman Catholicism
But all that matters is what the Bible says:
God expects you as a Christian to identify with Christ by being Baptized (immersed in Water)
This ordinance does not save, but is an important matter of obedience. Its important because it's part of the great commission.

Join a N.T. church which Biblically practices Baptism.