

# Our Denominational Outlook

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Faithfully Yours,  
Augustus H. Strong.



# OUR DENOMINATIONAL OUTLOOK

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ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE GENERAL DENOMINATIONAL MEETING  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE BAPTIST ANNIVERSARIES AT CLEVELAND,  
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A GREAT division of the Christian army halts to-day to hold a council of war. What has our Baptist host done thus far? Where do we now stand? What is our prospect for the future? These three questions, I take it, bring out the meaning of my subject. I have been asked to speak of "Our Denominational Outlook." I appreciate the honor thus conferred upon me. I appreciate even more my responsibility. Only an inspired prophet could adequately accomplish the task committed to me, for St. Bernard's *Respice, Aspice, Prospice*—"Look back, look around, look forward," or "View the Past, the Present, and the Future"—seems the demand of the hour. And I am no prophet. I can only remind you of past victories, point out present dangers, and encourage to future effort. Even in this attempt to discern the signs of the times, I need your sympathy and your prayers.

Yet before I begin to tell what Baptists have done, are doing, and need to do, I must say what a Baptist is. What is the essential principle for which we contend? I maintain that we stand above all things for a *spiritual church*. The church is the body of Christ. It properly consists only of those who have been renewed by the Spirit of God, and are joined to Christ by a living faith. This conception of a spiritual church carries with it all the other articles of our creed. The word "spiritual" suggests the deity of Christ, whose omnipotent Spirit is the source of the church's life. The word "church" suggests the outward expression of that life in the forms appointed by Christ himself. Thus a spiritual church implies a regenerate church membership on the one hand, and the New Testament ordinances and polity on the other. Dependence on the Scriptures as the sufficient and only standard of faith and practice, and independence of the State in all matters of doctrine and government, while they are not the central truths, are yet logical corollaries of the Baptist faith.

It is the vision of a spiritual church which Baptists have ever had before them. Our insistence upon the proper subjects and the proper mode of baptism is not the essential, but only the incidental, of our belief. Because we hold that the church is the body of Christ, we cannot accept the statement of the Westminster Confession that the church consists of those who "profess the true religion, together with their children," for this includes in the church those who give no credible evidence of regeneration. Because we hold that immersion of the body in water was appointed by our Lord as the sign of his death and resurrection and of the believer's entrance into communion therewith, we cannot regard any body as a regularly constituted church of Christ which disobeys or ignores his command by the substitution of any other mode of baptism. But we oppose infant baptism, only because it admits to the body of Christ those who do not belong to Christ; and we oppose sprinkling or pouring, only because they do not set forth that

entrance into the communion of Christ's death and resurrection which is essential to a regularly constituted Christian church. The maintenance of a spiritual church furnishes the reason for our existence as Baptists. When we cease to "follow the gleam," we shall die, and we ought to die.

## I. THE PAST

The church, then, is the body of Christ. It is a spiritual body, rightfully composed only of those who have been regenerated by Christ's Spirit and who have expressed this fact of regeneration in Christ's appointed way. To stand for this central truth in heart and life is to be a Baptist. We can now look backward and inquire what Baptists have been and have done. I can deal only, in a large way, with the facts of the past, and details must be left to others. In general, we must say that Baptist history began two hundred and fifty years ago. Before that time there were doubtless churches which held to some of the principles of the Baptist faith. But a clear recognition and confession of the great truth that the church is to be composed only of those who give credible evidence of regeneration and who have expressed their faith by baptism in Christ's appointed way is not furnished in modern times by any definite and organized body before the year 1640. About that time the Particular Baptists of London, and shortly afterward the General Baptists of England, began to maintain that baptism belongs solely to believers and also that nothing but immersion is baptism. But both these bodies saw in the outward ordinance the sign of a living union with Christ. They wished to build a spiritual church, a church separate from the world, a church after the pattern shown in the mount, a church spiritual because scriptural, a church in which Christ could dwell because it had been constituted according to his laws as they are laid down in the New Testament.

Other bodies have had the vision of a spiritual church,

but they have not been obedient to the heavenly vision. The New Testament gives us a form as well as a substance, an outward means of expression as well as an inward truth to be expressed. Luther saw clearly that justification was wholly by faith, but he retained infant baptism and thereby admitted to the church those who, if they had faith as he maintained, certainly could give no evidence of it, while he put the government of the church into the hands of princes instead of intrusting it to the whole congregation of believers. The Puritan Fathers aimed at the establishment of Christ's sole authority, but they identified that authority with that of the State, and it needed a Roger Williams to teach them that there could be a church without a bishop and a state without a king. But Baptists first in modern times furnish the example of a spiritual church organized after the New Testament model, self-governing and independent of the civil power, and expressing in both its ordinances the believer's communion with the death and resurrection of Christ.

The progress of Baptist principles has shown that they are not only adapted to human nature, but are also peculiarly blessed by God. It is doubtful whether any other religious denomination has grown more rapidly—only our Methodist brethren can claim as great a numerical increase. And this comparison teaches us that not simply doctrine, but life, counts in the rolling up of numbers. The heroic labor and sacrifice of pioneers, among Methodists and Baptists alike, were prompted by a vivid experience of sin and of redemption; and godly living gave proof that this inward experience was a reality. But we have had an advantage even over Methodists, in that we could always point for our polity to a "Thus saith the Lord," or to Scripture example and precedent. Where we have kept most closely to the New Testament model, we have prospered most; departures from it have been followed by spiritual and numerical decline. Hence our statistics give us both encouragement and warning.



In 1640 the General Baptists of England claimed over 20,000 members, and there were possibly half that number of Particular Baptists—say a total of 30,000. Macaulay estimates the population of England at that time as something above five millions. During the century from 1640 to 1740—the century of Charles II. and the Deists, a century of both ethical and religious declension—Baptists in Great Britain were subject to bitter persecution. They did not greatly increase in numbers, though such Baptists as John Bunyan in spite of fines and imprisonment confessed their faith and opposed a barrier to the growing corruption of the times. In 1740 they probably had no more than 50,000 members, though the population had increased to eight or nine millions. In 1840, when the population was 15,914,148, the Baptists numbered at least 150,000—their large growth due to the Wesleyan revival on the one hand, and to the missionary impulse of William Carey and Andrew Fuller on the other. In 1870, with a population of 22,712,266 in England and Wales, Baptists had increased to 243,395. In the decades from 1870 to 1900, however, the numbers have been 295,035, 330,163, 365,678; an increase of 21 per cent. in 1880; of 12 per cent. in 1890; and of 10.7 per cent. in 1900; while it is only at the rate of 6.2 per cent. a decade, for the three years from 1900 to 1903. In 1890 the population of England and Wales was 29,082,585, when the number of Baptists in Great Britain was 330,163. In 1900 the population of England and Wales was thirty-two millions, and the number of Baptists was 365,678. In 1903 with a probable population of forty millions, Baptists number only 372,998. The average rate of increase in population per decade in Great Britain is 13.86 per cent. for eight decades.\* Before 1880 Baptists in Great Britain increased much faster than the population. But since 1880 there has been a rate of increase slower than

English  
Baptists

\*In the United States the increase of population has varied from 35.1 per cent. (1800-1810) to 20.7 per cent. (1890-1900). The average per decade (1870-1900) is 25.2 per cent.

that of the population, and this decline has gone on until the 14 per cent. increase in population has over against it a Baptist increase of only a trifle over 6 per cent. Two facts are made plain by these English statistics. The first is that times of religious revival, of doctrinal earnestness, and of missionary enterprise, are marked by great accessions to our numbers, while laxity of belief, worldliness of life, and indifference to missions are accompanied by numerical diminution. The second fact is that the last quarter-century has witnessed a comparative set-back, in which the exceedingly rapid growth of the preceding century has been checked, and the figures indicate some deeply working causes of decline.

Home  
Statistics

What is true of the Baptist body in Great Britain is also true of our denomination in the United States. Our early rate of increase was astonishing, but in later years it has been steadily diminishing. In 1784 we are credited with only 35,000 members, and in 1800 with only 100,000. But by 1880, the number had reached 2,133,044; by 1890, 3,065,367; by 1900, 4,181,686; and by 1904, 4,506,747 (estimated). While the five millions (5,308,483) of population which the country had in 1800 have increased fifteen fold (or to 75,994,575), the number of Baptists has increased forty fold (or to 4,181,686). But I must add that this great increase belongs to the first three-quarters and more exactly to the first nine decades of the past century, rather than to the last ten to twenty-five years. Or to speak more specifically: From 1800 to 1880 our numbers doubled in every twenty years; and in the single decade from 1870 to 1880 we increased 74 per cent. (74.64; population, 29.74). But from 1880 to 1890 the increase was but 43 per cent. (43.70; population 25.36); from 1890 to 1900 only 36 per cent. (36.41; population 21); and from 1900 to 1904 we are increasing at the rate, for a whole decade, of only 19 per cent. (19.44).

Education-  
al Progress

Is this check to our progress only a temporary eddy in the current, which can be attributed to the diverting in-

fluence of trade and war? That there has been a progressive diminution for more than three decades seems to indicate some more radical evil; and we are summoned to self-examination with regard to our doctrinal faithfulness and our practical consecration. I would not too hastily impugn the soundness or the generosity of the great Baptist host to which I belong. Two encouraging facts may be set over against this relative slowness of increase during the past thirty years. The first is the great additions that have been made to our educational equipment. Whereas in 1880 the total property and endowments of our Baptist Seminaries, Universities, Colleges and Academies in the United States amounted to only \$16,661,079, and in 1890 to \$19,659,864, they amounted in 1900 to \$39,434,392, and in 1904 to \$51,158,368. The world may be challenged to show a like rapidity of increase, and the only drawback to our claim is the fact that so large a part of this increase has been due to the liberality of a single giver.

The second reason for encouragement is to be found in Missionary  
Advance the growing interest of our churches in the foreign field, and in the great success in our home missionary work. In 1840 the receipts of our Missionary Union were \$65,761, and the members of our mission churches numbered 2,500. In 1850, we gave \$87,537, and had 11,958 members; in 1860, \$132,426, and had 25,408 members; in 1870, \$200,953, and had 46,964 members; in 1880, \$290,851, and had 85,308 members; in 1890, \$410,974, and had 138,293 members; in 1900, \$500,455, and had 206,746 members; in 1904, \$779,594, and had 226,058 members. During this same period the work of Home Missions has been correspondingly prosecuted and prospered. In 1850, the total receipts of our American Baptist Home Mission Society were only \$26,443; in 1860, they amounted to \$57,777; in 1870, they were \$183,828; in 1880, they were \$192,356, but in 1890, they more than doubled, being \$449,444; in 1900, they rose to \$581,609; in 1903, they again rose to \$614,223; and in 1904, they are \$635,396. Our American Baptist Publica-

tion Society furnishes an exhibit which is an almost exact parallel. In 1850, the receipts from all sources were \$24,539, in 1860, \$66,556; in 1870, \$304,999; in 1880, \$349,564; in 1890, \$651,605; in 1900, \$867,066; and in 1904, \$934,923.

Our Women's Foreign Missionary Societies were organized so late as 1871, yet their aggregate receipts for a year, as reported in our last Year Book, had reached \$188,019; while the Women's Home Mission Societies, organized only in 1877, collected and expended in a single year \$134,612. A great new force was called into effective operation when the women of our denomination gave themselves to this missionary work. And so we may believe that an instrument of equal future possibilities was raised up when the Baptist Young People's Union of America was constituted in 1891. That over \$60,000 should have been paid into its treasury in a single year, when the Union was only twelve years old, gives great promise for the future.

These figures prove that, in some respects at least, we have made surprising progress. They show that the comparative apathy in church extension at home has been accompanied by remarkable increase in our educational facilities, and by a growth both in home and in foreign missions for which it would be hard to find a parallel.

Sectional  
Gains and  
Losses

Our congratulations in these two respects need to be tempered by the unpleasing consideration that the growth we have had at home has not been so great in the settled and older States as it has been at the West and at the South. In New England, for example, while the decade from 1870 to 1880 shows an increase of Baptists of 16.65 per cent. as compared with an increase of 14.98 per cent. in population, the decade 1890 to 1900 shows an increase of Baptists of 14.54 per cent. with an increase of population of 18.96 per cent.; and the last three years have shown almost no increase at all of Baptists, or only at the rate of a half of 1 per cent. (or .56) for a whole decade. In the Middle States the relative increase in proportion to population has been better kept up, being 25.96 per cent, to 19.37 popula-

tion in 1880, and 28.90 per cent. to 20.95 population in 1900; yet for the last three years the Baptist increase is reduced to a rate of only 14.12 per cent. for the whole decade. It is in the West and South and on the Pacific Slope that we have most increased in numbers. The Western States show in 1880 Baptist increase of 52.04 per cent., to 32.12 per cent. in population; in 1900 Baptist increase 30.08 per cent., to population 17.58 per cent.; but in the last three years even here our rate of Baptist increase has been reduced to 14.12 per cent. for a whole decade. The Southern States showed in 1880 an increase of 111.29 per cent. as compared with 36.88 per cent. in population, and in 1900 of 40.32 per cent. as compared with 24.01 per cent. of population, while in the last three years Baptist increase was at the rate of only 11.32 per cent. for a whole decade. The Pacific States have shown the greatest persistency of all. In 1880, their rate was 115.15 per cent., as compared with 78.46 per cent. in population; in 1900, 96.98 per cent., as compared with 35.13 per cent. in population; while, for the last three years, Baptist increase is still at the rate of 48.05 per cent. per decade.

In short, our increase has been greatest in the newer and less cultivated fields. In the cities we have not grown so rapidly as in the country, and in New York City, the metropolis of the land, where it would seem that we ought to be strongest, our churches have experienced a relative decline. The causes for this state of things are partly local. Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, have shown that Baptists, with proper management and liberality, can stand at the front. The growth of population at the West, and the influence of foreign immigration at the East, explain to some degree the fact that our victories are more and more to be found where pioneer and missionary work is done. We are encouraged to home missionary work, as we are encouraged to foreign missionary work, when we see that in Nebraska and in Oregon, as in India and China, the seed sown brings forth a hundredfold, while it brings forth only

tenfold in Pennsylvania and New York. I deny that we are a denomination only of pioneers, or that our mission is simply to the unintelligent or to the poor. If we have the truth of God, that truth should have greatest power where there is most of culture and wealth. And yet we seem to be prospering far away from our centers of intelligence and of business enterprise, while our cause makes less progress where there is most of money and of education. Only our long-range guns seem to be hitting their mark.

**Foreign  
Factors**

I would not be unjust to our Baptist brotherhood, and I would recognize peculiar features of the situation which to some extent explain the slowness of our recent progress. In New England, as well as in several Western and Northern States, fully two-fifths of the population is of foreign birth or of foreign parentage, in contrast to a very small per cent. of this element fifty or seventy-five years ago. The preponderating foreign element in our great cities, where it ranges from 70 to 80 per cent., must also be remembered. This constitutes a more stony ground for our Baptist seed-sowing than that with which the fathers had to deal. If we could compare our Baptist growth with that of the native American population, the showing would without doubt be more favorable. At the South, moreover, where apparently Baptist growth has been phenomenal, we ought in all fairness to take separate account of the colored Baptists, who fifty or sixty years ago cut a very small figure in the religious statistics of the country, but who increased in numbers from four hundred thousand in 1865 to nearly two millions in 1894. It is also true that while in some of the extreme Western States our increase on the percentage basis has been very large, this is due to the fact that twenty years ago the Baptists in the Territory of Washington and in some other Territories were very few. The man who was blessed with a second son was technically right, but he gave a wrong impression, when he declared that his family had increased at the rate of 50 per cent. within a year. In some of the Western States our progress has been

as slow and as difficult as in some of the Eastern States. These considerations do much to equalize our diversities. Yet they cannot blind us to the fact that our general rate of progress has been gradually diminishing for at least thirty years.

It may be argued that other denominations are as badly off as we; that the last fifty years have been a period of general religious decline; that we are not responsible for the external conditions which have hindered and checked our progress. And it is true that, while the Congregational increase in the United States from 1870 to 1893 has been only 91.67 per cent.; the Presbyterian increase 133.74 per cent.; the Methodist increase 147.49 per cent.; and the Disciple increase 248.81 per cent.; our Baptist increase has been greater than any of these, namely, 254.38 per cent. If however, we take into account only our churches at the North, excluding the South and the Pacific Coast, our rate of increase from 1870 to 1893 has been only 128 per cent.; which is less than that of the Presbyterians, the Methodists or the Disciples, and is only greater than that of the Congregationalists. And even if we include the South in our estimate and claim 254.38 per cent. of increase, we find that the Protestant Episcopal Church has outstripped us, for its increase from 1870 to 1903 has been 319.28 per cent. The Disciples and the Episcopalians have grown most rapidly, and we have doubtless given many of our members to each of them. And what right have we to take comfort from the thought that we have prospered more than some of the others, when we remember that times of general religious depression were to our fathers a glorious opportunity, and that Baptist zeal shone out brightest when confronted with indifference and opposition?

We do not get the case properly before us until we remember the vast increase of our material resources during the half century that is past. I suppose it is within reasonable limits to say that Baptists during that period have accumulated many thousands of millions of dollars. The

denomination that was once poor has become rich and increased in goods. We have probably a hundred times the financial means that we possessed fifty years ago. But our giving has not increased in any such proportion. Instead of being multiplied by a hundred, our gifts have hardly been multiplied by ten. God has bestowed a blessing upon these gifts far beyond our faith or our desert. He seems to have been pointing us to his work in the Far West and the Far East, to stir up more vigorous effort right at home. Yet we have suffered this work at home to languish, and at the present rate of comparative decrease, it will be but a question of time when the sources of supply will be dried up and the work abroad will be hindered or stopped. We who have been floating with the stream do not appreciate how rapidly we are drifting. Our missionaries who return to America after an absence of twenty years perceive, as we do not, that there is a change of position. We do not stand where we once stood. The old zeal for conversions is dying out. Our churches are less careful in their examination of applicants for admission to their membership. We do not realize as we should that men are lost, and that only Christ can save them.

## II. THE PRESENT

**Questions  
of the  
Present** So the review of the past leads me to questions of the present. Do we Baptists still hold to the belief and practice of the fathers, or have we departed from the faith and turned aside to a science that is falsely so called? My reply must be a qualified reply. I maintain that the great Baptist body still holds to Jesus Christ its head; still stands for his deity and his atonement; still insists that the church shall be composed of regenerate persons; still claims that the constitution and ordinances of the church shall visibly picture and express the inward union of believers with their divine Lord. But I hold at the same time that there



is progress in our Baptist apprehension of the truth; that it is duty to accept the new light that true science gives; that the formulas of the past need some revision in order to satisfy the demands of the present time; yes, that the impulse to this revision is itself divine, an impulse from Christ himself, whose Spirit is promised to guide us into all the truth. It is our advantage that we have no authoritative creed to define our theology once for all; and this ensures us freedom and right of development. A creed expresses one age and set of thought; the Bible is of many ages, minds, purposes. Accepting it as authority, we still affirm the duty of bringing out of that treasure things new, as well as old. A Baptist theology must continually seek the truth, must keep abreast of public intelligence, and must be a progressive theology. The guarantee that it will not ultimately run to wild extremes is furnished in the total teaching of the written word, and in the continued influence of the Holy Spirit.

The chief source of change and improvement in our modern thought has been the discovery of the immanence of God in his universe. Yet this is not so much a new doctrine, as it is the new recognition of an old one. The ancient Hebrews knew of it, and it was taught by Paul and John. But deism had obscured it. God was thought to be far away, in some distant heaven. We have learned that he is near; that in him we live, and move, and have our being; that he is the soul of our soul, and the life of our life. We take seriously the omnipresence of God; we recognize in Christ the only Revealer of God; we believe his assurance that he is with us always even unto the end of the world. The idea of Christ in the universe and Christ in humanity is gradually transforming our theology and bringing it into closer accord with the New Testament. There is no better illustration of the wrong view than is found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In that immortal work, Christian does not have Christ with him on his journey; there is no divine companionship in his toils and struggles; he hopes

Theological  
Changes

to meet his Savior only after he has crossed the flood. Nature, in a similar manner, was conceived of as under the dominion of the evil one; since the world is ruled by Satan, and not by Christ, all natural processes and even all natural beauty—literature, art, and all the joy of life—were regarded as hostile to Christ.

Christ  
the Key

But Christ is greater than the Puritan theology thought. He is the acting God; the Creator, Upholder, Governor of the Universe; the Life of nature and of humanity. Law is only the method of his regular working; gravitation and evolution are only the habits of Christ. We need not fear either science or philosophy, for these are men's efforts to interpret the ways of him to whom all authority is given in heaven and in earth. The historical Christ only "shows the hid heart beneath creation beating"; and "he that hath seen him hath seen the Father." So we have the key with which to unlock the chief secrets of the world; we have a divine Companion and Friend to accompany our earthly pilgrimage; we have a living Interpreter of Scripture and of history. And, of all denominations of Christians, Baptists should be most ready to concede the possibility of a progressive theology, since Baptists from the beginning have believed in a spiritual church, in which Christ dwells and reigns.

Old and  
New View  
of Sin

Think now of the light which this conception of an immanent God and an omnipresent Christ throws upon the doctrines of sin, of the atonement, of the church, and of the Scriptures. As we note the changes that have come over our ways of thinking, we may see exaggerations which have weakened our faith and have checked our progress. Take for example the old and the new view as to sin. Our fathers believed in total depravity, and we agree with them that man naturally is devoid of love to God and that every faculty is weakened, disordered and corrupted by the selfish bent of his will. They held to original sin. The selfish bent of man's will can be traced back to the apostacy of our first parents; and, on account of that departure of the race from

God, all men are by nature children of wrath. And all this is true, if it is regarded as a statement of the facts, apart from their relation to Christ. But our fathers did not see, as we do, that man's relation to Christ antedated the Fall and constituted an underlying and modifying condition of man's life. Humanity was naturally in Christ, in whom all things were created and in whom they all consist. Even man's sin did not prevent Christ from still working in him to counteract the evil and to suggest the good. There was an internal, as well as an external, preparation for man's redemption. In this sense, of a divine principle in man striving against the selfish and godless will, there was a total redemption, over against man's total depravity; and an original grace, that was even more powerful than original sin.

The great Baptist body has become conscious that total depravity alone is not a sufficient or proper expression of the truth; and the phrase has been outgrown. It has been felt that the old view of sin did not take account of the generous and noble aspirations, the unselfish efforts, the strivings after God, of even unregenerate men. For this reason there has been less preaching about sin, and less conviction as to its guilt and condemnation. The good impulses of men outside the Christian pale have been often credited to human nature, when they should have been credited to the indwelling Spirit of Christ. I make no doubt that one of the radical weaknesses of our denomination at this present time is its more superficial view of sin. Without some sense of sin's guilt and condemnation, we cannot feel our need of redemption. John the Baptist must go before Christ; the law must prepare the way for the gospel. My belief is that the new apprehension of Christ's relation to the race will enable us to declare, as never before, the lost condition of the sinner; while at the same time we show him that Christ is with him and in him to save. This presence in every man of a power not his own that works for righteousness is a very different doctrine from that "divinity

of man" which is so often preached. The divinity is not the divinity of man, but the divinity of Christ. And the power that works for righteousness is not the power of man, but the power of Christ. It is a power whose warning, inviting, persuading influence renders only more marked and dreadful the evil will which hampers and resists it. Depravity is all the worse, when we recognize in it the constant antagonist of an ever-present, all-holy, and all-loving Redeemer.

**The  
Atonement**

We must acknowledge also that our conceptions of Christ's atonement have suffered some change. Yet that change has been in the nature of a more fundamental understanding of the meaning of atonement, and its necessity as a law of universal life. To our fathers the atonement was a mere historical fact, a sacrifice offered in a few brief hours upon the Cross. It was a literal substitution of Christ's suffering for ours, the payment of our debt by another, and upon the ground of that payment we are permitted to go free. Those sufferings were soon over, and the hymn "Love's Redeeming Work is Done," expressed the believer's joy in a finished redemption. And all this is true. But it is only a part of the truth. The atonement, like every other doctrine of Christianity, is a fact of life; and such facts of life cannot be crowded into our definitions, because they are greater than any definitions that we can frame. The atonement is a substitution, in that another has done for us what we ought to have done but could not do, and has suffered for us what we deserved to suffer but could not suffer without loss of holiness and happiness forever and ever. But Christ's doing and suffering is not that of one external and foreign to us. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; the bearer of our humanity; yes, the very life of the race. The life that he lived in Palestine and the death that he endured on Calvary were the revelation of a union with mankind which antedated the Fall. Being thus joined to us from the beginning, he has suffered in all human sin; in all our affliction he has been afflicted; so that the Psalmist

can say: "Blessed be God, who daily beareth our burden, even the God of our salvation."

So we add to the idea of *substitution* the idea of *sharing*; **Substitution and Sharing** and see in the Cross, not so much the atonement itself, as the revelation of the atonement. The sufferings of Christ take deeper hold upon us when we see in them the expression of the two great truths: that holiness must make penalty to follow sin; and that love must share that penalty with the transgressor. And we are subject to that same law of life. We who enter into fellowship with our Lord fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake which is the church; and the Christian church can reign with Christ only as it partakes in his suffering. The atonement becomes a model and stimulus to self-sacrifice, and a test of Christian character. But it is easy to see how the subjective effect of Christ's sacrifice may absorb the attention, to the exclusion of its ground and cause. The moral influence of the atonement has taken deep hold upon our minds, and we are in danger of forgetting that it is the holiness of God, and not the salvation of men, that primarily requires it. When sharing excludes substitution; when reconciliation of man to God excludes reconciliation of God to man; when the only peace secured is peace in the sinner's heart and no thought is given to that peace with God which it is the first object of the atonement to secure; then our whole evangelical system is weakened, God's righteousness is ignored, and man is practically put in place of God. I doubt not that this has been the effect, in Baptist circles, of some recent journalism and some recent teaching. We need to stay this incoming tide of anti-scriptural theology. We can do so, not by going back to the old mechanical and arbitrary conceptions of the atonement, but by going forward to a more vital apprehension of the relation of the race to Christ. A larger knowledge of Christ, the life of humanity, will enable us to hold fast the objective nature of the atonement, and its necessity as grounded in the holiness of God; while at the

same time we appropriate all that is good in the modern view of the atonement, as the final demonstration of God's constraining love which moves men to repentance and submission.

Christian  
Fellowship

I perceive some change in our ideas of Christian fellowship. Our fathers lived in a day when simple faith was subject to serious disabilities. The establishments frowned upon dissent, and visited it with pains and penalties. It is no wonder that believers in the New Testament doctrine and polity felt that they must come out from what they regarded as an apostate church. They could have no sympathy with those who held back the truth in unrighteousness and persecuted the saints of God. But our doctrine has leavened all Christendom. Scholarship is on the side of immersion. Infant baptism is on the decline. The churches that once opposed us now compliment us on our steadfastness in the faith and on our missionary zeal. There is a growing spirituality in these churches, which prompts them to extend to us hands of fellowship. And there is a growing sense among us that the kingdom of Christ is wider than our own membership, and that loyalty to our Lord requires us to recognize his presence and blessing even in bodies which we do not regard as organized in complete accordance with the New Testament model.

The  
Communion

If I am asked whether Baptists still hold to restricted communion, I answer that our principle has not changed, but that many of us apply the principle in a different manner from that of our fathers. We believe that baptism logically precedes the Lord's Supper, as birth precedes the taking of nourishment, and regeneration precedes sanctification. We believe that the order of the ordinances is an important point of Christian doctrine, and itself teaches Christian doctrine. Hence we proclaim it and adhere to it, in our preaching and in our practice. But we do not turn the Lord's Supper into a judgment-seat, or turn the officers of the church into detectives. We teach the truth, and expect that the truth will win its way. We are courteous to

all who come among us; and expect that they in turn will have the courtesy to respect our convictions and to act accordingly. But there is danger here that we may break from our moorings and drift into indifferentism with regard to the ordinances. The recent advocacy of open church-membership is but the logical consequence of a previous concession of open communion. But I am persuaded that this new doctrine is confined to very few among us. The remedy for this false liberalism is to be found in that same Christ who solves for us all other problems. It is this Christ who sets the solitary in families, and who makes of one every nation that dwells on the face of the earth. Christian denominations are at least temporarily his appointment. Loyalty to the body which seems to us best to represent his truth is also loyalty to him. Love for Christ does not involve the surrender of the ties of family, or nation, or denomination, but only consecrates and ennobles them. Yet Christ is King in Zion. There is but one army of the living God, even though there are many divisions. We can emphasize our unity with other Christian bodies, rather than the differences between us. We can regard them as churches of the Lord Jesus, even though they are irregularly constituted. As a marriage ceremony may be valid, even though performed without a license and by an unqualified administrator; and as an ordination may be valid, even though the ordinary laying-on of hands be omitted; so the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as administered in pedobaptist churches may be valid, though irregular in its accompaniments and antecedents. Though we still protest against the modern perversions of the New Testament doctrine as to the subjects and the mode of baptism, we hold with regard to the Lord's Supper that irregularity is not invalidity, and that we may recognize as churches even those bodies which celebrate the Lord's Supper without having been baptized. Our faith in the larger Christ is bringing us out from our denominational isolation into an inspiring

Unity  
Empha-  
sized

recognition of our oneness with the universal church of God throughout the world.

View  
of the  
Scriptures

There have been changes in our Baptist view of the Scriptures. When the Reformation dislodged the Church from the place of ultimate authority, the Bible was substituted for the Church. It was forgotten that the only ultimate authority is Christ, and that he has never so constructed Scripture as to dispense with his own personal presence and the teaching of his Spirit. Nowhere does the Bible speak of itself as "the word of God." That phrase designates the truth, of which the Bible is the record. And modern investigation is teaching us that there is a human element in that record; it has grown up in ways analogous to those in which other literatures have originated; and it is to be interpreted in the light of its history. And yet, in spite of imperfections, its authorship is divine, as well as human; it brings us a divine revelation; its many *biblia* constitute one *Bible*. It is not intended to teach physical science or secular history; but it can lead us to Christ and the truth. When taken together, and interpreted by the same Spirit who inspired it, it is able to make us wise unto salvation.

We cannot, even if we would, escape or ignore the results of modern criticism. That criticism is sometimes skeptical and destructive, but it is not necessarily so. It may be, and it often is, constructive and illuminating, and in that measure it is only a new means by which Christ himself is throwing light upon the record of his past revelations and enabling us the better to understand them. The miraculous element in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament the virgin birth and resurrection of our Lord, are only made more indisputable facts of history, when they are shown to be not violations of law but extraordinary workings of law; and inspiration becomes only more credible, when it is recognized as an intensification of natural powers under the special influence of the Spirit of God. But in this new method of thought there lie obvious dangers of exaggeration; and in



some quarters we may observe a tendency to sink the divine in the human, and to divest the Bible of all authority. Let us beware of this tendency, for our Baptist doctrine and polity are founded upon the New Testament. If this New Testament is not the common law of the church, then our separate existence as a denomination is impertinence and schism. How shall we steer our bark so as to clear both the Scylla of bibliolatry and the Charybdis of rationalism? Ah, there is ever the one and sufficient answer: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever. He is the only ultimate authority; and he abides, by his omnipotent Spirit, in his people, opening to them the Scriptures even as he did to those disciples on the way to Emmaus, showing them the things concerning himself, enabling them to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and so leading them gradually but surely into all the truth.

### III. THE OUTLOOK

And now, last of all, with this past history behind us, and with this present attitude in respect to faith and practice, what is our outlook toward the future? Will Baptist principles stand the test of advancing intelligence, and of the tremendous march of culture and civilization? I reply: They are the only principles that *can* stand the test. For they build on Christ, the solid Rock, and on that conception of a spiritual church, against which he himself has said that the gates of Hades shall not prevail. In that one conception of a spiritual church, we find our strength, our warning, and our inspiration. If we hold to that, we cannot fail to grow and to triumph. We may be very weak and ignorant in other respects, but this principle ensures success. When I think how little Peter and James and John, on the banks of the Jordan at the beginning of Christ's ministry, knew about Christian doctrine, I am amazed that they should have been counted among his disciples. If you had asked them about the deity of Christ or about his atonement, they

Building  
on Christ

would not have understood the meaning of your words. But they heard his command: "Follow me!" and they obeyed. In that act of obedience was latent the whole Christian scheme. They knew nothing of the deity of Christ? But what right had they to submit themselves unreservedly to him, if he were a mere man like themselves? Their following him was an implicit and unconscious confession of his deity. They knew nothing of the atonement of Christ? But were they not conscious sinners, who had submitted to John's baptism of repentance and of faith in him who was to come, and, in following Christ, did they not show that they looked to him as the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world? All Christian doctrine was implicit in their obedience. That doctrine was vague and undefined, unconscious and unformulated, but it was none the less real. It was like solid matter in a state of solution, so transparent as to be invisible, yet ready at a shock to be precipitated and crystallized into definite forms of belief, as when Peter afterward made his great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God."

The  
Conquering  
Principle

So our Baptist principle of a spiritual church contains, latently and logically, all the substance of Christianity, and it has power to regenerate the world. That is, it has all the power that truth alone can possess. But we need ever to remember that truth, apart from Christ, the Spirit of truth, is an abstraction, and not a power. Here is the danger of some modern theories of Christian education. They give us statistics, to show that the age of puberty is the age of strongest religious impressions; and the inference is drawn that conversion is nothing but a natural phenomenon, a regular stage of development. The free will, and the evil bent of that will, are forgotten, and the absolute dependence of perverse human nature upon the regenerating Spirit of God. The age of puberty is the age of strongest religious impressions? Yes, but it is also the age of strongest artistic and social and sensuous impressions, and only a new birth from above can lead the soul to seek first the kingdom of

God. Our people have believed in the converting power of God; and just in proportion as they have given and prayed and labored, the Spirit has been poured out upon them and their witness to the truth has been followed by great gatherings.

When we think of the proper expression of the truth, as of importance only second to the having of the truth to be expressed, may we not learn some lessons from those denominations which seem of late to be outstripping us in the race? It is the Disciples on the one hand, and the Episcopalians on the other, who have drawn most upon our numbers, especially in the older and more cultivated portions of our country. I think we cannot doubt that, as education advances, there is a demand for decorum in worship and attention to outward order, which the earlier stages of religious life tend to neglect. The æsthetic instinct may be overcultivated, and may become a hindrance to piety. But, with increasing culture, there is a growing disposition to express religious thought in impressive forms. The arts of music and of architecture may become helpers to religion. The Puritan worship was bare and hard. It took little account of the love of God or of the beauty of his works. The ritualistic churches of our day are making headway, partly at least because they clothe the truth in a fitting garb, and appeal to the heart as well as to the head. Taste is a divine gift; the bride in the Messianic psalm had garments of needlework; the New Testament appropriates all that was vital and beautiful in the Old; the worship of the New Jerusalem has in it a responsive and even a liturgical element. We give over to the minister too much of our public service; he should be rather the leader of the congregation. We can keep our young people more easily, if we add to our worship more of dignity and impressiveness, and if we make our places of worship beautiful as well as homelike. Christ is the Master of the universe; he will make even the arts to serve him; regard for outward form is not incompatible with the humble and contrite heart, and

**Demand  
for order in  
Worship**

with the indwelling in that heart of the living Redeemer. Our Baptist concern that the religious spirit properly express itself in the constitution of the church and in its ordinances may well lead us further, namely, to making that church and those ordinances thoroughly tasteful and attractive.

**A Witness-  
ing Church**

Yet I confess that my greatest concern for the future is the concern lest we should cease to be a *witnessing* church, and so should cease to be a *true* church of Christ. For a spiritual church means, as we have seen, two things: first, the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in regenerate souls; and secondly, the outward expression of their union with Christ in his death and resurrection. We express our relation to Christ by the New Testament organization and ordinances. But we need also to express it by holy lives, and by actual oral testimony. To a considerable extent, and especially in our older and more educated communities, we have fallen into the sacerdotal notion that our ministers are to do our preaching for us; forgetting that, in the early church when Christians were scattered abroad, they, and not the apostles, went everywhere preaching the word. Not sermons, but individual voices of private members of the church, are to evangelize the world. When the Romans shortened their swords, they lengthened their territories. Wherever and whenever we have done this hand to hand work, our increase has been great. When we cease to believe that men around us are lost, cease in private to urge them to come to Christ, the glory will depart from us. The church that ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical; and the church that ceases to be evangelical will soon cease to exist.

**Church  
Must be  
Missionary**

Why is it that those Mediterranean lands where the gospel was first preached have been given over to infidelity and to barbarism? Why has the candlestick that once burned so brightly been removed out of its place? Simply because it quenched its light and refused to shine; simply because it shut in its rays, like a dark lantern, and had no

compassion upon those who were sitting in darkness. While the early churches were missionary churches and sent the gospel abroad, they continued to prosper at home. When, like the ancient Jews, they came to fancy that the oracles of God were given to them only for their individual and national salvation, God scattered them through the world, and gave their possessions to others. And so it will be with us. If we settle down in ease and idleness, content to enjoy the fruits of Christianity without giving our Christianity to others, we too will be dealt with as were those wicked husbandmen who failed to render returns to the owner and whose vineyard was taken from them.

We have been a democratic people, and the masses have flocked to us. Now that we are gaining wealth and social position, there is danger that we shall forget the poor and the oppressed. We need more fully to recognize, not only our unity with all Christians, but our unity with all men. We are our brothers' keepers, and nothing human should be foreign to us. The *laissez-faire* or let-alone principle is only a surviving selfishness and barbarism. We are bound to moralize competition, and to bring men out from their isolation into community and brotherhood in Christ. I do not mean that *churches* should take sides in labor agitations or in political campaigns. But I do mean that *church-members* should listen to the exceeding bitter cry of the submerged classes; should demand protective legislation for those to whom heartless capitalists will not grant a living wage. In the saloon that entices to drink, in the crime which that drink causes, and in the lawlessness which lynches the criminal, Christian men should see their Master's call to stand for the weak against the strong. We have been losing ground because we have been too intent upon our own concerns to care for the interests of our neighbor. A true Baptist should be a man of public spirit. He should not only strive to rescue individual men from the slough of vice, but he should devise measures for draining that slough and making that vice impossible. In other

The  
Christian  
a Public  
Spirited  
Citizen

words, he should labor for the coming of the kingdom of God in society, as well as in the church.

Faith  
Measured  
by giving

Our faith, moreover, is measured by our giving. Judged by our numbers and by our wealth, our Baptist gifts, however large they may seem, are pitifully small. Our total gifts to home and foreign missions are not one cent a week for each member. The church is like Dives in the parable, clothed in fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, while the sick and hungry world at its doors, like Lazarus, receives only the crumbs from the bountifully provided table. In the time of the great Indian famine there were relief agents to whom were intrusted great sums of money with which to feed the hungry, but who kept that money for themselves, while hundreds of starving creatures died under their very eyes. God has given us wealth, that we may relieve the spiritual famine of the world. He has made us stewards of his bounty; and for every dollar intrusted to us he will require us to give account. Shall we keep for ourselves, or spend upon our own pleasures, what belongs to the perishing? What should we think of the professed Christian who, when the bread was passed to him at the Lord's Supper, should keep it all for himself, and refuse to pass it on? When the Lord multiplies the loaves to feed the five thousand, shall the apostles keep the loaves to themselves, and pile them up till they form such a barricade that the five thousand are hid from sight? And shall John be excused from distributing, simply because Peter will not do his part? Ah, my brethren, this is a matter between each one of us and Christ! Each one of us is charged with maintaining and extending a spiritual church, by our giving, as well as by our witnessing and teaching. And not our brethren, but only Christ, is our Example, our Lawgiver, and our Judge.

For he cometh, for he cometh, to judge the earth! The judgment of nations takes place in time; for nations belong only to the present order of things, and have no eternal existence. Denominations also are judged in this world;

since the divisions between them are incidents of our present imperfect knowledge, and when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away. Meantime, we are held individually responsible for the forward march of the denomination which to us most fully embodies and represents the truth of Christ. A retrograde movement of that denomination may be the consequence of our illiberality, our laxity, our indifference. We cannot say with the heedless French monarch: "After me the deluge!" The judgment which comes to a denomination in time comes to the members of that denomination in eternity. If we confess Christ and his truth before men, Christ will confess us before his Father and before the holy angels. If we deny him, he also will deny us.

The faith in a second coming of Christ has lost its hold upon many Baptists in our day. But it still serves to stimulate and admonish the great body, and we can never dispense with its solemn and mighty influence. Christ comes, it is true, in Pentecostal revivals and in destructions of Jerusalem, in Reformation movements and in political upheavals. But these are only precursors of another and literal and final return of Christ, to punish the wicked and to complete the salvation of his people. That day for which all other days are made will be a joyful day for those who have fought a good fight and have kept the faith. Let us look for and hasten the coming of the day of God. The Jacobites of Scotland never ceased their labors and sacrifices for their king's return. Their passionate devotion to his cause led hundreds of them to exile and to death. They never tasted wine, without pledging their absent prince; they never joined in song, without renewing their oaths of allegiance. In many a prison cell and on many a battle field they rang out the strain:

"Follow thee, follow thee, wha wadna follow thee?"

Long hast thou lo'ed and trusted us fairly:

Chairlie, Chairlie, wha wadna follow thee?

King o' the Highland hearts, bonnie Prince Chairlie!"

The  
Coming  
Christ

So they sang, so they invited him, until at last he came. But that longing for the day when Charles should come to his own again was faint and weak compared with the longing of true Christian hearts for the coming of their King. Charles came, only to suffer defeat, and to bring shame to his country. But Christ will come, to put an end to the world's long sorrow, to give triumph to the cause of truth, to bestow everlasting reward upon the faithful.

“Even so, Lord Jesus, come!  
Hope of all our hopes the sum,  
Take thy waiting people home!

“Long, so long, the groaning earth,  
Cursed with war and flood and dearth,  
Sighs for its redemption-birth.

“Therefore come, we daily pray,  
Bring the resurrection-day,  
Wipe creation's curse away!”

**The Basis  
of Faith  
and Hope** I rest my Baptist faith upon the New Testament demand for a spiritual church; and I rest my Baptist hope upon the historic fact of our past faithfulness to this fundamental principle. “If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” These words are as true of the denomination, as they are of the individual Christian. And what is meant by serving Christ, our Lord himself intimates when he requires that “all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” We have tried to honor Christ, and Christ has honored us. Our future as a denomination, if we are but faithful to Christ's word and to our past history, is as sure as the promises of God. It is not a question whether our principles are correct, so much as it is a question whether we are true to our principles. I believe that the great body of Baptists still *are* true, and therefore I believe that our denominational outlook is still promising. Though we have



suffered a comparative check in our onward movement and our increase is not what it once was, the very knowledge of the fact which this council of war gives to us may, by the help of Christ's Spirit, be made a stimulus to such labor and liberality and prayer, that we shall press forward as never before. We were once but a little flock, yet it was the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. If we are only meek, we shall yet inherit the earth.

If we are to meet our King in peace, we must do the work of the immediate present. And what an opportunity stretches before us! Here in this land is the greatest field, and the most widely opened door, that the Baptist principle has ever known. Never before in human history was so vast an area devoted to free trade, unrestricted by interstate duties and taxes. Never before in human history was so vast a population possessed of the means of education. Never before in human history was there so complete and successful a system of self-government. Our Baptist faith and polity inculcate the right and the duty of private judgment, and so commend themselves to intelligent freemen. We believe in democracy, and we are fitted to succeed in a democratic country. We ought to take possession of America in the name of Christ. But more than this. We are citizens of the world. We have access to the other nations as never before. The industrial and educational and democratic leadership of America gives us advantage over every other people, in the conduct of religious work. American Baptists ought to girdle the whole earth with their missions. Let past success embolden us to worldwide effort! The principle for which we contend is divine and eternal. Christ himself is with us. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he has made his spiritual church conterminous with the whole human race for which he died.

Not many days ago President Roosevelt touched a gold button in the East Room of the White House at Washington, and set in motion all the machinery of the great World's Fair at St. Louis. How came it that a single man

The Open  
Door for the  
Baptist  
Principle

Faith and  
Prayer the  
Unifying  
Forces

of finite powers could bridge over that great interval of space and could accomplish results which a thousand giants could not produce? Only because of the all-encompassing, all-pervading forces of electricity and magnetism which bind together, not only St. Louis and Washington, but all places and all times. These forces are but other names for the intelligence and will of God. The God in whom we live and move and have our being connects all human souls as well as all material things, and, weak and ignorant as we are, the least of us may be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. God has invested each one of us who believe, with authority, greater than that of President Roosevelt, by faith and prayer to touch the springs of human action, and to inaugurate movements in human history compared with which the starting of that machinery at St. Louis was but child's play. We are not presidents, but we are more than that—we are kings and priests unto God, instruments through whom Christ works, endowed with his power. Even the grain of faith that is like the mustard-seed for smallness can remove obstacles that stand like mountains in the way of progress of Christ's kingdom. Let us then betake ourselves to prayer as well as to labor. And let us begin here and now. Let us pray!

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, if we have faltered and suffered defeat, it is because we have forgotten Thee. We repent of our unbelief and sin, and we come back to Thee. Reveal Thyself to us once more as God omnipotent, with Thy people alway even to the end of the world; as God omniscient, with Thine attention concentrated everywhere and even upon us; as God omnipotent, with infinite power ready to act in our time of need. Thy holiness demands that we recognize Thy presence, Thy knowledge, Thy power. Thy love assures us that Thou wilt give even the faith which qualifies us to appropriate Thy gifts. What we cannot do of our-*

selves Thou canst enable us to do, by the bestowment of Thy Holy Spirit. We appeal to Thee to help us. Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They bore Thy cross, and suffered death, believing that their death should be made the means of establishing Thy truth. Remember their prayers, we beseech Thee. Remember Thy faithful ones, who in all Thy churches still call upon Thy name and witness for Thee. Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine, and the stock which Thy right hand planted, and the branch which Thou madest strong for Thyself. So shall we not go back from Thee: quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Jehovah Jesus; cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. Fulfill Thy promise, by giving to us here and now the Holy Spirit; and by sending us out, individually and collectively, empowered to proclaim Thy gospel in such a way that, as of old, men may be moved to surrender themselves to Thee, to lead holy and unworldly lives, and to labor and give for the triumph of Thy cause. Bring the resurrection of faith and love which Thou hast promised. Make Thy servants again willing to die for Thee, nay, to live for Thee at home, or to go for Thee, if Thou dost bid, to the uttermost parts of the earth. Bring again the days of great ingatherings; show the scorners and the faint hearted that Thou art mighty to save; set up Thy throne where Satan now rules, Thou Prince of the kings of the earth! O Thou who didst love Thy church and give Thyself for it, be not far from us; for if Thou be far from us, we shall be as those who go down into the pit. Make Thy church what Thou didst design it to be, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. For Thou art the Son of the living God; all authority in heaven and in earth has been given unto Thee; to Thee equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit we give honor, and praise, and glory, and blessing; and in Thy name, O Christ, we ask and offer all. Amen.





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