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SOME BAPTIST TYPES.

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The religionist may be denominated mystic, or creedalist, or institutionalist, or religious pragmatist according as he lays chief stress upon the devotional, the doctrinal, the ecclesiastical or the practical side of the religious life. Baptists have reproduced all four of these types—at least in some measure. Many early Baptists were much like Quakers in their emphasis upon the inner, spiritual life. Others have made much of ecclesiastical connections and unbroken successions. Some Baptists have been known to lay quite commendable stress upon doctrinal rectitude, and yet in their zeal for ecclesiastical regularity have traced themselves back through sects of the earlier ages whose doctrines they would today repudiate, and whose fellowship they would reject, did not distance lend to them enchantment and ecclesiastical necessity render them convenient. There is also springing up a practical type, whose gospel approaches the motto, “Baptist is that Baptist does.”

In this country it has not been easy for Baptists to understand their English brethren in such matters as open membership—involving, of course, much freedom in

the matter of baptism and the communion. The recent suggestion of the distinguished English Baptist leader, Mr. J. H. Shakespeare, looking toward a merger of all the English Free Churches, is puzzling to a large part of the Baptist brotherhood of America. But English Baptists have always laid greater stress upon the mystic conception of religion, than have American Baptists. Religion being chiefly an affair of the spirit, the spiritual nature of religion must be kept to the front. With this conception deeply impressed on the consciousness, differences in matters of doctrine and of ecclesiastical practice naturally fall into the background. Besides, English Baptists must continually contend for the faith against the evils of High Churchism with its ceremonialism and lofty claims to exclusive regularity; against the unfairness and oppression of a state church; hence many lesser differences are forgotten in the face of the larger foe.

Dr. John Clifford in his thrilling address at the Baptist World Alliance in Philadelphia, 1911, declared that American Baptists would be far more sympathetic with their English brethren, if they could only understand the difficulties confronting the Baptists of England in the efforts to keep spiritual religion alive; and that we on this side would not interpret their methods as simply doctrinal and denominational laxity. The creedal and ecclesiastical emphases are relatively lost in the presence of the fearful onslaught upon religion interpreted in terms of spirituality and freedom; just as the American colonies forgot their differences under the pressure of oppressive imperialism. The end of the religious struggle in England cannot now be forecast.

From a similar point of view, the Baptists of the North and the Baptists of the South furnish an interesting comparative study. American Baptists began in the North about the year 1639. It was only after the American Revolution that Baptists became numerous in the South. That story to the effect that Thomas Jefferson

learned democracy from a little country Baptist church in Virginia, may be a myth; but it is probably not accidental that that section of the land which accepted most fully the Jeffersonian conception of government should have proved to be the section which has been most hospitable to Baptist propaganda and growth. There are in the United States more than six millions of Baptists, at least two-thirds of whom reside south of Mason and Dixon's line.

In the early days of expansion the Baptists North and South were much alike. In some cases Southern Baptists were only Northern Baptists moved South. Such was the first church in Charleston, which came bodily from Kittery, Me. Churches in Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas were the result of preaching of traveling evangelists from the North, such as Daniel Marshall, Shubael Stearnes, John Gano, and many beside. Other leaders who exerted wide influence were natives of the North, such as John Leland, Richard Furman, Luther Rice, and among the later comers, J. R. Graves. No doctrinal differences entered into the split of 1845, when the Southern Convention came into being. The North was theologically as conservative as the South, and for years after the Civil War, even so staunch a landmarker as James M. Pendleton, a native of the South, lived and exerted wide influence as a northern pastor under the very shadow of a northern theological seminary—Crozer. His memory is still highly respected in this locality.

That during the past quarter of a century some differences between Northern and Southern Baptists have developed can scarcely be denied. These have been due to certain thought currents which have respectively influenced them and to the difference in practical conditions which have surrounded them. These divergences are not to be explained in terms of loyalty or disloyalty to truth; but rather are to be accounted for by the circumstances under which the Baptists of each section have been com-

pelled to do their work, causing some difference of viewpoint, and of doctrinal emphasis.

There is some truth, no doubt, in the Hegelian view that all human progress is the resultant of the interaction of opposing forces. In the making of Baptists, the world over, there have been two counteracting principles—that of *authority*, and that of *freedom*—the one a conservative, the other a progressive force. Even in New Testament times there were “certain ones from James” (Gal. 2:11) who made much of apostolicity, strictly interpreted, and the authority of the mother church. On the other hand, there was Paul who stood for freedom, for the religion of the Spirit, for apostolicity freely interpreted. Among the Anabaptists these same two principles struggled for pre-eminence. Some of those forerunners, as has been said, were much like modern Quakers in their emphasis upon the authority of the inner revelation; while others laid deeper stress upon the authority of the written Word. A man will be a strict constructionist or a loose constructionist, a conservative or a progressive, according as he places emphasis upon the *authority* principle, or upon the *freedom* principle in religion.

The Northern Baptists are rather nearer to the English Baptists in stressing the historic Baptist principle of freedom of individual interpretation. The Southern and the Canadian Baptists have given greater emphasis to the doctrine of the authority of the Scriptures. Denominational development in America may be compared to that which has taken place in our political life. The nation took its form under the influence of two nucleating ideas—national unity and states’ rights, expressed jointly in the motto *E pluribus unum*. But through the march of events, social, industrial and political (and through the dominating personalities of such men as Hamilton on one side, and Jefferson on the other), the North advanced along the pathway of nationalism, while the South chose the route of the states. One section saw on the ensign

the *unum* in deep letters; the other perceived the *pluribus*, writ large. So, one side regarded the Constitution as a document to be interpreted freely, sometimes even in accordance with a "higher law"; the other, regarded this organic document as one to be strictly and literally construed, both in its utterances and in its silences. Each of these positions was potential in our national genius, for the United States put forth at the very same time the first *written* constitution on the one hand, and the doctrine of individual freedom and local self-government on the other. In similar fashion, Baptists have emphasized individual, spiritual freedom and local self-government as no other people have, and at the same time have insisted on obedience to the written Word as norm of faith and practice.

But, in all times and places, these two principles have not always been equally stressed. For example, the predecessors of the English Baptists were strong on individual freedom and independency, but weak on the Scriptural teaching as to the form of baptism. So the English Baptists of today are much inclined to leave the matter of baptism to the free conscience of the individual. Somewhere between the loose-construction view of the English Baptists and the strict-construction view of the South, stand the Northern Baptists.

As Edmund Burke said about indictments, it is impossible for us to draw up a generalization about wide sections of people that would be altogether fair. There are as staunch conservatives in the North as may be found anywhere. Witness the brethren of Illinois who affiliate with the Southern Convention, and numerous Northern editorial censors who undertake to keep their brethren in the straight and narrow way. And there are doctrinal progressives in the South whose number is daily increasing. Yet it may be safely affirmed that Northern Baptists do not belong so thoroughly to the strict construction school of interpreters, but are inclined

to give larger freedom, than do Southern Baptists, to the individual, for private judgment in religion; and to the local church a more complete autonomy in matters of practice.

There is involved here, of course, the question as to the true conception of the Bible as a guide. Is it a sort of religious *statute* law, or is it rather a book of *common law*? That is, does it provide fixed rules of practice and procedure, or is it to be rather regarded as a record of cases, of examples, which embody the principles of life that are to guide and govern? Is it a book of final enactments, a sort of "mould of doctrine"? or is it rather intended as an educative, stimulative guide by which the Holy Spirit may the better lead the individual and the Church to find out the right way to the will of God in every age? Is it a final revelation of all forms and methods, a sort of "pattern shown in the mount;" or is it an inspired teacher which has a goal toward which the hearts of men are being eternally led? Naturally those who hold the second of these views regard those who hold the first as literalists, disloyal to essential truth, and to the living Spirit; while those who hold the first, look upon the others as faithless to the written Word. We may again affirm, therefore, that the difference is not a matter of disloyalty to the truth, but rather a question of the theory of the Scriptures, their nature and function in the making and guiding of the spiritual life.

Furthermore, when the Southern Baptist speaks of soul liberty he, most likely, thinks of the political aspects of that doctrine. He is very sensitive as to the union of church and state in any form whatsoever. When the man of the North thinks of soul liberty he is prone to think of its wider aspects—he wishes to be free to worship God and interpret His Word according to the dictates of his own conscience, uncoerced either by civil government or by authoritative creed, or by that collective, centralized, indefinite power known as "the denomination," or by

brethren come in to spy out his liberty; unawed either by past "Baptist usage," or present Baptist critics.

So much for the differences in *stress* of Baptist principles. There are also differences in conditions in the two sections of our country which account for some of the divergences in denominational life.

Southern Baptists have not been so powerfully influence as have those of the North by what may be termed the thought currents of today. The last fifty years have been chiefly spent by the former in reconstructing their social, civic and industrial life, which was almost destroyed by the Civil War.

There is doubtless no other single influence that has so powerfully shaped modern thought as the theory of development. The North has been more influenced by it than the South. When many Southern Baptists think of Christianity they conceive of it as a system of truth given in the first century as a finality—a body of doctrine and a method of life which is to be accepted without addition or subtraction, without development or change. The remark of Macaulay that "revealed religion is not of the nature of a progressive science," was made prior to 1859. To many Northern Baptists "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" is a vital, living growth; they hold that a revelation that could be completely and finally delivered to any one age could not be a satisfying and universal gospel; that Christianity's real claim to finality, so far from resting in a ready-made, fully delivered and unchanging system, must be based upon its power of perpetual development, its capacity for complete adaptation to life in all climes and in all ages. These two points of view are so at variance with each other that the advocates of the one can scarcely understand the representations of the other.

It is easy, then, to see why the Northerner is mentally more hospitable than is his brother of the South. He is not so suspicious of the new; he is more willing to believe that good may survive even under a new form. Samuel

McCord Crothers, in one of his essays, pictures a clothing man's clerk who is suddenly ushered for the first time into a drawing-room where he sees numerous suits of clothes carried upon backs of persons, but without labels or price-marks. He at once concludes that the clothing business is in utter confusion. The disappearance of old forms, old phrases, theological and ecclesiastical labels fails in the North to bring the consternation it once did. One looks at New Testament forms as final, because they are in the New Testament (though as a matter of fact, no one carries out this principle with complete consistency); another sees within the New Testament itself, growth, development, adaptation to needs as they arose, and declares that this is really the apostolic conception of Christianity; that it, in fact, shows its power by meeting new conditions as they arise; that such expressions as "it seemed good unto the Holy Spirit and to us," are not simply a New Testament *fact*, but a New Testament *principle* of life; that we do not honor the Spirit in the Word, by failing to hear the Spirit who is at work in the world, One who was given to guide into all the truth—because there were many things Christ had to say which the world at first could not bear.

So also the Northerner makes a clearer distinction than does his Southern brother between faith and creed; between *the faith* and men's interpretation of it; between Christianity and opinions concerning it. Hence he is more willing to call a man a brother whose life is saintly though his creed be unsound.

There are also external conditions as well as thought currents which Northern Baptists have been compelled to face that have tended to make them less conservative in general attitude and in method. The problems confronting Christian work in the North have been very complex and difficult. Immigration has made the population far more heterogeneous and hard to reach. Mass movements are not so easy of achievement where the masses lack

homogeneity. People from various lands have come with their multitudinous opinions and varied habits. The North is therefore filled with "isms" and "problems" that as yet have not seriously affected the South. An unchristian socialism, communism, anarchism, secularism, Roman Catholicism, Unitarianism, Eddyism, Russellism, and all the rest, make a pressure upon the lines, offensive and defensive, that is incalculably fierce.

It is not a matter of wonder, therefore, if all Protestant bodies should feel the need of federation against so many common and pressing foes. In many communities the churches are fighting for their very life. In the South where the conditions are not so acute, or where they as yet do not at all exist, Christians may feel they can afford to emphasize dear, though divisive doctrines, and discuss with zest questions of "regularity." But Northern Christians feel they have little time except for the most vital concerns while engaged in the most deadly grapple with deadly enemies. They are therefore more willing to join hands with other Christians in defeating the foes of all. There seems to be just now no time to quarrel among themselves over denominational differences and preferential methods when the very life of the Kingdom is threatened. You may recall the Frenchman who, when visiting a convention of some sort in Scotland, heard the saints discussing with much vehemence whether or not the congregations should be allowed to use hymns in their services; and when called upon for a word of greeting, he arose and with much emotion said: "My brothers, while you are here debating bitterly whether Christian people should sing hymns or not, we in Paris are facing the question whether there is a God or not, and whether there is in the gospel of Christ power enough to save a godless city." Southern Baptists should not, therefore, be uncharitable in their judgment of their brethren in the North, when they discover that these have lost interest in many questions which once seemed worth while. They

have come to feel that many questions which divide Christians can be relatively forgotten, or at least left in abeyance, in the presence of deadly and frontal attacks upon Christianity itself.

Accordingly, Northern Baptists are more inclined to federate with other Christians at home and abroad. They have united with the Federal Council, and a Baptist is its president. Especially in the gigantic task of converting the world from heathenism are they more inclined to favor co-operative effort. The darkness of paganism is so dense and in some quarters, such as in China and Japan, the crisis is so pressing that many have come to feel that to let the opportunity for great achievement slip, through friction or divided counsel, would not be short of criminality; that some things can wait for a decision, but that this crisis can not be deferred. "Unite in effort," say they, "and carry the gospel on a grand scale to these people *now*, while we have a chance. Give them Christ and the Bible, and we can trust them denominationally, to work out their own salvation." Some are affirming that it is a sin to perpetuate in the Orient the historic denominational divisions of the Occident. "Let Chinamen make their own denominations if they must have them." This is often heard in the North. "Convert the heathen and give them the Bible and Baptists have nothing to fear."

On the other hand, Southern Baptists are more inclined to the opinion that affiliation with Pedo-baptists is a partial endorsement of error, and that federation is sure to lead to placing the soft pedal on some of the doctrines in which Baptists firmly believe; or to result in "pushing Baptists into a corner," taking away their right to work wherever they may see fit. The man of the North is more inclined to look at religious questions from the point of view of practical efficiency. For example, if on some foreign field Baptists alone are unable to support a school, he would be willing to co-operate with

other denominations in equipping a first-rate college rather than not educate the children that are under Baptist care, or to educate them poorly. He would prefer educated Baptist native workers, trained in a federated school, rather than to have no trained Baptist workers at all; for he recognizes that on foreign fields that denomination will win which puts the most trained, and the best trained *natives* into the field. Loyalty to his denomination's future causes him apparently to be less denominational. He refuses to jeopardize future denominational growth by present doctrinal strictness. He believes that in the conflict of truth with error, truth has nothing to fear; that truth gains nothing by isolation, is no delicate plant, but grows stronger and clearer by comparison; that truth must not be self-conscious, thinking of its own conservation, but bold, aggressive, missionary, in every sense of the word; that the field is so wide and the call so pressing that there is no reason for sensitiveness nor reserve, nor conflicting interests, but that all may sing, with James Montgomery's missionary hymn, somewhat modified,

“Rebuild thy walls, thy bounds enlarge,
And send thy heralds forth;
Say to the South ‘Give up thy charge!’
And ‘Keep not back, O North!’”

As to the two ordinances, that old-time strictness no longer prevails in some parts of the North, cannot be questioned. Dr. Geo. E. Horr, president of Newton Theological Seminary, declares, “Northern Baptists by their union with Free Baptists have practically remanded so-called ‘close communion’ from the denomination to the individual church.” (*Young People*, Apr. 26, 1913). This seems a fair statement of the case. Both Southern Baptists and Northern Baptists think they are logical in this matter of the ordinances. The ceremonial logic says,

“First baptism and then communion,” “close baptism implies and demands close communion.” The spiritual logic declares, “If the ordinances are to be interpreted spiritually, then the prime requisite for both rites is the spiritual qualification.” The Northern man is inclined to say that the spiritual in religion cannot be best conserved by making a ceremony a test of spiritual fellowship; while the Southern man declares that the best way to conserve spiritual religion is to preserve the two ordinances in their primitive form and meaning.

If the Northern Baptist thinks the Southern Baptist in danger of laying stress upon creed and ceremony at the expense of Spirit, the Southern Baptist may well fear that his Northern brother will lose the Spirit through disregard for those doctrines and ordinances which tend to hold the Spirit true. Spiritual deeds must suffer when correct beliefs are lost. For as Dr. Mullins has suggested, the smile on the face of the cat of Alice in Wonderland will disappear when the cat itself has vanished. Deeds will suffer if doctrines are not dynamic and true. Human opinion is not the same as vital faith, and differences of belief should not divide Christians so rigidly as has been the case in the past; yet beliefs can never be a matter of indifference. It may be that Northern Baptists are sometimes too little concerned about the doctrinal aspects of the faith. It may be that Southern Baptists allow creedal differences to have too large a place in their thinking and planning for the Kingdom.

Southern Baptists, for the present at least, are destined to play little part, and so to have little influence, in co-operative world movements. They seem to be now only an eddy in the stream of modern religious forces that are moving toward a grand, united impact upon the world of heathenism. It may be that God is holding them back as reserves for some future crisis. The ancient Hebrews were hedged about by laws of the strictest segregation till the days were ripe for the fulfilment of their world mission.

In the meantime, Southern Baptists should know Northern Baptists better, and Northern Baptists should better understand Southern Baptists. More young Southern ministers should come North, and more young Northern ministers should go South. The charity that never faileth is the charity that is founded upon knowledge. Baptists North, South, East and West will one of these days sorely need to stand together. Indeed, the hour seems about to strike when the world will be asking for a message of spiritual freedom which Baptists, above all others, are prepared to give. Withal, it is well to remember that we shall perpetuate our type only as we serve our age. Love is the law of life, and therefore sacrificial service is the only pathway to survival.