

## PERSONALITY IN RELIGION.

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While traveling in Europe the writer heard the World's Baptist Congress described as a heterogeneous crowd of evangelical Christians without a distinctive principle. The speaker went on to say that "Baptists are at one with the Congregationalists in the democratic form of government; that Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans agreed with them as to justification by faith. Regarding baptism and the Lord's supper it could not be said that they are distinctive, as Baptists are not agreed among themselves as to the place in thought they occupy and, under any circumstances, affirm that ordinances are not of saving value in themselves. Further, it was noticed that all evangelical bodies practically accept the Bible as sole authority in matters of faith and morals, so that it is claimed to be unfair for Baptists to maintain that they are the only Bible-Christians, seeing that the Bible is not in question, but simply a particular interpretation of the Bible. All agree upon the Bible as final authority objectively, but differ as to the truth contained in the Bible when translated subjectively."

The statement was surprising, and, if true, the Baptist denomination, as such, has no place in Christian thought and cannot stand the test of time.

The long history and large success of the Baptist denomination indicate vitality. The origin of the Baptists is obscure; the name, comparatively modern. There seems, at the dawn of the ideas represented by the Baptists, to have been no leading spirit and exponent of their belief. Bohemians have their Jerome and Huss; the Swiss, Zwingli; the Germans, Martin Luther; the Presbyterians, John Calvin and John Knox; the Anglicans, Wycliffe and Cranmer; the Congregationalists, Robert Browne; the Methodists, John Wesley; but there is no name looming up in history as being largely responsible for

Baptist thought and practice. If the characteristic principle held by the Baptists antedates the present name, then those holding it were identical in principle, no matter by what name they were known.

Leading exponents of Baptist principles of faith and practice, such as Roger Williams in New England, are recognized as converts to a pre-existing order. The Baptists are unique in this respect, and it may well be that their force lies in this fact.

#### HISTORICAL.

Let us follow the progress in the development of the principles of faith and practice as represented by Baptists in the light of the foregoing statement.

The Primitive Christian Church gathered around the apostles, who had a gospel orally delivered to the people. It is well for us to remember that the early Christian Church was not established through the Book. During the first hundred years of our era the appeal was spiritual; the contact was personal; the different nationalities responding to the appeal colored the religious life originated with their social, political and philosophical tendencies. For three centuries the spiritual ideal was predominant; there were no universally acknowledged standards set up as criterions in morals, theology and practice.

The persecutions periodically inflicted upon the Church solidified the membership, kept pure their purpose, and welded them into a mighty force, seeking unselfishly the establishment of Christ's Kingdom.

The energies of the Church were spent in the preservation of religious life, as such, rather than in the elaboration of theories regarding the life. The demand presented was faith in the personality of Jesus Christ; the standard of guidance was individual direction of the Holy Spirit, by whom the vitalizing powers of the Gospel were administered through the Scriptures in fragmentary forms, as the Canon had not yet been generally established.

It would be useless for us to affirm that there was unanimity of thought and practice. The strongest bond of union was in

the willingness of the believers in Jesus Christ to suffer and die rather than belie their profession and prove apostate to their common subjective faith. It was a personal relationship with a common interest.

Constantine inaugurated a new era in the development of Christianity with the recognition of Christianity as the state religion. Instead of caves and catacombs, they had sumptuous churches; the wealth of the kingdom was lavished upon their bishops; no longer had they to hide their allegiance to Jesus Christ; instead, preferment and emolument were showered upon them.

Schism was doing her deadly work among the Christian forces, and now that the combined energies were no longer applied for self-preservation they turned upon each other.

Christianity became the vehicle to inspire unity in the empire. A new adaptation was imperative, organization was essential, that the alliance between the Church and empire might be effective in unifying the forces of the empire to achieve the political ideal.

It is not our purpose here to review the multitudinous schisms which wrenched the Church apart, but rather to point out the organizing forces which attempted to unify the Church. Constantine called a council at Nicea, giving instructions that unity was essential, and demanded that a basis of unity be secured. Then began that constructive policy which gave formal statement to some of the leading dogmas of Christian thought.

A new process for spiritual guidance must be evolved. This process was found in making the Ecumenical Council the medium through which the Holy Spirit enlightened the Church as a whole. The implications of this principle were immediately set in motion. All refusing to conform to the voice of the Holy Spirit as speaking through the Ecumenical Council were adjudged heretics and apostates. The Church being wedded to the empire, this decision not only classed the recalcitrants as heretics, but as enemies to the empire. Christians in this era, instead of being persecuted, became persecutors. The principle of control having been established, the energies of the Church

were enlisted in the creation of criterions, with adequate power for their enforcement. The painful record of working out the standards is written in the centuries that followed.

Augustine was the one man above all others who, gathering up the forces of the past, organized them for the future. He was the son of a Christian mother, trained in the schools, a rhetorician and philosopher. He revelled in all the pleasures of sense, tested the forms of thought and satiated his soul with the lasciviousness of the age. At twenty-nine years of age found himself alone with God, and by a direct heavenly influence, later, was born to a higher life through which the past was sanctified and focused upon the future. Experimentally, he realized the justifying grace of God through faith and brought to light and prominence the teaching of Paul, his great forerunner. This is the foundation of Augustine's religious life. In his experience he gathered up all that was best in the past. He was born into a turbulent time; standards had been partially evoked; schisms were rending the Church; forms were being constructed; such a mind must enter into the fray and force itself into light. With a masterly grasp he grappled with the schisms of the age and reinforced his findings with philosophy and rhetoric.

In Augustine we have the germ of the theological ideal. The fall of Rome, at the approach of Alaric, gave rise to heathen taunts. He, believing in the triumph of Jesus Christ and in the ultimate establishing of His Kingdom, gave to the Christian Church, in embryonic form, its political ideals in his "City of God." Augustine spiritually, theologically and politically stamped himself upon his age. From his rise the currents flow down through medieval ages.

It is not our purpose to follow these currents in their windings. We are rather inclined to think that, in their implications, they were lost sight of, but one thing stood fast, the voice of the Spirit was indicated with the voice of the Church. Exigencies in the development gave rise to ebb and flow, but the powers of organization were ever accelerated. At last the strong force of the hierarchy of Rome felt their power, watched their opportunity, and more clearly formulated their ideals. The

breaking up of Rome and the development of Western civilization offered a new field for their enterprise. Missionary forces covered the whole of Western Europe, and, borrowing the prestige of the fallen empire, they brought the heathen hordes to the foot of the wooden cross.

The spiritual ideal in the campaign, although not wholly lost, was subordinated to the political and theological ideal. The Church had come between the soul and God; the mechanism of the Church in her sacraments had crystalized into a beaten path, with its formulas as signboards by which the soul must find her God. Those seeking to enter by any other way were classed as thieves and robbers. Spiritual authority was founded upon a perversion of the words of Jesus Christ. Diplomacy was exercised to advance her way.

The political ideal, during this era, was ever prominent in the mind of the Church. Every advantage was sought to strengthen its hold. Legal authority was fabricated to uphold her claim through the supposed donation by Constantine of the Western Empire. Control of the body as well as the soul was the confirmed purpose of the Church; necessity seemed to demand it.

Charlemagne, in the year 800 A. D., seeking to advance his prestige, accepted the crown of the Holy Roman Empire at the hands of the Pope, and thus gave the Church an opportunity to flaunt her claim. The master mind had not yet been born which could grasp the tangled threads and weave the mesh that would enthrall the State.

In Hildebrand, of the eleventh century, the man and the situation met, and we see Europe kissing the toe of the Pope in the form of Henry IV. at Canossa. He had established the political ideal of the Church; her missionaries were freed from political control and made amenable only to the authority of the Church. The nomination of the head of the Church was taken from the political sphere and put into the hands of the Conclave at Rome. This was the climax. It was short-lived in its brilliancy, but the pinnacle had been reached and a precedent established.

The theological ideal had not been slumbering; monas-

ticism in its seclusion had been advancing its thought and fortifying its conclusions; the fathers of the Church were carefully studied; the Church was one; the accumulation of knowledge by its members belonged to the whole; faith in the past must be fortified by the reason of the present. Scholasticism took its rise from this fact.

In Anselm we have the position taken that mind must be used to buttress and rationalize belief; his works are a commentary upon his principle.

In Abelard we have the position taken that we must reason and rationalize in order to believe. Short shrift was made of Abelard by the ruling authorities of the Church, but mind had been borne into action and the end was not yet in sight. The leaven was working; time and opportunity produced the man.

In Thomas Aquinas we reach the climax of the theological ideal. Aristotle and Plato, Jesus Christ and Paul, Origen and Augustine, reflect their rays on him, and from him shines forth in its pristine beauty "The Sum of All Theology." The Roman Catholic Church to-day recognizes him as the great saint who penetrated the mind of God and made objective His thought to the one Church of all the world.

Thomas Aquinas' teaching may be summarized as follows:

Revealed religion is the superstructure raised on natural religion; God's aid to man's reason.

The revelation he accepted was the interpretation of the Church.

To him, the Church was the voice of nature, revelation and God.

The Church teaches that all true grace either commences by means of the sacraments, or, being commenced, is increased by them, or, being lost, is through them restored. It is of faith that Jesus Christ instituted seven sacraments, viz.: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order and Matrimony. It is of faith that grace is conferred upon the soul by the application of the external rite, *ex opere operato*.

1. Baptism is the door of Spiritual Life.
2. Confirmation, the communication of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3. Holy Eucharist, not only confers grace, but contains and gives the author of grace, Jesus Christ Himself.

4. Penance cleanses and restores the soul from sin committed after baptism.

5. Extreme Unction strengthens the soul and guards it from any grievous spiritual peril in sickness or death.

These five sacraments meet the wants from the cradle to the grave.

6. Holy Order, a character bestowed upon the priests, makes them independent of human weakness in dispensing the sacraments of the Church.

7. Matrimony regulates the source of human generations upon which the whole stream of human life is dependent.

In the thirteenth century the ideal of theocracy through Rome seemed to have been reached. Spiritual life could only be generated and maintained through the sacraments of the Church; political life enjoyed through the favor of the hierarchy; mental life, operated within the prescribed sphere. It was the ideal of spiritual, political and intellectual oppression. The man—body, mind and soul—was lost in the achievement.

#### DISINTEGRATING FORCES.

This three-fold ideal held, within itself, the elements of life which, when fructified, gave birth to the causes of disintegration. The impulse of the human soul for freedom of action, freedom of thought and freedom of spiritual life could not be quenched.

Among the political elements of Western Europe the spirit of nationality dawned; rivalries frequently sprang up; political ideals came into conflict; struggles for supremacy gave birth to patriotism. The Church, by intrigue, endeavored to hold the balance of power and maintain control; the weaker were incensed and stimulated to action; champions of local political rights were not wanting; Ockham fulminated against the arbitrary claims of the Pope and repudiated his right to **interfere** in the rights of the State. The Crusaders enlarged the **horizon** and disillusioned the mind. Scholarship exposed the **forgeries**

perpetrated in the supposed grant of Constantine. The character of the popes and the weakness of their administration aroused general scorn. The scandal of different popes excommunicating each other led to the question whether popes were at all necessary. A running campaign was indulged for 200 years, in which the right of the pope to rule was freely questioned.

When nations or individuals would not submit to the political sway of the Church they were coerced by withdrawing from them all spiritual privileges which were held in the great reservoir of the Church. Kings were deposed, subjects were freed from their allegiance, the dead were left unburied, and the dispensation of grace, through the Church, was virtually stopped. No authority could interpose to gainsay the power of the hierarchy. This blended the political and spiritual so thoroughly that they came to be recognized as one cause. To oppose the Pope was to oppose God, and all the thunderbolts of heaven were hurled at the transgressors. Political and spiritual agitation was rampant, but it recoiled upon the heads of the instigators. The people were not willing to risk their souls for a temporal advantage.

Wycliffe, in England, realized that a work of education was essential. He translated the Bible into the vernacular and educated the poor priests and laity to preach to the people Biblical truths. His influence, through his writings and students, traveled to Bohemia. Huss and Jerome imbibed his ideas. Wycliffe was forced into retirement; his followers, the Lollards in England, were persecuted; Jerome and Huss were burned at the stake; thus the movement in the fourteenth century failed and Rome was, for the time being, triumphant.

In the meantime movements of quite another character had been inaugurated. Peter Waldo and Peter de Bruis were leaders of the movements.

Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, decided to sell his property and devote himself to the preaching of Biblical truth among the people. He established the order of the "Poor Men of Lyons," who went about teaching the people. Originally they had no intention of coming into conflict with the Church



of Rome, but carried on their simple work among the people. Crowds flock to hear them, scriptural truths took hold of their minds, a religious awakening followed. Reports of their work reached Rome and, in a council held in 1179 at Rome, they were interdicted from preaching. These men were in earnest; they had sacrificed everything for the privilege of teaching scriptural truth and were confronted with the edict of the Church restraining them from continuing the practice.

These truths had proved a new force in their lives, and, confident in their new experience, they clung to the happy consciousness which had dawned upon them. Independent of the Church, they had been thrilled and inspired in a way which the cold formulas and practices of the Church had never awakened. The personal satisfaction which they had experienced in their relationship to God they had found entirely independent of the Church dogma and State patronage.

When confronted with the option of giving up all this or being excommunicated from the Church they clung to their new experience. Religion had found her true soil in the home of the soul. The stirring of life was ominous, whither it portended not even they themselves knew, but of this they were confident—it was life, not a formal prescription for life. Freed from the dominion of the Church of Rome, they fell back on the Scriptures, which the Church claimed to interpret, and, through these very Scriptures, sought to confound the Church of Rome.

The Principle of Personality in Religion, through experimental regeneration, without the sacrament of baptism as administered by the Church was revolutionary in the extreme. These unlettered men had the experience which they identified with the Biblical experience, and expressed in the terms of the new birth. That simple-minded men could thus come into touch with God without being magnetized by the Church to receive spiritual influences, was outrageous and scandalous to the age. They were despised, rejected, cast out from communion of the Church, and looked upon as vipers, whose deadly sting provoked spiritual death.

Peter de Bruis, identified with the Albigenses movement,

inaugurated a similar but more thorough-going work, which is largely shrouded in mystery. He is accused of Manicheism, and conflicting accounts are given of his work. One thing is generally admitted, that he wielded a large influence and the missionaries of his type were indefatigable in their endeavors to procure converts. They penetrated the valleys of Italy, Switzerland, Spain, France, and even as far as the Netherlands. They were bitterly oppressed and almost annihilated; much malignant misrepresentation was indulged regarding them; but the historian Faber frees them from the charge of manicheism and shows conclusively that they held the following five tenets:

“Here in due form, as preferred by Peter, the Venerable, Abbott of Clugny, against Peter de Bruis and his disciples, we have, with whatever distortion of statement, five specific articles of indictment.

“The first point denies that children who have not arrived at the age of intellect can be saved by Christian baptism, or that the faith of another person can be profitable to those who are physically unable to exert any faith of their own. For according to them, it is not the faith of another, but an individual’s own faith, which saves with baptism; inasmuch as the Lord said, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.’ ”

“The second point maintains, that churches ought not to be built, and those already built ought to be pulled down. For sacred places set apart for worship are in no way necessary to Christians, inasmuch as God, whether invoked in a tavern or in a church, in a market place or in a temple, before an altar or in a manger, equally hears and answers those who are deserv-  
ing.

“The third point commands, that sacred crucifixes should be broken and burned; for the cross, on which Christ was so horribly tortured and so cruelly slain, is worthy neither of adoration nor veneration nor of any suppliant invocation, but, rather, by way of avenging his torment and death it ought to be treated with every dishonor, to be hacked with swords, to be burned with fire.

“The fourth point not only denies the truth of the body and blood of Jesus Christ through the sacraments daily and continually offered up in the Church, but it also declares that the sacrament is nothing and that it ought not to be offered up to God.

“The fifth point derides sacrifices, prayers, alms and other good deeds, when made by the living faithful on behalf of the faithful defunct, affirming that, not even in the smallest degree, can they help any one of the dead.”

Manicheans rejected baptism entirely and the popish writers always refer to them thus. The fact that the Petrobrusians accept baptism, but only reject the baptism of infants, puts them in another class, Antipedobaptists. The other charges brought against them clearly show that they could not have been Manicheans.

We do not claim that constructive thought about the life engendered had been formulated, but we do claim that these men lived and trusted in the full enjoyment of their personal religious experience and began to hew out for themselves untrodden paths. The evident antagonism of the Church which taught and practiced baptismal regeneration, is at once brought into sharp and bitter conflict with the theory of regeneration independent of the Church and wrought exclusively by the Spirit of God. The very fact of this new life in the experience of those simple men was an experimental demonstration to themselves of the possibility of the spiritual life without the good offices of the Church. The authority of the Church, which sought to nullify their own experience, was already questioned when the validity of the spiritual experience was believed and enjoyed. There was no middle ground. A rival principle had been born.

The Church, on the other hand, if she would maintain her prestige and hold her grip upon her people, must as confidently assert her right to be the only custodian of spiritual grace, and emphatically deny the possibility of regeneration except through the machinery employed by the Church. The State was the servant of the Church to enforce her edict, and keep the subjects of the State submissive within the pale of the Church.

Thus the State and Church were partners, seeking to enforce the dogmas and formulas of the Church upon those whose new experiences of personal religion made them independent of the Church for the enjoyment of all spiritual privileges. They must either give up their personal enjoyment of religion or be excommunicated from the Church as apostates and looked upon by the State as criminals.

We do not claim that the same logical construction was put upon this personal experience in every community or by the various individuals in a particular community who experienced it, but it is evident that the same biological fact of spiritual regeneration was the fountain-head of their attitudes and hopes. To claim that all who experienced the regenerating power in themselves were classed as Baptists would seem preposterous, but it is historically true that these who resisted the dogma of baptismal regeneration, formulated the authority and acquired the vocabulary in which to express themselves from the Bible.

The spiritual life in them was distinct from a logical system regarding the spiritual life. We find those early heretics clothing their experiences in the language of the Scripture and identifying their soul-struggles with the teachings of Paul. For them there is no need of theological statement—their experience is the reflex and verification of the original statement, as found in the Word of Truth.

The advocates of such a theory must hold themselves exclusive and resent the popular conception of the time and Church. Out of this attitude there arose a selected people with community of interest. Add to this consideration the vital fact that all forms and practices of the Church had the sanction and support of the State, and you can readily perceive the necessity, not only for seclusion, but even for secrecy.

All the elements for a successful revolt against Rome had been gradually gathering force in localities far apart. When we consider that printing had not yet been inaugurated, books were rare, travel was confined to princes and scholars, we can readily perceive that time must become a large factor in the result.

The fifteenth century must do the work. Erasmus had not

yet been born, the stores of Grecian lore had not been explored, the work of the Lollards in England had not culminated, the influences of the mystics in Germany had not reached their climax, the Hussites had been repressed, but not extinguished. Printing was essential to open up the knowledge of the Bible, familiarize the people with the arguments against hierarchy, inspire the desire for political freedom, and incite the thirst for freedom of mind. These the printing press accomplished.

#### REFORMATION.

The sixteenth century found the nations ready for the hour; the man who sounded the bugle note which rallied all these forces had been, in his soul, going through the struggles which prepared him for the climax.

That man was Martin Luther, the year was 1517, his theses told the tale; justification by faith alone, independent of the Church and State, was the battle cry of the Reformation. Universal priesthood of believers as taught by Martin Luther made it possible for all to see how they could save their souls and yet throw off the yoke of Rome.

Zwingli, independently, had reached the same results; Europe answered the call. Political, theological and spiritual ideals were acclaimed. The conflict began, the forces of the Roman Catholic Church were rallied; Luther, never wavering, met them at Worms and the world re-echoed the challenge. The process was inverted, the authority was wrested from the hierarchy and placed upon the individual; his experience was final as verifying the written word.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE WORK OF THE REFORMATION.

The principles underlying the whole movement were not held by all in common. Some opposed the abuses of Roman Catholicism, others opposed the authority of the pope, others opposed the authority of the ecclesiastics; thus the name Protestantism was derived from the predominant negative attitude in the Reformation. Protestors urgently endeavored to win

the approval of the several States in order to withstand the encroachments of the hierarchy.

The leaders of the Reformation who grasped the constructive principle of justification by faith alone, made it possible for the statesmen to grasp a constructive policy which would conserve all the benefits of the Church, yet gain the liberty of the State and hold the Church in partnership with the State to develop the political ideal of the State. Out of this grew the national alignment of the Church and State along lines suggested by the leaders of the different nationalities.

Thus we have a re-alignment of Church and State in England, Germany, Scotland and the Netherlands. It was simply a re-affirmation of a partnership between the Church and State to arbitrarily enforce the national ideal as developed in the Reformation. It is needless here to quote authorities showing how rigidly this was enforced. Popular thought had been stunned at the success of the Reformation and failed to crystallize its effect. The Reformers, for the time being, forgot the fundamental principles of the whole movement—spiritual liberty, freedom of thought—and contented themselves with national liberty.

When the atmosphere began to clear and men could calmly review the results achieved it became evident to the radical forces that "Personality in Religion" had been sacrificed. The Reformation was an alignment of the Church and State according to localized interpretation of the Scripture, which did not deny the principle of the authority of the Scripture, but claimed the right to interpret the Scripture into formal statements binding in their authority and national in their application.

#### PERSONALITY IN RELIGION.

In the enthusiasm of the hour it had been forgotten that the soul had found its reconciliation with God through the attitude of subjective faith towards Him. The Reformers made the mistake of setting up their particular experience, with the logical interpretation thereof, as the standard for the future.

The logical interpretation overshadowed the fact. The form was more particularly emphasized than the reality; the adherents of the principle of "Personality in Religion" found that they were outside of the protected sphere and liable to the same disqualifications and persecutions as before the Reformation. The Anglican Church, in England, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, the Lutheran Church in Germany, in their respective spheres, had taken the place of the Roman Catholic Church. All who were outside were alike heretic and criminal.

In England the movement of the Non-Conformists was inaugurated to stand for their principles; the Antipedobaptists in Germany, being forced outside of the Church, were also obliged to take counsel for the perpetuation of their ideas; the Mennonites in Holland, likewise being excluded, a general ferment was instituted. Disappointed, yet valiant for the fight they imagined they had won; these noble bands, persecuted in one country, fled to another. The interchange of ideas broadened their views; the literature of the time shows us the development of their thought. That no clear, well-authenticated account of their movements remains is not surprising, as public worship was largely prohibited and they were obliged to meet in secret in order to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. These conditions applied to the Protestants and Catholics alike, with the exception that Protestants were persecuted in Catholic countries and Catholics in Protestant countries.

A careful study of the period indicates that lines were not clearly drawn. The unifying principles had not been generally declared. This is not surprising, as the scholarship of the time had largely been drawn into the existing organization, but that, to the radicals, there was a principle for which they were willing to give their fortunes and their lives no one can doubt.

The spread through persecution in England to Holland, the migration to America from Holland, and the reaction of the Holland radicals upon the English contingent, brought into existence the clear identification of the principle of "Personality in Religion." With the establishment of the first Baptist

church in Holland in the year 1608, they realized that they were not protestors or reformers, but the true Apostolic Succession in kind, according to the laws of generation operating under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Previously they had been called Anabaptists or Antipedobaptists, which they repudiated. When baptism was recognized by them as the symbol of the regenerated life they had experienced in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, they welcomed the name Baptist. It was significant as pointing to the symbolism which taught the great principle of "Personality in Religion," for which they stood. Form and faith had been blended.

The conflict, for the time being, seems to have been how to organize believers in such a principle into an organized church. The tendency of strong personalities to identify their interpretation with the principle itself was strongly at work among the Radicals, as it had been among the Reformers. The problem of that age was diversity in unity. It is well for us to remember, in considering the difficulties of this situation, that these early fathers were grappling with a principle which did not find a place in practical thought until the Declaration of American Independence became a fact.

Let it not for a moment be understood that we are insinuating that there was a lack of clearness regarding spiritual regeneration, as to the verification of divine revelation and the demonstration of experimental religion. Baptist thought in England, during the seventeenth century, was well authenticated by the "Bedford tinker," John Bunyan, who, without ecclesiastical acknowledgment, defied the authorities of the State, thrilled the people of his time, and left with us his immortal dream.

It should also be remembered that the inductive logic, in which these terms are stated, had not been written, and our fathers were anticipating our modern scientific development without our phraseology.

England, Germany and Holland were not prepared for emancipation from this thralldom. The scene of development must seek another clime, where institutions having their origin in this very principle of individuality had not yet been born.



The Pilgrim Fathers, seeking liberty of conscience for themselves in New England, made the same mistake as the Reformers in Europe, and sought to exalt their special interpretation and enforce it upon their fellows. Providence, R. I., well named, was the kindly soil that welcomed Roger Williams, where, for the first time, the principle of "Personality in Religion" was fully believed and clearly announced as the policy of the settlement.

This is the climax of the long struggle and exhibits the possibility of a State being born in which the temporal, the intellectual and the spiritual may find their fruition and blend the life in the one principle of civic, mental and religious democracy. Much misgiving regarding its impractical nature and the final outcome were indulged. Prophecy is recorded and forebodings of evil to come are not few. The United States of America is launched upon a faith in the all-sufficiency of the three-fold democracy—Political, Intellectual and Religious.

In the American Revolution individuals of all shades of religious belief fought side by side for political freedom under the Stars and Stripes. When the conflict had been won and the government was being organized, there was the same possibility and tendency in America that had proved disastrous in the Reformation. To the Richmond Baptist Convention held August 8, 1796, belongs the honor of formulating the final appeal which caused to be embodied in the Constitution of these United States the great principle of the right of "Personality in Religion" which we have been tracing.

All through the American development this principle has been known as Baptist. The implications of this principle in all their fullness may not have been grasped either by the body as a whole or by the various individuals composing the body, but the right of every man to come into direct touch with God and realize his own experience through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, without the mediation of the Church or the patronage of the State, has always been recognized as thoroughly Baptist, and has been opposed by every religious denomination, as such, during its conflict for supremacy. Indeed, in no other country than America has the Baptist principle any standing to-day other than that of toleration.

Further, the Baptists have always claimed that personal experience in regeneration is its own authority and every man has the right to look into the face of God and interpret his own experience in the light of God's Word and his experimental dealings with him. Thus was the true spiritual democracy established, and it is probably much more far-reaching in its results than any of its early adherents ever conceived. Baptist churches have always made entrance into the local Baptist church conditional upon the testimony of a personal experience of the regenerating power of God through the Holy Spirit.

The Negative Results from "Personality in Religion" have been:

1. The rejection of all ecclesiastical authority in any form which limits the soul in its relationship to God.
2. The rejection of all sacerdotalism with its various implications.
3. The rejection of all sacramentarianism.

These have their fullest significance in the Roman Catholic Church, where the system is worked out, through the seven sacraments, to its completeness. In most of the evangelical churches there still remains a subtle influence which binds them to more or less diluted forms representing these principles; although it may be freely admitted that the influence of democratic forms in civic affairs is practically undermining ecclesiasticism.

The Positive Results of "Personality in Religion" are:

1. Personal subjective faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Sovereign the supreme test.
2. Freedom personally to interpret God's Truth as revealed in Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
3. Through this personal freedom to interpret God's Truth, the individual conscience becomes the ultimate standard and final appeal.

These govern the relationship of the soul with God in Jesus Christ, and arouse, inspire and control the "Personality in Religion." On them depend the peace, poise and development of the soul.

Objections to "Personality in Religion" are:

1. This is anarchy.

This is no more anarchy than the individual mind, and rests on the firm faith that spiritual laws have their perfect analogy in mental laws. Sanity in both exhibits the normal experience. This does not ignore the Christian conscience in others, but recognizes that the individual is purified and uplifted through it. The difficulty in apprehending this truth lies in the fact that spiritual laws have not been as closely studied or clearly understood as mental laws.

2. It does away with an ethical standard.

There is no such thing as an absolute statement of a concrete ethical or æsthetic standard developed in the history of the world. Advancement always means the abrogation or modification of all formulated ethical or æsthetic standards. When Wagner wrote he was repudiated by the standards of his time, but the awakening conscience of the age was aroused to appreciate his harmony, and that which was discord in the preceding age became harmony to his successors. The only perfect harmony lies in the individualistic development as illustrated in the orchestra, where each plays his part and the master musician applauds the result. Baptists have remained largely in the first stage of their development, the individualistic.

3. It gives no basis for co-operation.

This objection is based upon the presumption that personality, when operating under a fixed law, is not as true as physical or mental operation. This belies a true spiritual faith in the all-sufficiency of the soul to answer the voice of God in Jesus Christ and reflect His image as revealed in His Word. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

The personal development in the individual is distinct from the development of the orchestra as a whole. The sphere of co-operation is entering into the common purpose of the master mind to produce the varied and harmonious unity required in the whole.

In co-operation the utmost liberty must be given to the individual and restraint should only be exercised to preserve the common end. Thus only can democracy be blended with sovereignty; such a condition will be heaven itself, and out of

such blending must rise the hallelujah chorus, which shall greet the great Master in the world to come. The object of all life is the realization of its type; the rose sprig agonizes for the rose.

#### PRINCIPLES OF CO-OPERATION.

1. The Church, a voluntary and fraternal communion of believers in the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, seeking to establish His Kingdom.

2. The pastor, the one especially recognized by the community of believers as endowed by God with special ability to teach and lead.

3. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, as symbolism, in which are represented the work and worth of Jesus Christ.

4. Polity, a wise application of these fundamental principles to achieve the end for which the fraternal communion exists through the enlightenment of God's spirit.

5. Discipline, the right of the community of believers to include only such as are willing to co-operate in securing the common end.

#### FUTURE OF THE BAPTIST PRINCIPLE.

The future of the Baptist is promising. He is confronted with the great question, "Shall he enter into his heritage?" Baptist influences are swaying the thought of the age. Other bodies are forgetting the formalities which bound them in the past and are imperceptibly crawling into Baptist positions.

We welcome the breaking down of ecclesiasticism, sacerdotalism, sacramentarianism and the strong tendency toward the position of independent approach to God in Jesus Christ resulting in a spiritual regeneration. The temper of the evangelical Church is marked to-day on this particular point, and the cobwebs of medieval darkness are fast disappearing.

We deplore the tendency of some reactionary elements in our own body to grab at the rags of sacramentarianism as the distinctive characteristic of the Baptist. Unless the utmost

caution is exercised the peculiar anomaly will inevitably follow of the Baptist standing convicted before the evangelical world as posing for the very objects which for one hundred years his principle opposed. Ordinances are no part of our principle, but the symbolism which represents our principle.

They belong to our polity, and not to our faith.

We ought never to forget that our principle of spiritual democracy implies a full and candid faith in man's spiritual, mental and moral nature when vitalized by an active faith influenced by God's Spirit. This is the epistemology of the Baptist structure.

The world has been slow in philosophy, ethics and religion, to recognize this faith, but the onward march of science and civilization are fast sweeping her into line in every department of activity.

The Baptist position is free and unfettered to grasp all the forces of modern science, psychology and democracy, and wield them with efficiency and power to advance the principles and achieve the results for which Jesus Christ died.