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A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php

SOME TYPES AND TENDENCIES AMONG AMERICAN BAPTISTS.

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Bibliography has no part in what follows. Observation and experience, not books, furnish the data used. Impressions and inferences, manifestly, are never inerrant and so the testimony herewith presented may be received with a grain of salt. An other reporter, peradventure, with keener insight and wider range of vision or with a better trained logical faculty would give a different and more scientific interpretation of the phenomena considered.

Whatever of worth or worthlessness may lie in the paper is not to be attributed to the slightest drop of bad blood. The writer, by an heredity reaching through a century and a half, as well as by training, inclination, personal choice and conviction, confirmed through years of preaching and practice, is a Baptist upright and downright from core to cuticle. Criticism expressed or implied is kindly. Commendation, though never indiscriminate or unmeasured, aims to be frank and fraternal and helpful.

Substantial oneness of belief and practice among Baptists is admitted by all the world. No highly centralized church government in other Christian bodies perhaps is able to show a more thorough-going solidarity in things fundamental and differentiating. When it is remembered that there is no recognized authoritative creed but the New Testament and that the right of private judgment is everywhere allowed, the result is both remarkable and gratifying. Nevertheless there is a diversity of beliefs among Baptist people. Among the millions they number in their roll of communicants there are many men of many minds on sundry matters of importance. Baptists are human and the best of men are but men at best. Within the brotherhood are clearly recognized types and tendencies which can not fail to modify the denominational life in the years to come.

Liberalistic Type.

First there is a liberal or liberalistic type among Baptists. These are the "Broad Churchmen." They are men of culture and intellectual temper, distinctly the children of the present age. Religions of authority, if by that expression is meant one based, in the one case, on an infallible church, or, in the other, on an infallible Bible, do not hold their allegiance. They avow themselves disciples of the "Religion of the Spirit" to which both the Bible and the Church bear witness. They believe in an infallible God only. All of His communications are made known through fallible men to fallible men. God speaks to them, as they allege, through the Church and through the Bible, but more directly, clearly and authoritatively by the medium of their own Christian consciousness. Their theology, evangelical as any they maintain, has a place for redemption and regeneration because they admit sin and guilt. The emphasis of their preaching usually is placed, not so much on a crisis in religious experience which we call conversion, as on culture of the seed of saving truth let fall in the human heart. They are more pedagogic than hortatory, more effective as teachers than as preachers of the word, more edifying than evangelistic.

Quite a number of this type are cautious, silent men in the denominational assemblies. They recoil from the shock of agitation. Amiable and optimistic, they quietly pursue the course of instructing their hearers, trusting to time to season the people with modern ideas of Christian doctrine and duty. Theirs is a long perspective. They prefer revolution to evolution. The Kingdom is coming along their line they believe, but they would not forget that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."

On the other hand there are militant liberals. They are fretting for the fray. Already they throw down a challenge, swing aloft a battle axe and uprear a standard for civil war among the sacramental hosts. Like Mr. Alexander Campbell they advocate the reduction of Christianity to its lowest terms, but they are more radical. According to his contention Christianity, in a nutshell, is the belief of one fact and the perform-

ance of one act, belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and submission to the act of immersion in water in His name.

Baptist liberalists would strike out baptism. Christianity, briefly stated, is intelligent and whole-hearted acceptance and acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as lord of conscience and life. The Church should be as broad as the Kingdom. The Kingdom admits all who show allegiance and obedience to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Baptists, they insist, have always accorded Christian fellowship to all believers in the Saviour of men. Now let them broaden the basis of church fellowship. Let church fellowship be as broad as Christian fellowship. If baptism be desired by a candidate for church membership administer only immersion. If not desired adopt no substitute or modification of the original rite. Always oppose and condemn any superstitious or sacramentarian view of the ordinance. And of course reject infant christening. At the same time let all the world know that every Baptist church welcomes among its members all honest and earnest followers of Jesus Christ without requiring of them theological definition or creedal statement or any ceremony. A covenant and not a creed, should be the foundation of church organization, a summary of duty and not an elaboration of doctrine or an abstract of theology.

Unquestionably these brethren show a tangential tendency. Quakers, if these be the model for our modern times, are not conspicuously successful in winning numbers to Christ. "They care for no "outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace." Marriage among them requires no ceremony to evidence the dignity and solemnity of this holy relationship. Speech itself is not necessary to public worship in the meeting places of the Friends. Surely they of all people have given us the history of broadminded anti-ritualistic disciples. They are as far as possible removed from formalism liable to inhere in an initiatory ceremony. And yet somehow they neither hold their own in point of numbers nor prevent schisms born of heretical doctrine. Organization without initiation of some kind is the road to theoretical anarchy as the ideal state of Christianity. Individualism run mad, to say the least, would be limp and

lifeless as an antagonistic force to the organized hostile agencies of our times marshalled under flaunting banners and with linked shields.

Literalistic Type.

Second, there is a literalistic type among Baptists. Exactness in minor matters concerns them. Loyalty in every detail of New Testament manners and customs as well as precepts and practices is their watchword.

They love to believe themselves strict Bible Baptists. The Bible, the Bible only they affirm, is their rule of faith and practice—the Bible, no additions to it, no subtractions from it, no alterations in it—the Bible, uncovered by human ritual, untainted by human error, uncorrupted by human tradition. They admit and preach the right and duty of personal interpretation of the Bible, but evidence partiality for some conspicuous leader of their school of thought. Usually they analyse the requirements of the Bible into moral commands, evangelical commands, positive commands. Every one of these commands, so far as the weakness of human nature will allow, is to be carried out, not only in spirit but to the very letter. Obedience is the test of love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and literal obedience in the smallest circumstance its supreme manifestation.

Now by the Bible this type means never the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek. They are not critical and so do not trouble themselves about questions of canonicity, or authenticity or genuineness of particular books. The Bible for them by common consent and for all practical purposes is the English version prepared by order of King James in 1611. Other translations or versions of the original sacred writings, while not by any means unknown to them, are to this class of the brethren as if they were not.

Proudly they declare: "where the Bible speaks we speak; where the Bible is silent we hold our peace."

Now the Bible is silent about many things considered right and useful by the brotherhood at large. We have no "thus saith the Lord" for church buildings. The Bible does not authorize or even mention such latter day inventions as organs or

other musical instruments, nor Sunday Schools, nor religious newspapers, nor mission boards or societies. There is no distinct New Testament requirement for Baptist Associations, or Ministers' Conferences or State or other Baptist Conventions. Literalists have consistently and persistently fought to the last ditch every one of these post-apostolic expedients for furthering Christianity.

On the other hand it is maintained by the denomination that there are to be found in the New Testament some injunctions that were purely personal and others local and temporary in their obligation. One of these, for example, was the oriental act of hospitality known as feet-washing. Literalists have rigorously enforced this Eastern custom as an ordinance of the church of equal dignity and importance with baptism and the Lord's Supper. Slavery was defended by literalists as a divine institution to be perpetuated, and any attack on it was made, as they believed, in the very teeth of God's command. The women must keep silence in the churches because Paul is clear-cut and unequivocal in his prohibition of this practice. Local church communion has had its literalistic advocates. A minister celebrating the Lord's Supper for a church of which he was not a member would conscientiously refrain from participating in the ordinance. Was not the Supper at Corinth for the church at that place alone? What precept or example therefore authorizing or requiring any other disciple to participate in a strictly church rite? If the brethren neglected to obey the apostolic order to "salute one another with a holy kiss" it was only because forsooth their literalistic consciences had not been focussed upon it by some perfervid champion of literalism. Dunkards, towards whom the literalists tend, are more consistent. They stickle for the holy kiss.

The Ritualistic Type.

Third, there is a ritualistic tendency among Baptists. This is the mark of the High Church wing.

An American Episcopalian, asked to define a high churchman as understood by his sect replied: "A high churchman is not one who thinks high of the Church and low of Christ, as

our enemies charge, but rather one who thinks high of the Church and low of himself." The Baptist high churchman is his heart's brother. He exalts the Church. His definition of the church is a local assembly of baptized believers associated by covenant to maintain the ordinances and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. As arrogantly as any Anglican or Roman Catholic he dares to speak of the Church meaning a Baptist church. His lexicon has no place for what is known as the church universal or the church invisible. By church he does not mean the Baptist denomination, certainly not the Roman Catholic or any Pedobaptist body. Other Christian fraternities, however excellent in character are abnormal in organization. Societies they are, composed of good people, many of them Christ's genuine disciples, having worthy ends in view, but not churches. No other than a Baptist church comes within the definition of a church laid down in the New Testament. There are no regularly ordained ministers but Baptist ministers. Good preachers others may be, men indeed truly converted and often honored of God's Spirit in winning souls and in the edification of believers, but not Scripturally set apart to the rights and duties of the apostolic ministry. Baptism performed by a Pedobaptist minister is not baptism. Though there be a proper subject and a proper act and a proper understanding and intent, the ceremony is not baptism unless performed by a Baptist minister obeying the order of a Baptist church.

Order is the slogan of this company. The most valiant among the high churchmen conscientiously believe that the evils among the denomination are not so much moral or doctrinal as ecclesiastical. We are not taking the world for Christ as we might, not because of deficient spirituality, or by reason of erroneous doctrine or niggardliness or want of intelligent zeal and aggressiveness, but on account of laxness in ritualism. Stalwart ecclesiasticism alone can save us. "Alien immersion" or baptism by other than Baptist ministers is troubling us. The "open pulpit" and the union meeting are our bane. By an "open pulpit" is meant one to which other than regularly ordained Baptist ministers are admitted. Baptist pulpits, the

high churchmen maintain, must be for Baptists only. The union meetings which they so deprecate are those in which ministers or laymen of other denominations take part in the exercises whether these be held in a Baptist church or elsewhere.

In an interview with a beloved brother of this school I asked if I might not call a man a man even if he were not physically perfect. A man without an arm is still a man, I maintained, or without either arm, or bereft of both legs and both arms. I asked to be allowed to denominate such an one not an extra human being but a man nevertheless. So I said a company of Christ's disciples though ritualistically irregular might be admitted to be a church or assembly of believers as distinguished from a military company or a lodge of Elks. My analogy was scouted as irrelevant and illogical, the mere quibble of a low churchman. "Hold fast the form of sound words" was the solemn admonition, and further reply would have been a work of supererogation.

Pessimistic Type.

Optimism is the *bete noir* of this group. The "Broad Church men" hope to win supremacy in the denomination. So do the Literalists. Of like spirit are the High Churchmen. The Pessimistic wing is content to be a party of protest. Though claiming to be original Christianity they do not look for any world conquest. They are an elect few and willing to become fewer. Their decrease in numbers so far from being a calamity is to them a proof that they are unworldly, an exotic necessarily of feeble growth in alien atmosphere. They are modern Essenes, the world forgetting and by the world forgot. They are animated by a class consciousness, that of the exclusive poor. The one text most often quoted and enjoyed by them is this: "The Common people heard him gladly." They scorn to conciliate or even associate with the rich or the educated or socially prominent though it would seem that they allow themselves to fawn upon the poor, the ignorant and the unprogressive. They are worshippers of the past. The former days were better than these. The first century was the golden age. Since then it has been always and every-

where a down-grade movement. The world grows daily worse and not better.

They entertain orthodox views of salvation but believe it is a rare experience. They do not understand how it can enter the hearts of any but those who manifest a humility like such as they believe theirs to be.

They have not a few passive virtues. As they cherish no hope, however, for the conversion of any large number of the people of the earth they settle down into a dull fatalism which paralyzes all earnestness in evangelizing or progress. Civilization in their judgment, is no aid but a hindrance to piety. It is not by any means under the guidance of a divine will but is rather a daring and diabolic revolt against the simple life of poverty and obedience which the disciples practiced in the beginning of our era. Cities are an abomination unto them. Their moral state is that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Schools are useful if they limit themselves to the "three R's" but if anything more is attempted it is only vanity and vexation of spirit. Missions do not appeal to them, though admitting their lawfulness. God will gather up His own elect at His own time and in His own way. Judgment Day is the Supreme event they await. Salvation is "other worldliness." It is a future possession for the most part. And it was evidently intended for a small number of rural saints of passive virtues included in a quite limited atonement. Their ministers are most moving in their utterances when they expound and apply the words: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

Pietistic Type.

These are tangential like the Broad Churchmen but for an entirely different reason. So far from having a rationalistic trend this group is mystical. Their interior life is enriched by impressions they derive directly from communion with the Holy Spirit. They are the present day specialists on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They do not question their own inspiration when filled with the Holy Spirit. This "infilling of

the Spirit" or ecstasy is supposed to come after complete consecration which never or hardly ever occurs at conversion.

Names adopted by this party differentiate them from the ordinary Baptist, pure and simple. A few call themselves the recipients of the "Second Blessing." Others prefer to be known as advocates of the "Higher Life" or "Surrendered Life" or "Abandoned Life." Exceptional religious experiences due to extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Spirit avouched to them are declared to be their distinguishing mark. They affiliate with the Keswick movement in England and foregather for mutual edification at Northfield.

The "infilling" to which they attach so great weight is not for their exclusive enjoyment. It is accompanied by what they call "power for service" usually in preaching in revival meeting. They are mighty evangelists.

These brethren are militant premillennialists. They are not the kind of pessimists heretofore described but agree with them as to the hopelessness of the present dispensation. The conversion of the world to Christ by agencies now employed is an idle dream. On the other hand, they believe that after Christ returns to earth He will be more effective than He can be today. By the resurrection of the pious dead the Lord will be reinforced and will then be able to convert nations in a day. Meanwhile, until He comes, it is our duty to evangelize and do our best in a doomed dispensation.

The pietists have no toleration for the Broad Church party and wish them to leave the denomination. Nor are they literalists. Generally they are poetic and oratorical. This section of the brotherhood cares less for the Baptist denomination, apparently, than for their "Higher Life" coterie which has fellows in a number of evangelical bodies. It is not thought inconsistent by the ministers of this party to preside over un-denominational or pedo-baptist churches though without surrendering a personal devotion to immersion as the only Christian baptism. Individualism is their hobby.

The modern so-called "Institutional Church" with its multifiform benevolent activities is preferred by this section of the brotherhood. They are given also to what they designate

"Bible Conferences" in which exegesis or exhortation is brought under contribution to establish the Scripturalness of the "Abandoned Life," the "Premillennial Second Coming of our Lord" and world-wide missions. Of all the parties within the denomination this one is probably the most aggressive at this time.

Suffice it to say for the encouragement of the strictly normal Baptists that they are yet in the majority, and wisely led they can hold the denomination together. It is pleasant to know that all parties among us—the liberalistic, literalistic, ecclesiastical, pessimistic and pietistic—maintain firm grasp on some fundamental doctrines. These are the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice, regenerated individualism, fraternal democracy and earnest evangelism. It is a question for the future to settle how far the centrifugal forces among us shall gain control. The liberalist must be allowed to exalt the Kingdom of God on earth; the literalist to contend for the finality as well as authority and sufficiency of the Bible; the High Churchman may help us to understand the meaning and indispensableness of symbolism; the pessimist must not be hindered when he shows the dark side of an imperfect Christian civilization, and the pietists serve a good purpose in reminding us of the immanence of God through the Holy Spirit. Each party doubtless represents a truth. Each likewise may have over-emphasized what it regards its specialty. No one party, it may be, thoroughly understands the others. Within the denomination there is room for all if each is willing to be absolutely loyal to Christ. Only time, patience, gentleness, courtesy, consideration and supreme devotion to the unifying love of Christ will bind the brotherhood by unbreakable bonds. And that is our twentieth century task.

Beyond America lies the world. The world has found the Baptists because the Baptists have found the world. The world is waiting to hear our message and test its practical

Diversity of development among Baptists in other countries than America affords a most interesting study. Between the views prevailing in Canada and those in the United States

there is perhaps little dissimilarity. South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and other British colonies reproduce in a large measure the variations of faith and practice prevalent in the homeland. German Baptists and those of Sweden, though geographically nearer to Great Britain, yet by reason of deriving their origin from American preaching, are, ecclesiastically and in the matter of missionary organizations, closer kin to our people. The great awakening in Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe is bringing to the denomination thousands of recruits who are to be drilled according to the Baptist manual of arms. Fortunately these afford a great opportunity as well as supply a tremendous responsibility. Fortunately, too, the denomination has come to a world consciousness. The organ of its expression is the Baptist World Alliance. This high Council, not assuming ecclesiastical authority or forcing upon churches a prescribed creed or indispensable polity, but by furnishing to all throughout the world full information of Baptist doctrines and doings will prepare the way for a survival of the fittest and the adoption of the truest and best.

More than by another agency, some believe, the denominational life of the future is to be modified by the reflex influence of Foreign Missions. Problems clamoring for settlement by our sanest and sweetest thinkers in heathen lands, when so led in the Spirit and after the example of Jesus Christ, will disappear in the home lands also. American Baptists, therefore, while having the right to influence the normal evolution of the brotherhood everywhere, must in turn be open and responsive to new truth and new applications of old truth offered by our co-religionists across the seas. For the first time in all the centuries Baptists are rejoicing in a spiritual unity, which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will express its self in the creed catholic: "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity."