

Confessions of Faith

Comments by Bob Allgood, Editor, The Cords of Truth

It is common among our people to talk about Primitive Baptist 'faith and practice'. In reality we are talking about Biblical doctrine and practice. No church or individual can rightfully be called by the name Primitive Baptist if they do not hold to 'the doctrine' or 'the faith', or if they pervert 'the gospel' as set forth in the word of God. Notice the words doctrine and faith and gospel are used in the singular. These terms can be interchanged because there is one body of 'doctrine' called 'the gospel' and 'the faith', even though it is made up of many inseparable, interlocking and interdependent parts. There was only one gospel preached by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. The faith was "once delivered unto the saints" by Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

This body of truth is called 'the doctrine' in Acts 2:41-42 and 13:12, I Tim. 4:16, Heb. 6:1, 2 John 9-10, and 'the gospel' in Gal. 1:6-9, and 'the faith' (or one faith) in Acts 6:7, 13:8 and 24:24, Rom. 1:5, Eph. 4:4-6, I Tim. 1:2 4:1, 5:8, 6:10 and 6:21, II Tim 3:8 and 4:7, Jude 3, (just to list a few references). The doctrines (plural) of men and/or devils (Matt. 15:19, Mk. 7:7, Col. 2:22, I Tim. 4:1, Heb. 13:9) are referred to in God's word as unsound doctrine or strange doctrines. Sound doctrine is always referred to in the singular.

The true church of God is built upon the one foundation of Christ himself (Matt 16:18, I Cor. 3:11). The 'doctrine' or 'the faith once delivered' was given to the Primitive (original) Baptist church in Jerusalem by Jesus Christ and the apostles (Acts 2:41-42). This body of truth, called 'the faith' by Jude, has been passed down to every true New Testament church successively, 'by faithful men who were able to teach others also', beginning in the first century unto this present day. To accept anything less is to accept man-made religious orders founded on the doctrines of men. The pattern for the New Testament church is set forth in the Scriptures. The faithful bride will "continue in the apostles doctrine". Men sometimes start with the real pattern and "depart from the faith", while others start with a counterfeit pattern and try to be "called by his name".

This is not to imply that every New Testament Baptist church is perfect in her understanding and practice of the faith. With man involved this is impossible. Even the New Testament churches of the first century had their faults in both doctrine and practice. Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Lord's letters to the seven churches in Asia prove this. Yet all of these churches were true NT churches and the body of truth -- the faith -- had been delivered to them.

The faith is contained in the whole of the Scriptures, "for all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness --" (II Tim. 3:16). Most Primitive Baptist churches summarize the major parts of the faith in what is known as "The Articles of Faith", as do most other religious orders. The word of God does not instruct any church to have an "Articles of Faith", nor a Constitution, By-Laws, Rules of Decorum, or Church Covenant, etc.. We are told to "study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth". In reality the Scriptures are our Articles of Faith.

But in these last days of yellow page, fast paced religions, with their instant scholars, who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, 'Articles of Faith' are helpful study and disciplinary tools for the church. This body of truth called 'the faith' governs the teachings and practices of the true Primitive Baptist churches. Churches which deliberately depart from the doctrine and practice and refuse to repent are soon looked upon as disorderly by orderly churches and, after much labor and prayer, fellowship is withdrawn.

A true Primitive Baptist 'Articles of Faith' will disclose the points of doctrine that separate Primitive Baptist from all other religious orders. This has nothing to do with us making any determination as to the eternal destiny of God's people. God's children do not have to be members of a Primitive Baptist church nor believe the doctrine or the faith in order to have eternal life. Eternal life is in Christ Jesus, and not in knowing or believing 'the faith once delivered to the saints'. This body of truth " is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11-12).

Following are some "Confessions of Faith" which help reveal the historical doctrinal position the Primitive Baptists have held for the past two thousand years. Anytime men attempt to extract from the totality of the Scriptures and set forth in a few words the great body of truth which is "most surely believed among us" there is bound to be terminology and phraseology that leaves some- thing to be desired. This is surely the case with all "Articles of Faith" and it is the case with these. However, we hope you enjoy reading them, and that God will bless this effort.