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THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.—Peter

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Free Baptist Church History at the World's Congress of Religions.

[Prof. J. A. Howe, D. D., contributed the following sketch of the origin and history of the Free Baptist church.]

The first Baptist church recognized in English history was of the general or Free Baptist order, and antedated the first particular Baptist church by a score of years. For a long period the general Baptists constituted the larger and more influential part of the English Baptists, and therefore we should expect that among the earliest Baptist churches in America no small number would be of this persuasion; as in fact they were, the church planted by Roger Williams being properly reckoned as the first. With numerous churches centrally placed they gave early promise of a large development in our country—a promise that only needed fulfillment to have taken away any occasion for the rise of the Free Baptists as a separate people. But this golden opportunity was not improved. The General Baptists aimed to be a spiritual people; aimed at simplicity and meekness; clung to crude forms of worship; neglected to educate and support the ministry, and so far fell behind a progressive age that at the end of one hundred and fifty years of existence though their churches were not few, they were yet too little associated to be easily recognized as a distinct people. In ignorance of these Baptists, therefore, and innocent of any sectarian design, Benjamin Randall in 1780 organized at New Durham, N. H., a church that by the grace of God proved to be the first of the Free Baptist denomination.

The ministers associated with Randall and those who immediately succeeded him, like many other Baptist preachers of the day and like the apostles and preachers of the first century, had received little theological training, and in general intelligence often did not much excel the better part of their congregations; but they possessed enough strength of natural and religious character both to gain for them leadership in the church and to stamp upon her character some marked features.

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

In contrast with the clergymen of the state churches they gave special prominence to the necessity of believers having a personal, subjective verification of Christian truth. To them conversion meant a sense of sin, guilt, condemnation, of cries to God, of struggles and victory, followed by a profound sense of peace, communion with God, love for Christians, and a lively joy in Christ and Christian duties.

Religion without emotion seemed to them something paradoxical. Christian truths, if apprehended, were sure to stir the soul. Especially ought the Christian minister not only to know the grace of God in Christ, but to be deeply affected thereby, and to be burdened in spirit over the lost condition of man. He was expected to know both that his sins were forgiven and just when and where this great transaction took place; and because he had thus proved for himself the promises of God, to be able to preach them with power. The Christian life was judged to be life at the center of moral being, always deep and active and strong, answering to the most fervid descriptions of it found on the sacred pages. This the Free Baptist ministry and church called "experimental religion."

ITINERANT WORK.

Following still further apostolic precedent these spiritual preachers refused to be bound to any one parish. They went everywhere preaching the word. In summer or winter they were ready to leave their households and go to any one spot where Christ was not proclaimed, and where men were not turning to him. Flying evangelists, they had here no continuing city, but traveled from town to town and state to state, invading the slumbering dioceses of the state clergy, holding conventicles in the open air, in groves, barns, schoolhouses, and such meeting-houses as might be opened to them, compelling men to hear the Gospel of God's free grace, and, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" persuading them to yield to its terms of salvation. The number of miles that in the course of

a single year many of these tireless workers traveled on horseback or on foot seems even now, when distances are almost annihilated, somewhat extraordinary.

Nor were their journeys of ease or profit. The difficulties encountered, the hardships endured from exposure, poverty, weariness and sickness, from the opposition of wicked men and of sincere but blinded Christians, besides the mental anxiety of knowing of the fight but not of the issue of the fight that their families at home were making to keep the wolf from their door, converted their itinerant ministry into martyrdom.

RELIANCE ON THE SPIRIT.

It was a peculiarity of these untutored evangelists to rely in preaching on the immediate aid of the Holy Spirit. Following in the exegetical steps of the Puritans, Friends, and Baptists of the seventeenth century, they interpreted the passage: "And when they lead you to judgment, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost," to mean that illumination and quickening from on high were here pledged to whom Christ sent to preach his truth. Thus made confident that through their lips God would give his message to the people, they often became indifferent to exact preparation for the pulpit; sometimes became intolerant of the ordinary symbols of such preparation in the hands of other ministers. Study of the Scriptures, prayer, meditation, and almost any unwritten arrangement of the truth to be presented seemed to them to keep with in the bounds of the Lord's prohibition and at the same time to leave the mind open to catch the suggestions and to respond to the inspiration coming from above. The preacher needed only to be *en rapport* with the Holy Spirit to preach with power. Learning was not indispensable to an apostle, the Holy Spirit was. These notions had their brief day.

EFFECTIVE MANNER OF PREACHING.

It was another peculiarity of these preachers to aim at reaching the conscience through the feelings. They denied the value of a dry intellectual light in efforts to change the depraved will. However scholarly or truthful a sermon might be, if it did not melt preacher and congregation alike it was only a pleasant sound. To awaken life the sermon must have behind it a living heart. Hence these natural, untrained orators studied to be moved by their truth, and to cultivate a style spirit, tone of voice, and a mien, that would appeal to the feelings of their audiences. Like Paul they spoke "with weeping" and warned men "day and night with tears." By conforming thus to the well known rhetorical rule for moving the sensibilities they were accustomed to have their congregations so affected that a dry eye could not be found among them.

Emotion was a solvent for hardness of heart, and a test of the preacher's sincerity and power. Aware of this, not infrequently hearers went to their meetings with breasts stoutly buttoned against this fervor and pathos, but generally in vain. The earnestness, solemnity, and sincere feeling of these preachers could not be withstood.

IMMEDIATE CONVERSION.

Another of their peculiarities was so to speak that their hearers would be immediately converted. Their sermons took effect. During the service men yielded to the aroused conscience, cried to God for forgiveness of sins, and found it on the spot. Believing in the ability of any prodigal at any time to say, "I will arise and go unto my Father," these direct and practical preachers declared that "to-day" and "now" men ought to repent, believe in Christ, and become children of the living God. They determined to reach their hearers, adjusted their homiletical methods to this end, and exerted themselves when preaching to bring sinners at once to repentance.

Charges of fanaticism they could not escape. Enthusiasm characterized all their ministrations, and sometimes in excess. But their seriousness was awful; and if at any time their zeal seemed to be carrying them into hurtful extravagance it was soon held into check. Earnest men they were, but of good common sense. Between fervor

and fanaticism the leaders were compelled to distinguish, and promptly to check all tendencies to enthusiastic disorder that threatened the overthrow or harm of the rising church.

POLICY DEVELOPED.

For twenty years Randall and his associates properly regarded themselves as members of the Baptist denomination. But the formation of the New Hampshire Association of Baptists gradually consolidated churches of the Calvinistic faith and left those opposed by themselves. The Free Baptists were thus forced into closer relations with each other, and as the churches multiplied were compelled to adopt some system of church policy.

At first the groups of converts in various places were too modest to take the name of churches, and because they met once in a month for fellowship with each other were called monthly meetings, and were held to be branches of the New Durham church; and here-in was reproduced a feature of some of the smaller apostolic churches.

It took but a few years for this early simplicity to give way before a full recognition of the monthly meetings as complete churches; then, as their members increased, arose the Quarterly Meeting, composed of churches in a restricted locality; next, the Yearly Meeting, embracing the Quarterly Meetings in a state or large section of a state; then, after fifty years, the General Conference, at first an annual, then biennial, and now a triennial body, composed of all the Yearly Meetings and annual Associations in the denomination—an organization of remarkable flexibility and completeness.

The General Conference is the one peculiar feature of the Free Baptist church government. Congregational in character, it has for its object to speak for the entire church on all matters of faith, polity, order, and within the limits of church independence to make the denomination homogeneous. It also publishes brief encyclicals on the great moral questions before the country, as well as on all religious questions affecting the character of the ministry or the teachings of the pulpit.

A GLORIOUS RECORD.

Looking at four million human beings toiling through life without the right to own property, or of husbands to own their wives, or of parents their children, or even themselves, the Conference without waiting for other churches pronounced American slavery to be unchristian, and refused fellowship with those guilty of it.

Letting their vision take a wider sweep they saw in every civilized land man's godlike reason attacked, liable to be and accustomed to be temporarily dethroned, and at the same time, every evil passion to be set on fire by the power of alcoholic drink; and these sensible men without hesitation declared temperance to be the duty of every man, and total abstinence to be the only practical rule of temperance, and to this principle unanimously committed their ministry and laity.

The early preachers found, in New England, church and state bound together in unholy alliance, both requiring of the minister a classical education, but making little account of his need of a new heart and a spiritual life. Hence these consecrated men, neglecting the Hebrew vowel and slighting the Greek diphthong, intent only on saving souls, called for preachers who knew the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, and were able out of that knowledge to call sinners to repentance.

But the General Conference took the matter in hand and corrected this mistake, saying, "This ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone," and encouraged the building of academies and seminaries, colleges and divinity schools throughout the church, thus changing the current from indifference to enthusiasm for Christian education.

On the pages of their well studied Bibles they read, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Impelled by this command they had gone everywhere at home, bearing the good news of salvation. In 1832, they received a call to come to the help of the millions of India, and heartily responded, sending brilliant and scholarly minds to reduce

heathen languages to writing, to print Bibles, plant schools and other institutions required for effective missionary work.

All that public opinion has done in our day for the emancipation of woman from traditional false sentiment and to give her the free exercise of her powers was to some extent anticipated by this people, who from the first maintained her right in the church to pray, prophesy, preach and hold office. They led the way also, in New England, in offering to her a collegiate course, Bates being the first college that dared take this position.

On all these and other kindred subjects the voice of this people uttered by General Conference has been entitled to the respect of our American society. Great wrongs in our land would have been righted, great evils averted, great good wrought, had the record of all American churches of the nineteenth century been as consistently Christian.

FREE BAPTIST FAITH.

Accepting the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice, the denomination at first said that all other creeds are needless. But when the rising church found herself charged with holding destructive heresies she was compelled in self-defense to publish a confession of faith. As this is her present creed, and is orthodox at every point, it will not be necessary for me to speak of the tenets held by her in common with other evangelical churches except as far as these views may appear in answering the question how her creed differs from that of other Baptist churches.

It goes without saying that she holds to believers' baptism—on immersion in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—and to the necessity of a regenerate church. But from one Baptist body she is differentiated by accepting the Nicene symbol in respect to the divinity of Christ; from another Baptist body, in regarding saving faith as fiduciary rather than historic, as antedating rather than being simultaneous with the act of baptism, and as securing forgiveness independently of baptism, which is regarded as but a sign, symbol and public profession of grace received; from a third Baptist body, in finding but two ordinances in the Gospel enjoined on the churches, and in viewing the original government of the church as democratic.

But it is her separation from the regular Baptists that deserves particular mention. From this body the Free Baptist church differs on three points: in preferring the early Greek theology to the Augustinian, or the Arminian theology to the Calvinistic; in recognizing the churches of pedobaptists as Christian churches; in holding to Christian rather than to sectarian communion at the Lord's table. The peculiar contention of Free Baptists has been in behalf of the first and last of these positions.

In respect to the teachings of Calvin they have challenged the truth of every one of his five points. They have believed the decree of salvation to be founded on the sovereign will of God, but therefore the divine nature, and therefore on an infinite goodness that could not be goodness and refuse to rescue as many as possible of our race from the awful consequences of sin. By God's will all men are equal before the moral law. By the same will, Free Baptists assert that all men are equal before the eternal principles of grace; that God's election, like his salvation, rests on condition of faith in Christ (though it is not given by reason of that faith); that faith is not the touchstone of an antierian election, but the terms of its reception; that when Christ "tasted death for every man" he gave the extreme proof of his impartial effort to obtain every man's salvation.

It seems to the Free Baptists, also utterly unscientific to hold that one sin of the first man shattered and broke down the moral faculties of his soul and of the souls of all his descendants, when innumerable subsequent sins have no such destructive effects; and hence that it is reasonable to believe that every sinner has the natural ability to obey God, and can now repeat the resolve and the penitent return of the prodigal son.

Moreover, they look on the Holy Spirit as omnipresent, immanent, and ever active in making the infinite be-

nevolence of God at once to surround and beat upon all living hearts, and, through the truth, to influence every man to repent, believe, and be saved; and they believe that simultaneously with the sinner's first choice of Christ the Holy Spirit enters the heart to cleanse, renew, and sanctify, and to fill it with the love of God. Then, since it is by faith that the Spirit enters the heart, it is by the loss of faith that he departs, and one who was "made partaker of the Holy Ghost" and had tasted the good word of God falls away past hope of recovery.

In a word, then, Free Baptists have been unable to construe man's self-determining activity in deciding the supreme questions of his probation as an infringement on the prerogative of divine sovereignty, nor to deem it other than an axiom in ethics to declare that the strength of man's free will corresponds to the degree of his accountability. Hence, "free will," "free grace," "free salvation," have ever been watchwords of Free Baptists—though thereby separated from the largest Baptist body.

CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE.

It is in accord with the spirit of this theory that Free Baptists should be tolerant of opposing views. They have conceded to other Christians what they have asked from other Christians—the right of private judgment—and from this as a premise have not found it necessary to draw an inference against the validity of the title of pedobaptist churches.

Different views of baptism any more than different views of grace cannot undermine the *eclesia* of any group of Christ's people. Christians who do not receive immersion, if they are yet Christians, read Christ's law of baptism and, as they understand, obey it—not indeed according to the letter as we read the law, but yet in spirit and as unto the Lord; and their organizations therefore become to Free Baptists true churches of Jesus Christ, and as such are seen to be owned and blessed of him.

This attitude only a few of the regular Baptists openly indorse, nor all of the Free Baptists, but enough to give it the stamp of a denominational peculiarity.

OPEN COMMUNION.

It is universal among the Free Baptists to welcome to the Lord's table all the disciples of Christ. They think that when the New Testament gives no explicit law in respect to a church practice the spirit of the Gospel becomes a law more binding and safe, more life-giving and Christian, than any letter of man's sectarian inference. And that the tenor of inspired teaching and the spirit of Christ do enjoin brotherly love and Christian fellowship among all who bow to Christ as their Lord and Saviour seems to this people as clear as the law of baptism. Hence, seeing and rejoicing to see that Christians of diverse opinions about church government and the plan of grace and ritual observances may and often do alike possess "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and serving Christ herein are well pleasing to God and approved of men, Free Baptists cannot suppress the impulse to greet these brethren in the name of Christ, and, because they belong to him, to welcome them to his table and give to them the sacred emblems of our Lord's death. Although this liberality has kept them apart from the regular Baptists it has given Free Baptists a pleasant consciousness of union with all the Christian brotherhood, and has allowed them to add to their illiterative signal-cries, "free will," "free grace," "free salvation," another like note, "free communion."

LOYAL TO APOSTOLIC TRUTH.

Regarded in itself the Free Baptist system of faith stands out complete, logical, compact, and so loyal to apostolic truth that it seems to this church but a transcript from the pages of the New Testament. Above all, she places evangelical truths in the forefront of her creed. To it, therefore, the pulpit accords a cordial reception as a body of divinity that can be fully and fearlessly preached. Nor has it been found less adapted to be taught from house to house, in the workshop, in the marts of trade, in the hospitals, of the sick and dying, to the masses of men at home or abroad; nor wanting in power when taught to touch the conscience, sway the judgment, melt the

heart, and draw out faith in Him "who loved us and gave himself for us."

HERES THE COMING FAITH.

A spirit of change has hovered over the Christian world from the time when the seven churches of Asia, in the very presence of the apostles, began to move away from the standards of Christian faith and conduct, until our day. The church reflects the character of the age; for flexible though stable are her Christian principles, adapting themselves without loss of essential truth to the divers conditions of life. Too often, however, adjustment to conditions has meant laxity, too often, reform has meant intolerance.

Within a century the aspect of the churches in our land has undergone partial transformation; forbidding features have been softened, reserve been changed to brotherly love, distrust to confidence, jealousy over another's success to rejoicing, and the light of grace has caused the face of God's people to wear closer resemblance to the face of our blessed Lord. But the work of the Spirit in the churches is not completed, and still goes on. "Back to Christ," the call is heard. To a better condition, to a more perfect character, Providence is leading his people. In response to the influences that he has set in motion, the Free Baptist denomination has in many things amended her exterior life and removed the clinging defects of an earlier day. But none of the tenets of her faith has she seen reason to modify. Nor is the present trend of Christian thought in evangelical circles away from her catholicity of spirit and truth. Rather the currents of practical belief, if not of speculative theology, set strongly toward her stable and yet liberal orthodoxy. It is possibly in store for her that she shall yet not be the "least among the princes of Judah;" even possible that she has been chosen to represent that reasonable and attractive centre of truth for the coming church, where the Lord's scattered sheep shall be gathered in one field, under one shepherd—that

"Far off, divine event
To which the whole creation moves,"

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY.

"Rise up ye women that are at ease,"
Isaiah 32: 9.

[All contributions for this column should be addressed to Mrs. Jos. McLeod, Fredericton.]

The Sweetest Lives.

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed.
Whose deeds, both great and small,
Are close-knit strands of an unbroken thread.
Where love ennobles all.
The world may sound no trumpets,
ring no bells,
The Book of Life the shining record tells.
Thy love shall chant its beautitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad:
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every one
Of service which thou renderest.
MRS. BROWNING.

IN AFRICA a Masai woman has a market value of five large glass beads, while a cow is worth ten.

THE LONDON WOMAN'S MISSIONARY Society is sending out sixty women, thirty-one to India, twenty to China, five to Madagascar and four to the South Seas.

FIVE MISSIONARIES are soon to be sent to Vuz Yara in the Telegu field, Asia. Of this number will be Miss Anna Murray, of the Baptist Church, Dovercourt Road, Toronto.

A MISSIONARY MEETING of more than ordinary interest was recently held at Halifax, when Dr. Hare, a native of that city, delivered an earnest address. He will soon depart for the mission in China. Miss Hart and Miss Cunningham also spoke. The formerly is recently from the Indian Home in British Columbia, and the latter is from Japan, and will soon return thither. The audience was well pleased with the meeting. Miss Cunningham on her return will be accompanied by Miss Smith, who goes to Chilliwick, and to Japan by Miss Crombie, so that Methodist missions are well represented in the Maritime Provinces.