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## THE BAPTIST POSITION FOR TODAY.

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It is well for a man to know his place. It may not sound well to say so, for this may be taken as a hint that he is intruding into another man's place. Nevertheless it is well for a man to know his place. His place means his opportunity and his fitness. To have an opportunity and to find one's self fitted for it is the best that can fall to any man. It is what a man is for. It is well for a church to know her place. Against every church there is loud complaint that she has not found her place. "She has left undone the things she ought to have done, and she has done things which she ought not to have done, and there is no health in her," is all the cry. It is well for the sisterhood of churches to know their place. What the place is of the sisterhood of Baptist churches we are now to ask. That is, what is the Baptist opportunity and fitness, the Baptist message and mission, what, in a word, the Baptist position for today?

The opportunity is in part new, the fitness must be partly new. Unless our former position was essentially mistaken, it must remain for substance the same, but if it is to meet the demands of the changing times, its form must correspondingly change. In not a single particular will it remain unaffected. If I shall have the happiness to state correctly the present attitude of our denomination, some who are familiar with its former attitudes will inevitably feel that the new posture is strange or all but queer, even while they may concede that it is correctly stated. The former position is easily described. We hear it often, we read of it continually. Our fathers set

out with affirming the supreme and sole authority of the New Testament in matters of faith and practice. The New Testament seemed to them to teach that a church should be constituted of persons who give credible evidence of the new life. Such persons were to become members of the church through immersion in the name of the Trinity; being members, were to observe the memorial of our Lord's burial and rising; while as freemen in Christ they were to rule their own churches, and, for the sake of the completer self-rule, were to keep their churches independent. As a corollary to the spirituality of a church they held that it should concern itself only with spiritual things, while the state should confine itself to secular things. Thus they became the foremost advocates of full religious liberty.

To-day we begin with the authority of Christ. The fathers bowed to the authority of a book, we own the authority of a person. Not that they were less loyal to Christ, not that we defer less to the Bible, but that, in the order of thought the starting point has changed. It had to change. The many open questions about the Bible, even about the New Testament, forbid us to proceed as though these questions had not arisen. If we pay no regard to them, how can we meet the needs of a generation which is troubled about them? If we fail to consider them, how can we meet our own needs? But in what way shall we deal with these enigmas? Does anyone claim that the Baptist denomination has already taken them up and solved them? Or are we expecting a sisterhood of churches to pass upon them after a while? Will the venerable Philadelphia Association, or the energetic Pennsylvania Baptist State Mission Society, issue an answer to the problems of the higher criticism, or perhaps vote that these problems do not exist?

But what are we going to do? Is there nothing that can be done? Has all authority in religion been plucked from under our feet? Is no standard left upon which we can rely? Has the Bible lost all its conclusiveness for us if we do not set out with alleging its authority? Are we reduced to the plight of rationalists, and may properly believe only what we can reason out and argue up? This is what we will do: we will be loyal to Christ. We will ac-

cept his authority. We have in him the best which the Bible ever offered, or could offer, on whatever theory of inspiration. As to Christ we feel the strain of no real question. His ascendancy is admitted. He is the supreme Teacher, whatever else he may be, and his teaching we find in the New Testament. His authority is generally accepted, and for us it is final. Never before was his supremacy so heartily, so widely known. Him we know. Him we bow to. If we maintain this attitude, as we are sure to, we have found our opportunity and our fitness; we know our place.

The situation, then, may be thus defined: our fathers believed in the New Testament because Christ gave it; we believe in the New Testament because it gives us Christ. They argue that he left to his closest disciples this and that pledge of infallible guidance into all the truth; but we, without argument, at once recognize our Lord. It might, to be sure, look like a mark of deference to Christ if we accepted the Book on the ground that he gave it to us; but only slight acquaintance with points at issue is needed to show that the question would then arise, What beyond dispute did Christ actually say? and on the heels of this would come the perhaps more staggering challenge, What saying of Christ was meant by him to guarantee the inspiration of the New Testament?

Yet, beyond question, the New Testament gives us Christ. He cannot be mistaken there. The representation of him is coherent and clear. And it is of one whom we personally know. Like the Magdalen, we hear him speak our name, and we know our Lord. He is also recognizably the Christ whom all generations of Christians have walked with, and trusted, and worshipped. His figure is perfectly well known, and never to be missed on the pages of the New Covenant. Whether we follow thoughtful Matthew or childlike Mark, the painstaking Luke or the intimate John, always we find the Master, and find him always the same. Every sketch shows a particular aspect, but the same face. The epistles do not change him. If we range through the fields of the wide-viewing Paul, or tarry with glowing Peter, if with eagle John we soar above earthly things, or walk with cautious James, who will have no mistake about anything, still we are with

Christ. In the gospels he is a personage, in the epistles he is an experience. It is now well nigh two thousand years that men have kept his company, and to all the generations he is the same personage and the same experience as to Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul, Peter and John. In scouring the New Testament record criticism has not availed to intercept him, nor misunderstanding to disguise him; in the tumultuous course of history unbelief did not make out to hide, nor error to supplant, the real Christ. Again and again, at the hands alike of foes and friends, has the saying of the prophet come true, "His visage has been so marred more than any man," yet never beyond recognition. The Christ of history remains the Christ of the New Testament. But the New Testament has given him anew to every age of Christian history, and every age, of receiving him, has in turn accepted the New Testament. This ought to be in particular our own attitude toward the New Testament and toward Christ. Such an attitude is our denominational opportunity, and our denominational fitness.

Now and always it is the proper attitude, because the Christ of the Bible, of theology, of the church, and to-day the Christ of mankind, is an authoritative Christ. The Old Testament tells the story of the theocracy, but the New Testament proclaims the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom was announced by the forerunner, and preached by Jesus and his disciples. Of that kingdom he was to be the sovereign Ruler. Hebrews called him Messiah, their anointed king, and we call him Christ, still the king anointed to be over us. The ancient worthies mistook, it may be, the nature of his rulership, but not the fact of it. We, in turn, have been so engrossed with study and debate of his other offices as hardly to notice that the New Testament seats Christ upon a throne. Popular evangelical faith all but makes him abdicate the throne for the sake of exalting his priesthood. Because his kingdom is not of this world, it too easily escapes our notice that he has a kingdom. But he came from the right hand of God, and has returned with augmented authority. Now he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. That is to say, the New Testament presents Christ first and last, before all, after all and above all, as our sov-

ereign Lord. He was called Jesus, Savior, because he was to save his people from the disloyalty of sin.

Theology can make out no different relation between his offices. Too exclusive emphasis on one or another office has hitherto divided Christendom. To regard Christ as only a prophet makes men rationalists at most; to deal with him solely as priest sets them down as evangelicals at best; to overdo his kingship binds them hand and foot as high churchmen at worst. But his offices are interdependent, and in that interdependence the primacy belongs to the kingship. This office is as exalted in its intrinsic importance as in its outward dignity. A king is always above a prophet and more than a priest. As to be a patriarch was to be both prophet and priest, to speak for God and to offer sacrifice to God for one's household, so to be absolutely king is, in the essential idea of it, to embody the nation and fulfil all offices for them, to stand for them against the world and before God. As king Christ is more exalted than his functions of teaching and mediating could make him. He is prophet that he may declare the constitution and ordinances of his kingdom; he is priest that he may intervene between aliens and God and win them to God. Twice was he baptized into his royal office, once by John, again with that final baptism which he was so straitened to accomplish. Now he sends forth the Holy Spirit to make loyal subjects of all whom his teaching has availed to enlighten and his sacrifice to redeem. He is prophet and he is priest that he may be king, and for no other purpose which can be gathered from the nature and relations of his office, or from their fruition in the lives of his people. Supremacy is his prerogative, to rule is his right.

What both the Bible and the systematizing of Bible doctrine affirm history illustrates. The great churches which represent Christianity as a factor in human affairs, have set forth Christ as pre-eminently a king. His kingdom to them is his church, and obedience has been claimed as due primarily to the church because due ultimately to him. Practically this has issued in an assumption by the church of sole authority. The proper office of faith is said to be to believe the church. The faithful are those only who first of all put faith in the church.

Deferring to the church's prerogative they accept what she teaches and practice what she prescribes. They believe in Christ because she bids them do so, and in such wise as she bids. If this has amounted to spiritual bondage, a bondage as foreign to the gospel as that which Paul dreaded among the Galatians, and as unfriendly to real service of Christ as a Christian Pharisaism must needs be, all this is because a relation of Christians to the Kingdom has usurped the place of a relation between Christians and the King. The body is more esteemed than the Head, the society is put over its Lord, the organism preferred to the organic life. A proper relation is one of loyalty on the part of *the individual*. *The lordship of Christ, the loyalty of Christians* sets forth, as well as a formula may, what Baptists ought to stand for.

Such an attitude may be taken by any Christian denomination; historically we can claim it as our own. Two considerable and opposing bodies have always stood for authority in religion, the Roman church and the Baptist denomination. These two are bent on divine sanction for every doctrine and every rite which they accept. The Romanist bows to the delegated authority of the Church, the Baptist insists on original headship of the Bible. If now, without defection from the Bible, we would take a position impregnable to modern criticism, we must stand for the supremacy of the Lord Jesus, and stand firm. Any relaxation of loyalty would be a surrender. The best tempered weapons would fall from our nerveless hands. We have always felt that we could take orders from the Commander himself. Revelation has been for us an indispensable basis of religion. Ours is ever a "religion of authority" because it is "religion of the spirit." Between these is no antithesis. The spirit in the Bible is the spirit in those who wrote the Bible. The spirit in them is the spirit in us. Whatever its varieties, true religious experience is in species one. And so the spirit's teaching today reaffirms and confirms the teaching of the spirit at that day. In all days, if God but speak, and men but know his voice, it remains only to obey. To us Christ is the Word of God. His person embodies the

truth, his life sets it forth. What he is and what he does we find in the New Testament, whoever its writers were. When, therefore, we insist on the supremacy of Christ, we declare our independence of higher criticism both conservative and destructive. The disputes about authorship, mode of composition, or of compilation and editing, are of high moment, but not of the highest. We stand outside them, deeply interested spectators, but that is all. Our attitude involves a frank recognition of three facts: In the first place, the problems of criticism are too academic to be solved by any religious denomination; secondly, we do not need that they should be solved; thirdly, our unhesitating recognition of the Jesus of the New Testament as the historic Christ and the Christ of spiritual experience carries with it an almost irresistible persuasion that the traditional claims of the New Testament are true. The documents which give so veracious an account of Christ cannot well be regarded as spurious or misleading. Their credit, which depends on his, is well nigh as secure as his. Our loyalty to Christ is practically loyalty to the New Testament. The lordship of Christ and the loyalty of Christians furnish the starting point for Baptists in our day; what do they further involve?

Primarily and most obviously his precepts should be our rules of living. His commands are our laws. Loyalty is love for a law-giver. Loyalty to Christ is the love which he described when he said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." That Christ makes a requirement is reason enough to a loyal heart for obedience. We may not see why such a requirement is made, but we do not doubt that it is properly made. We have no suspicion that there is any arbitrariness or capriciousness in our Lord's exactions; and so what he exacts we enjoy. Obedience to Christ is not legalism but liberty. Still, to be under law to Christ is felt to be for us the consummation of his mission alike for him and for us.

The next fruit of loyalty to Christ is that we accept him as the supreme criterion of truth. "The truth as it is in Jesus" is for us the consummate truth of religion. It was noticable that "he taught with authority." He

never hesitated to affirm anything which it fell to him to affirm. His assertion went to the outermost range of conceivable authority when he said, "No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Revelation was completed in personal knowledge of Christ himself. He embodied more than he spoke, far more. It was quite in John's way to record that the invisible God was offered to human eyes in Christ. "He that hath seen me," said he to Philip, "hath seen the Father." So vital was this knowledge that we dare not affirm it in other words than his own, and hardly take in its purport even when couched in terms of his own choosing: "This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send." But as of his precepts so of his teachings we say that we may not always see how this or that can be true, yet we accept it as true. "At thy word I will let down the net," said Peter, and found that word could be trusted. This is the position of advantage and of fitness today. What Christ meant for teaching it belongs for Baptists to believe, and in turn to teach. From the torch in the Leader's hand we light our own and our neighbor's torch.

Yet submission to the law and acceptance of the doctrine of Christ does not compare with the stretch of loyalty shown in another way: we trust in him. Trust is the most entire subordination possible of one person to another. No act can be humbler, none more energetic, none more devoted. To trust indeed expects everything, but it gives over everything. It gets and it gives without reserve. It makes Christ ours, but it makes us his. Its gaining is in giving. It conquers by capitulation. Faith is a more primary loyalty than love. It works by love, and then love is transformed back into faith. At love's best faith is the furthest that love can go; at faith's fullest, love is the overflow of faith. When we commit ourselves entirely to Christ we entirely devote ourselves to him. To believe is to obey. "This is the work of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent." To set forth Christ as the ruler of our lives, the standard of our beliefs, the object of our trust, is the mission and the message, the opportunity



and the fitness, in a word, the position for Baptists in our day.

But this threefold characterization of our Lord is possible because loyalty to him further requires us to hold the highest view of his person and of his work. To reduce the taking of human nature by the divine, in order to be rid of the miracle of it, into the last term of a process which pervades the cosmos may be for others to attempt, but not for us. Some may be embarrassed by the miraculous in the incarnation, we must know how to glory in it. Others may try to make faith easy by lowering the claims of Christ; for us faith is easy when we raise his claims. The experiment of letting down his pretensions in order to win adherents for him, has been tried many a time, and has often failed; but for us it is impossible because it is forbidden by loyalty. The newest theology of all, the Ritschlian, may seek to comfort the devout in spirit and despairing in doctrine by an assurance that it does not matter about doctrines, that one may get all Christ can give without asking himself what Christ is, or how he came by what he offers; but we at least have not learned how to leave the nature of our Lord in question; it cannot be worth as much in our judgment merely to call him Son of God, and let it go at that, not trying to find out whether he is more than Son of Man. We have no fitness, and can never find our opportunity, in any make-believe about our Lord. We must be loyal to the utmost in our thoughts of him, because we stand for his supremacy. If we do not know him as supreme, we do not know him at all; it is some one else than Christ whom we know.

As to his person, so as to his work: we must exalt this to the utmost. Loyalty requires it. In this way we act but as his immediate disciples learned to do. How they got their doctrine of his mission we are not told in detail. What we are told is this: so far as it involved his crucifixion they could not be made to accept it in advance; they held their Master at too high a rate; but the Holy Spirit was afterward to call to mind his sayings. When at length he did so their Master had taken his throne and they were ready loyally to set the highest estimate on all that he did or bore. With this disposi-

tion toward our Lord we too may be taught by the Spirit all that was taught to them.

But loyalty leads us not alone to glory in the cross; whatever is claimed for any work of our Lord, we also claim. If some cry "Back to Christ," we will go back to Christ; if others shout "Forward to Christ," we, too, will press forward to him. We believe in the Christ that was, and in the Christ who is to come. If any insist that everything turned on the incarnation, and can see nothing except what the incarnation in itself provided for, we will insist as stoutly as they on all which was gained when the "Word was made flesh, and men saw his glory"; or if the many refuse to glory save in the cross, we will not be outdone by the many in this glorying. Should others still declare with Paul that we escape condemnation not merely because Christ died, but rather because he rose again, we will look to the resurrection for as much of good as they do. Or if the resurrection itself is taken for a first step, which had to be followed by the ascension as a second step in order to make Christ our Intercessor and more than Intercessor, our present Life, even this conception of him, the ripest in the New Testament, and the latest to the common apprehension of Christians, we will let no one tell of in our hearing, even for the first time and as a new truth to us, without rejoicing in it and agreeing to it at once with all our hearts. It is seen to be a fresh claim for Christ which is supported by the experience and the teaching of the great saints in the apostolic age and every age. We can not let ourselves be anywise outdone in magnifying the work of our Lord.

Possibly we may outdo all others at resisting disparagement of some office for the sake of exalting another office. We cannot make the less of our Lord's incarnation for the sake of making the more of his cross, and we must not lower the cross in order to assess higher the value of the incarnation. We will never lay stress on his rising by withdrawing emphasis from his dying; nor, even for the sake of rating remission of sin as the purchase of his blood, can we let ourselves doubt that his resurrection helped to earn forgiveness for men. Nothing done by him on earth was so momentous that we dare

slight any longer what he now does for us; but, on the other hand, zeal for what may be to us relatively a new truth must not lead us to think slightly of the resurrection as an occurrence, of the crucifixion as a mere fact, or of the incarnation as sheer reality. What Christ once was among men made sure of what he now is in men. Loyalty to him, as well as theological coherence, forbids us to belittle one of his offices in hope of magnifying the rest.

But to what end are these offices? What shall we announce that they have made ready for us to do? We would not bid men to attempt what God has already done, or has reserved for himself to do. That is, we cannot add to the Godward efficacy of the atonement. Can we then exhort men to be born of the Spirit, to be created anew in Christ Jesus? Should we summon them because dead in sins to rise to newness of life? Shall we call on them, as President Finney says he did, "to make themselves a new heart?" The supremacy of Christ suggests what we should say to our generation. Our message is no other than that to which we hold ourselves bound: "Obey Christ. Be loyal to Christ." Loyalty to him means not merely a new way of living, but a new principle of life. If, like Peter at the Gate Beautiful, we should tell men to "repent and be converted," the converting like the repenting must surely be from the centre outward. Our fathers had their attention fixed on this inward transformation; and, because it was so surely a transformation, their minds were taken up with the fact of change. They jealously argued for the newness of the new principle of life. They insisted that it must be new in order to be real. Any one's attempt to explain the nature of the change wrought by the Holy Spirit our fathers followed with critical intentness lest the explanation should undo the fact of a change. If it were explained as a change in the affections, they mostly insisted that, on the contrary, it must be a change in the nature. But others would not admit that the nature was capable of changing; to their minds regeneration could not be a change of nature, it must be the creation of a new nature. Yet even this fell short of the need which some thought they saw. Nothing less than a new life

must be produced, and this new life certain popular guides were prepared to cry up as no less than Christ himself in us, become our vital principle.

In a word, our fathers found themselves busied with the metaphysics of regeneration. They were so intent on making the most of the change that nothing short of a philosophy of the operations of the divine Spirit on human spirits could content them, and metaphysics claimed a place in their doctrine which, Bible-followers as they were, they would have been the foremost to decry in advance, and effectually to guard against, too, except through the process of insensibly drifting into it. Most intangibly metaphysical of all is any theory of a new life imparted by the Holy Spirit in connection with infant baptism.

The doctrine of the new birth is certainly one which has to be offered to our generation in a new form. It is for us who preach it to be occupied not so much with the nature of the change as with the aim and object of it. We cannot preach and the Scriptures did not, "Be born again." We can say they need to be born again, and we can call on all men to be loyal to Christ. They will not become so unless they are transformed by the Holy Spirit, but this transforming is for the Holy Spirit, not for themselves, to effect. As when Jesus walked among men so now he bids them follow him. It is not necessary to enter with the unconverted into the question what the change is in regeneration, to expound synergism, monergism, or any other proposed account of this mystery. There are signs that already an idea has got about that birth from above is chiefly concerned with providing for a right ruling motive, imparting loyalty to Christ. The experiences of recent converts correspond to such an idea. We hear little about the burden of past sins, or hardness of heart, or struggle against besetting temptations, or about a penitent's despair and his deliverance. Converts seldom move us of late with the story of their painful conviction of guiltiness and their ecstatic delight when forgiven. We hear them say, "I thought it was time for me to turn to Christ. I felt that I ought to enlist on his side. I asked him to accept me. I believe he has, and now I desire to live for him." If asked whether

they have regarded themselves as sinners and trusted in Christ as their Savior, usually they will say yes, but it had not occurred to them to make a point of either the repentance or the faith. A specially intelligent young man thus summed up to me his religious experiences: "I expect to repent, I know I believe, and I wish to be baptized." At some future date he might take up the fact of past disobedience, now he was taken up with the thought of his present duty. So far he was like Saul of Tarsus. Saul, when the conviction smote him that he had made a mistake in persecuting Jesus, did not say he was sorry, did not confess a changed belief. No, he simply asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" Such a conversion may possibly be not the less radical because it looks forward rather than backward, or because the convert has not studied up the nature of the change. It is fairly certain that in these days our exhortations are surer of a hearing if we urge the object and aim of the renewing Spirit rather than try to open for inspection the process of renewal.

But some one will be ready with the challenge, Is not this to preach salvation by works? I reply, Does the Sermon on the Mount preach salvation by works? You ought to answer No. Why not Yes? Because the Lord does not there tell how to become a disciple, but what it is to be a disciple. He describes what his true follower must be and do, not how one may begin to be his true follower. And so to call on men to obey Christ, to be loyal to Christ, is to tell them what it is to be a Christian, not how to become a Christian. It is only just now that I have been insisting on the importance of estimating at its highest all that Christ did and does for us; the question now before us is, what all this can effect in us. It is meant to effect in us a transformation by the Spirit; but to our consciousness this operation of the Spirit can be no other than the conversion of our affections and of our lives. It is the Spirit which enables us to be loyal to Christ; but what we should summon men to is not the Spirit's work but our own.

No ground for questioning the reality of the new birth or its newness can be found in recent statistics which go to show that it is ordinarily associated with the trans-

ition from childhood to young manhood and womanhood. Neither science, philosophy, poetry, nor art is discredited by the fact that capacity for them shows itself at the same period, as is sagaciously remarked by Professor James in his "Varieties of Religious Experience." If most people who turn to God at all do so as they cease to be children and before they become men and women, this is no recent discovery, and needed no carefully collated statistics to prove it. The churches of the majority have always recognized and acted on the fact. The Greek, the Roman, the Lutheran, the English churches with their "confirmation" service, the Presbyterians with their "children of the covenant," and the Methodists with their "probationers," indeed, almost all except a few Congregational bodies assume that the young of their flocks are to commit themselves formally to Christ and his church at the end of childhood. If we are not satisfied that all these youth are then regenerated, we have reason to believe that most of them who are ever regenerated are regenerated then. For ourselves, holding as steadfastly as ever that a church should be made up of those only who give good evidence that they have entered the new life, our mission is to make a proclamation of that life in terms not too theological to be appreciated. Let us, then, describe it as a life ruled by loyalty to Christ as Lord, through acceptance of Christ as Redeemer.

We may now and then wonder a little to find ourselves noticed not so much for insisting on the spirituality of the church as on scrupulous observance of its appointed forms. Our doctrine of the ordinances needs to be re-stated. Its substance is correct, its form is inapt. Of the need for restatement no sign could be plainer than the fact that the doctrine of baptism and communion is rarely heard from our pulpits, and more rarely welcomed. The ordinary position as to baptism is that believers ought to be baptized because Christ ordained it. Surely this is a good reason, and all the reason which can be looked for in a majority of young persons. But everyone baptised merely because it is required of him is a formalist. A formalist is no other than one who uses a rite without seeing any fitness in it or any reason

for it, beyond the fact that it has been appointed. If, to begin with, we can obey no better than formalists do, this is better than not to obey at all. But formalism is irksome. It is not congenial with the nature of Christianity. If no other reason is in mind for being baptized than that baptism is commanded, the question is bound to arise whether, after all, the ordinance is a necessary preliminary to church membership. Within a year or two American Baptists have been astounded to learn that certain of their pastors are ready, here as in England, to deny that necessity. Once openly said, this can never be unsaid. The denominational situation cannot again become just what it was before. All the world now knows of Baptists who maintain that Christ prescribed no other form of baptism than immersion, yet question whether he prescribed any baptism. How can this situation be met?

By showing that there is reason enough for being baptized in addition to the fact, and which explains the fact, that Christ commanded us to be baptized. It is a reason which loyalty readily apprehends, and joyously embraces. We read descriptions of how a simple-hearted villager in the Bavarian mountains dares to take upon him the role of Jesus in a passion play, and to let himself be treated seemingly as Jesus was treated. It may strike us as an awful sacrilege. Yet every believer has the privilege once in his life of taking the part of his Master, of being for a moment laid out of sight and rising to light again, as his Lord was buried and rose. In the same way you declare what the Lord has done to you that in Christ you have died to the old life, and risen to the new life. Even more, you set forth what Christ has hereafter to accomplish. As the waters close above you so one day the earth must close, and as the waters part, so will the earth open that you may rise in the likeness of the Lord's resurrection. But this is all of Christianity. What Christ did for men, what he has done to every believer, what he will yet do for us, this sums up the special teachings of our religion. To profess faith in all this, to profess it so vividly, and to do it in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a decisive committal of oneself to Christ and his service

before the face of the world. There will always be many whose loyalty to Christ will rejoice in such an opportunity, and who could by no means be persuaded to forego it. To begin in this way one's membership in the body of Christ may or may not seem to be commanded, but it is at least allowed, and, we may be sure, will never cease to make its appeal to faithful hearts that count it no shame to put on Christ before men, and would be glad, if it were possible, even to shame the shame that was his. As for ourselves, we will not cease to believe that baptism is required; but we can best recommend it to others as a loyal profession of Christ; and this we may take as the main reason for the requirement of it.

As to the Lord's Supper we used now and then to be bidden to look at it as but a memorial, yet, perhaps were oftener instructed to invite to it only members of our own churches. Strange and even sad that the purport of so affectionate a ceremonial should be at all lost to view in unamiable contention about who should participate in it. Of late we have heard but little on this head, and are likely to hear even less. But it is not possible to justify real neglect of what the communion signifies. We would mostly agree that it is suitable and seemly to observe a rite which means to begin, before a rite which means to continue the Christian life. This is all that is involved in the matter which it touches. And this is our whole doctrine as to terms of communion, in a nut shell. As in the case of baptism, if we would commend this ordinance we must learn to keep before people's minds not so much its ritual as its meaning, not precisely the rules for it but pre-eminently the spiritual realities in it. If, then, the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the Lord's dying, it is a memorial celebrated by treating it as food. By way of remembrance we newly accept our Savior. And then, as the communion is significant of union with him, it also of necessity signifies union with all who by the same means are united to him. Did you ever kneel by a loved one and unite your prayers? If there you both met Christ, did you not meet each other in Christ? And could it turn out otherwise if the communion brings us into union with him? Can the radii reach the center and stay apart? As Paul has it,



“We the many are one loaf.” When this rite joins you to Christ, it joins you to every brother who sits there with you, and by the same means is joined to his Lord. More still, there and then you are united to everyone anywhere who ever did or ever will by the same act of piety reach him who is our Life. We may not sit together at church, but we sit together in Christ. What doctrines the far away brother holds or denies does not matter. At this point nothing matters except that both you and he are made fast to Christ by this reminder of him. How close is such communion? It is close as union with Christ. How open and wide is such communion? It is wide and open as faith. We Baptists have not claimed all that we are entitled to. If we are strict as to form, we are wide as the widest in spiritual reality, and the spiritual reality is what the ordinance is for. If we would be loyal to Christ, the spiritual reality appointed by him is what we ought by all means to bear in mind and urge. Our doctrine of the ordinances remains, but we shall present it better, when we show how it illustrates loyalty to Christ. We best commend baptism not so much by the command for it as by the meaning of it; we best commend the communion not by declaring its terms but by showing what it is for. And so once more the form is for the sake of the substance; and will any one tell why it should not be so?

Democratic church government and religious liberty build on the same fact, the lordship of Christ, and are maintained by the same principle, loyalty to Christ. It may be doubted whether there is a New Testament polity, but beyond doubt there is a New Testament principle of Christian association. Perhaps there was no uniformity in the functions of deacons, of elders, of overseers, also called bishops, or of congregations. At least, if uniformity existed, we cannot prove what it was. The function of the apostles themselves is not entirely clear. Even Paul, who would not admit that in anything he was “behind the chiefest apostles,” and could “give a proof of Christ speaking in him,” always tried to convince by argument, as though he had no authority whatever. Why, in the very epistle which insisted with violence that he did not owe his doctrine to any man, and might

venture to rebuke even Peter, he admitted that he obeyed a revelation in communicating to those who "were of reputation" the gospel he preached, "lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain." But Paul left no doubt as to the principle which ought to rule the relations of believers; and this was such deference to the lordship of Christ as would forbid any brother to accept a master or to play the master. Furthermore, inasmuch as duty is to Christ alone and supreme, every servant of Christ must be "fully persuaded in his own mind" what his duty is. Paul but echoed the injunction of our Lord himself, "Be not called masters," and for the same reason, "One is your Master, even Christ."

Such a principle as this by establishing personal liberty would leave a church without any government whatever, if it were not that besides individual concerns there are common concerns. These latter, where all concerned are free and equal, can be managed only by common consent, or by a majority, if common consent is not to be attained, and if a decision must be had. Against the infringement of individual rights civil governments guard by constitutional or statutory provisions; but a church has to rely on the sense of justice and on fraternal feeling, whether the evil threatened is an invasion of individual rights by the church or a disregard of the church's peace by an individual. Congregational control of independent churches is the fundamentally correct polity, whatever modification may be adopted in practice without impairment of that loyalty to Christ which is the liberty of Christians.

Religious liberty in general has no other secure support except the lordship of Christ. I have never felt quite satisfied with the validity of the position familiarly taken by Baptists, that those who admit only converted persons to church membership could never be persecutors, because conversion is through faith, and faith is voluntary. Such a principle would, to be sure, forbid forcing any one into the church, but it would not forbid us to forbid the spread of false doctrine. There is nothing in voluntariness of church membership which must exclude the position of saintly Augustine that it is better to kill the body of a heretic than that he should kill

souls by spreading his heresy. But duty to Christ breaks every other bond. If I ought to obey him, I ought not to obey anyone else

This doctrine does not provide for precisely another position familiarly taken by us. We have claimed liberty from interference by the state, but have felt free to interfere indefinitely with our own church members. We have formulated confessions of faith and imposed covenants, meantime interpreting religious liberty as liberty for every brother who finds he does not entirely agree with us to step out of our fellowship. But the duty of every man to judge for himself as to the will of Christ extends to all *personal* opinions and practices. Individual liberty is guaranteed by the lordship of Christ, and its only bounds are those which loyalty prescribes. All diversity not traitorous is permissible. Our fathers faced their generation with the claim of liberty under the state; it is for us to face our own generation with the claim of *liberty under the church*. Christ is the only Lord whom we may acknowledge, loyalty to Christ the only law we can obey. "For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore."

The lordship of Christ appoints one supreme function to the church; namely, to make him Lord in the sphere which he has chosen. His kingdom is not of this world. The things of Caesar are not the things of God. It is the supreme office of the church to keep before men the importance of spiritual things. Attempts have not been wanting to provide through the church for temporal interests. Almost every reputable line of business has been run by churches in the hope of figuring as friendly to the poor. How far such an impression has been made on the world's poor others must be better able to report than I am. But this I may venture to say, that loyalty to Christ does not prescribe the conversion of all our churches into department stores which will provide every sort of goods at cost. It is not our mission to put an end to all merchantile profit and all private trade. We must at any rate leave to Philadelphians their Wanamaker and the stores which line Eighth street. No matter what success institutional churches could win, their trading function is not a function of loy-

alty to Christ, except so far as it is tributary and subsidiary to the spiritual ends of the Kingdom of God. While genius lends itself to preaching "another gospel which is not another," hearers in plenty will be there; but when the voice of genius is heard no more, it will be plain, if that voice was heard long enough, that spiritual men, plain men, teaching spiritual truth, have done nearly all the permanent good during that generation. For common-place ministers the choice is between "interpreting spiritual things to spiritual men" and whistling down the wind.

The nineteenth century was marked, the world over, and as much as anywhere our own country through, by a delirium of doctrinal fancies and freaks. These hundred years were a prolonged theological orgy. In the joyous freedom of speculation one enthusiastic group were ready to wipe out all substantive distinction between the human, or even the physical, and the divine. They would convert all things, including the soul of man, into activities of the Deity, until monism fairly became, as Spinoza was said to be, "God-intoxicated." At another extreme the Ritschlians, in despair of all mystic access to God, let theology sing into the slumbrous apathy of reaction, and denied all veritable knowledge of spiritual things. The strange frenzy of the nineteenth century it may be hoped, is wearing itself out. What shall bring it to a full end, and restore doctrinal sanity and health? As I passed a gang of men at work on a street railway, a large indolent negro lifted himself up and chanted to a weird, barbaric air these ear-splitting words: "I've spent all my money; I've been on a spree; I've been all over the world!" There was no rhyme and little rhythm in his song, but it was the completest poetical expression that I ever heard of the sense at once of futility and enlargement which are the very soul of drunkenness. The idle fellow had been on a spree no doubt, and we may take for granted that he had spent all his money; but while he staggered from grogshop to groggery, or reeled out of one street of the slums into another, very likely it seemed to him that he was going all over the world. How very big things must grow to the senses and the soul bewildered by

strong drink. There was no better cure for our dusky brother than the very thing that he was now doing, simply to work out of doors, in full air and under the shining sun. And so, for a generation drunken or drowsy with theological fancies, there is no radical cure except in work, loyal work out in the world, for the Lord Christ. If the church will do his will, she shall know his truth, as he himself said. If she will sow his spiritual things, he will doubtless provide for her all needed theological things. Christ is Lord, let us be loyal.

What was remarked at the outset may now be repeated: the Baptist denomination has not changed its doctrinal positions, and there is no sufficient reason for anticipating that it will do so; but it needs to present its tenets in ways as suitable to the present as its former ways were suitable to the past. In no case can its teachings be commended by timidity. What was remarked concerning the doctrine of Christ may be accepted as true of all Christian truth, high claims and a bold advocacy of them win assent, low views and half-hearted defence make a religion seem not worth defending. Modern weapons of precision do not dispense with the ancient courage.

It should be added that the representations of this paper do not claim to be applicable to any religion with which the writer is not particularly acquainted. The Northeast, and to some less degree, the Northwest, here and there, requires that familiar Baptist positions adapt themselves to a new situation. How far the South is yet exempt from invasion, not so much of new doctrines as a new attitude and sympathy toward doctrines, Southern observers must judge for themselves. They also alone can know whether they are sensible of any anxiety about the state of religious opinion and feeling, or whether they are ever troubled by a partly felt need of adapting their appeals and teachings to a new situation. But it is at least probable that wherever in these days men think about religion, similar problems will arise, similar strain be felt on mind and heart, and the very same need reveal itself that Christians should above all else and always be loyal to their Lord.

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