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THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

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The struggle for religious freedom is a part of the age-long conflict between society and the individual. The rights of the respective contestants in religion as in other matters have not as yet been delimited and it is probable that a definitive solution can never be reached. The usual difficulty found in every effort to determine the proper relations between society and the individual is increased in the case of religion because it is religion. The presence of God as a third party to whom both society and the individual are related in a vital way greatly increases the complexity and difficulty of the problem, for the relations of society and the individual to each other are in this question to be determined by their relation to God. It is agreed by all religious men that God's will is supreme, but the content of that will and the channel through which it is revealed are not wholly certain. Men are not agreed as to what God's will is and their disagreement is the cause of the struggle for freedom.

At one extreme stands the view that to society in the form of a church in alliance with the State is committed the duty of determining the will of God and of prescribing for the individual all his religious beliefs and obligations. The sum of his duty is to accept and act upon the decisions of his church, and in case he should fail or refuse to do so it is the duty of the church and State to compel obedience. The church should be free, but the individual has no freedom in the matter. At the other extreme is the view that God's will is revealed through the Bible and other means, directly to the individual, who is then under obligation to believe and do whatever seems to him to be the will of God, and that neither church nor State nor other social agency has any right to compel, hinder or regulate his religion in any respect. Between these two extremes all variations of theory and practice are found.

Religious liberty is, therefore, a very flexible and ambiguous

expression. In the mouth of a Catholic it means the freedom of the church from the control of the State, but by no means the freedom of the individual in the church or in the State. It may mean the toleration of all forms of religion within a given country, but with the State supporting one special form as the State church. In the United States it means that the State neither supports nor compels the acceptance of any form of religion, but leaves the individual free to renounce all forms of religion if he chooses, or to cherish whatever beliefs he may choose and to express them in any way and at any place and time he may choose, not incompatible with good order and public morals. The only point of contact under ordinary circumstances between church and State is, therefore, as to the acquisition and holding of property which is of course subject to regulation by the various states that compose the Union.

Faith is left absolutely to the individual and the tendency is to give the largest possible freedom in worship and other practices and manifestations of religious belief. But religious conviction is not permitted to protect immoral conduct as in the case of the Mormons, nor in any way to interfere with the welfare of society. Religion, in so far as it is faith and religious conviction, is regarded as a relation between God and the individual soul and therefore beyond the regulation of society in any form.

If a religious enthusiast should insist on the erection of his tent and the holding of religious services in the center of a street, the government would instantly suppress him, while the same government would protect him in his religious activities at the proper place. This is based upon the conviction that it can not be the will of God to interfere with the welfare of society. The claim of divine sanction and approval can not be made to excuse an attack upon society. Absolute religious freedom is, therefore, an impossible dream in organized society. Religion has a social side and on that side it is necessarily subject to regulation by society. But it also has a divine side. Is that likewise subject to the regulation of society? In the primitive, tribal and early national organization of mankind it was largely so regarded. Religion was scarcely an affair of

the individual, but rather of the totality of which he was a member. God or the gods dealt in the main with the tribe or the nation. Religion was ordinarily not a matter of personal experience or conviction or worship; it was the affair of the totality of the tribe or nation, and the religion was necessarily coterminous with society. There was no personal or international religion of any moment in Europe and Western Asia until the rise of Christianity. This new religion was first of all personal and could therefore be and actually was from the first moment of its birth international with aspirations at universality. Its propagation therefore raised what was practically a new question in religion—the question of the right of the individual as against society in matters of religion. How far shall the individual be free in the choice and expression of religion?

II.

The Christians of apostolic times as far as we can follow their actions performed their duties as denizens if not citizens of the Roman Empire as others did. They looked upon government as ordained of God and therefore to be obeyed. At the same time they proceeded with the propagation of their religion and the organization of converts as if government were not opposed to them and in fact had nothing whatever to do with that department of their lives. They betray no consciousness of any kind of relation, friendly or hostile, between their religion and the government under which they were living. The two things seem to have been wholly in different spheres of their consciousness. They held no ecclesiastical property, their organizations were local and slight, their worship was simple and informal and private if not secret, they propagated no creed and their manner of life was in no way altered except to be made more moral by their conversion to Christianity. Consequently contact with the State was very slight. Their religion was a matter of relation with God chiefly and with the society in which they lived very slightly.

As time passed, Christianity rapidly expanded and increased in complexity, and points of contact with the State. The church was quickly cemented into a great and powerful or-

ganization, owning property, possessing creedal statements of belief, and practicing more or less elaborate and public worship. It had become a mighty factor in society. The State now undertook to interfere and suppress it, but in vain. After years of struggle by former emperors the greatest ruler of the fourth century saw that it offered him a ready weapon for the accomplishment of his ambitions. He embraced it and marched rapidly to complete success. In granting Christians freedom within the Empire by the decree of Milan, 312, Constantine gave expression to the doctrine of religious freedom for the first time in history so far as known. As a wise statesman he saw that religious uniformity was impossible in the Empire as then constituted, and by reflection on existing conditions he formulated a very clear statement of the doctrine of religious freedom. The pertinent passage from that great decree is as follows: "We resolved. . . to grant both to the Christians and to all men freedom to follow the religion which they choose, that whatever heavenly divinity exists may be propitious to us and to all that live under our government. . . Liberty is to be denied to no one, to choose and to follow the religious observances of the Christians but to each one freedom is to be given to devote his mind to that religion which he may think adapted to himself. . . it being clearly in accordance with the tranquility of our times, that each one should have the liberty of choosing and worshiping whatever deity he pleases. This has been done by us in order that we might not seem in any way to discriminate against any rank of religion." Eus. His. X. V. The motives for this action as stated by the great emperor himself were religious and social. This policy would promote religion by gaining the favor of whatever divinity existed and it would promote internal tranquility and order by placating the religious sentiments of all classes. It is a remarkable statement coming from any source and especially from a ruler of that age. Constantine had identified his interests with those of the Christians who still constituted but a small minority of the people, and it is probable that this exhibition of enlightened statesmanship, fifteen hundred years ahead of its day, is due to the fact that

he was with the minority. Constantine acted upon this principle with a fair measure of consistency throughout his reign. All religions were tolerated, persecution ceased and the men of different faiths stood on a practical equality. But with him the idea perished for twelve hundred years. The Church, enjoying royal favor and increasing in power, forgot the days of its weakness and suffering and picked up the weapons it had stricken from the hands of its heathen enemies. Soon Christian persecuted and oppressed heathen, Jew and weaker Christian as bitterly as Jew or heathen had ever persecuted Christian. Theologians like Augustine worked out a dogmatic basis for the justification of persecution as the will of God and Christ. It was soon tacitly agreed that the State should execute the decrees of the Church, and thus was laid the necessary foundation for the long and bloody history of persecution. Infant baptism, fundamentally violating the first principles of religious freedom, gradually brought the whole of society into the Church, making State and Church coterminous. Being a Christian was no longer the result of free personal choice involving personal conviction and a moral and spiritual revolution. It was rather the result of a social convention imposed upon the child before he came to consciousness, and signified nothing as to personal character and conviction. Like the State the Church became a social bond, and to become a Christian was as inevitable as to be born. Religion ceased to be an affair of the individual soul and became the concern of society as a whole as represented in the Church and the State. The primitive tribal or national conception of religion as the concern of society conquered Christianity, so that the defection of the individual in religious matters was equivalent to spiritual suicide for himself and the worst treason to society. The interests of both religion and society were thought to demand his extirpation. For several centuries this ideal of uniformity was forced upon Western Christendom. However, with the great intellectual and religious revival which began about the middle of the eleventh century dissent from the Catholic Church again rose. The Waldenses and other sects insisted on the religious rights of the individual as against the demands

of uniformity on the part of the Church and the State. But the hand of society was too heavy for them and they were well-nigh exterminated, leaving little evidence of their presence or influence upon the world at large. The Church and the State were as firm in their belief in uniformity and as resolute to enforce it as ever before when we come to the close of the Middle Ages.

III.

At last the reformation burst on the world. It was a protest against the abuses and finally against the doctrines, organization, worship and life of the Church—a repudiation of religious uniformity. Luther and the rest set up new and independent churches, repudiated the old church as utterly apostate and thus shattered the principle of religious uniformity for the Western world. But in its room they set up a new kind of uniformity. The old ideal had been that of a universal, a Catholic Church; the new Protestant ideal was that of a national church with national uniformity. The Catholics had cherished the ideal of incorporating all society in their Church; the Protestants aimed at the incorporation of all society within the nation into the National Church. As the Catholics refused to tolerate dissent from the universal church, so the Protestants refused to allow dissent from the national church within the bounds of the nation. As in the case of the Catholics infant baptism was retained as the means of making the Church and the State coterminous. Moreover, the State used the exigencies of the reformers to compel complete subjection of the Church to the State as the price of protection and support. At the conclusion of the Reformation the Protestant Churches were far more subservient to and dependent on the State than the Catholics had ever been. But Catholics and Protestants alike cherished the ideal of religious uniformity within the territory under their control. By the Peace of Augsburg among the Catholic and Protestant States of the Empire in 1555 it was agreed that Catholics could move out of Protestant States without the loss of goods or honor, and vice versa that Protestants could move out of Catholic States on the same conditions, but neither party dreamed of tolerat-

ing the other or any other religious belief within the territory under its control. Each State was free to choose its religion, but this choice fixed the religion of all individuals who lived in that State. **Cujus regio, ejus religio.** What was true of Luther and his followers was likewise true of Zwingli, Calvin, and their followers. Not one of them dreamed of toleration, much less religious freedom or separation between Church and State.

It is often said that Calvin's principles logically involved a separation of Church and State and ultimately led to religious freedom. And it must be admitted that there are statements in many of the Calvinistic confessions that, taken by themselves, would unquestionably lead to the conclusion that their authors believed in religious liberty. But none of them had any such meaning. Calvin would have repudiated this interpretation of his teachings with all possible decision. What he and his followers meant by the oft repeated statement that Christ alone is lord of the conscience was an energetic repudiation of the claims of the pope and the apostate Catholic Church to lord it over the conscience, and to assert with equal emphasis that the will of Christ as revealed in the Bible, that is the will of Christ as interpreted by John Calvin, must rule the life. If one should presume to reject Christ let the fate of Servetus instruct us as to Calvin's judgment on him; if one would interpret and obey the will of Christ in ways not approved by Calvin let the flying Anabaptists and liberals tell us what he would do. In view of the actual practice of the Calvinists in every land where Calvinism went it is difficult to believe that Calvinistic theology contributed anything to the doctrine of religious freedom. Moreover, an *a priori* estimate of the probable effects of the two great types of theology, Augustinian-Calvinistic and Pelagian-Arminian, would lead to the same conclusion. The fundamental conception of both is the direct access of the soul to God; but the former emphasizes the corruption and inability of each individual owing to his relation to the race, thus depressing the significance of the individual while the latter lays upon the individual chief responsibility for his moral condition. Again the

former places responsibility for salvation wholly upon God who elects such worms of the dust as he chooses to save without any reason in the individual; the latter makes the individual a partner in his own salvation, responsibility for salvation or condemnation resting finally upon himself, thus again exalting the significance of the individual. Such being the case it would seem that the anti-Augustinian would be the type of theology which would most contribute to the religious freedom of the individual in so far as theology had any effect whatever. It is my opinion, however, that theology as such had little or no influence in this direction for both types of theology furnished both persecutors and sufferers for religious freedom. However, it is a historical fact that the earliest and most consistent advocates of religious freedom were anti-Augustinian in theology.

IV.

These were the Anabaptists of Germany and Switzerland. They were the first to embrace those views of personal freedom in religion which are rightly regarded as one of the richest treasures of modern life—not only universal toleration but also complete religious liberty through entire separation between church and state. These views were frequently uttered, but they probably find fullest expression in Balthasar Hübmaier their leading literary representative. In a tract "Concerning Heretics and their Burners," addressed to the bishop of Constance in 1524, he sets forth his views as to persecution with some fullness. A few extracts will suffice to make his position clear. "The Heretic Hunters (ketzermayster) are the very greatest heretics in that contrary to the teaching and example of Christ they condemn heretics to the fire and before the harvest root up the wheat with the tares" Art. 13. "Every Christian has indeed a sword against the godless, that is the word of God, but not a sword against the evil doers," (Article 21). "Therefore the worldly power kills the evil doers rightly (Rom. 13) who injure the defenseless in body. But God's enemy may no man injure, for He so wills it and leaves him to the gospel," Art. 22. "The magistrate judges the evil-doers, but not the godless." These quotations are sufficient to show

that Hübmaier understood clearly the difference between crime against society and sin against God.

Twenty years later appeared **Riedeman's Rechenschaft unserer Religion**, the longest account of Anabaptist beliefs in existence and representing the opinions of the Anabaptists gathered in Moravia. In this they say: "Magistracy is set up and ordained of God for a rod of his wrath wherewith to chastise and punish wicked, ruthless people * * Therefore one should be obedient and subject to them as ordained of God * * in so far as they do not act contrary to conscience or give commands against God * * * But when they command and act contrary to God one must let their command remain unfulfilled and obey God rather than men, for the conscience is free and subject to God alone * * * Therefore wherever magistracy undertakes to attack the conscience and rule over the faith of men, it robs God of what belongs to him. Therefore it is improper to obey in such matters." Quotations to this effect could be multiplied, but these will suffice.

In this attitude they were absolutely and uniformly consistent in all their discussions and actions, unless the madness of Münster be counted an exception. And they were the only advocates of religious freedom on the continent of Europe. Catholic and Protestant alike persecuted to the death. It is true that a measure of toleration was enjoyed by the Protestants in France for a time under the edict of Nantes, granted them by Henry IV, himself a renegade Protestant. Likewise in Holland Mennonites and later Remonstrants enjoyed a limited toleration, but religious freedom and equality was not thought of in either case, and in France toleration was flung to the winds as soon as the government was strong enough to do so.

V.

Let us now turn to the English among whom religious freedom has reached its highest development. In England the same principles of uniformity in belief and practice were the avowed and relentless policy of the Church and the government of the Reformation era. Intolerance and persecution raged as on the continent. Here again religious freedom is the trophy of a

persecuted minority. Dutch Anabaptists had found their way into England as early as 1535 and were numerous in the eastern counties for fifty years or more. From various sources we learn that they continued to be the advocates of religious liberty in this land of their exile. John Knox says of them about 1560 that they affirm "that lawful it is not to the civil magistrate to use the sworde against heretikes . . . Because (say you) external crimes hath no affinitie with matters of religion; for the conscience of every man is not alike persuaded in service and honoring of God, neither yet in such controversies, as God's worde hath not plainly decided."¹ In 1573 Whitgift, afterward archbishop of Canterbury, in seeking to ruin Cartwright by comparing him to the Anabaptists, says: "They taught that the civile magistrate hath no authority in Ecclesiastical matters, . . . that he ought not to meddle in causes of religion and fayth. That no man ought to be compelled to faithe, and to religion. That Christians ought to punish faultes, not with imprisonment, not with the sworde, or corporall punishment, but only with excommunication."² And Richard Hooker in his famous "Ecclesiastical Polity," published at the end of the century, sums up the Anabaptist views in these words: "Their judgment is therefore that the Church of Christ should admit no lawmakers but the evangelists, no courts but presbyteries, no punishments but ecclesiastical censures."³

It is impossible to determine how far these views affected Englishmen, but that they were not unknown among observing men is shown by the above extracts as well as by other evidence.

Anglican and Puritan or Presbyterian were united and equally determined in their opposition to this and all other forms of dissent from the State Church. Presbyterians during the Parliamentary regime were not one whit behind the Episcopalians in intolerance and persecuting zeal.

¹Quoted by St. John: "The Contest for Liberty of Conscience in England," pp. 20, 21.

²Quoted by St. John, p. 22.

³Quoted by St. John, p. 23.

How does it stand with the Congregationalists?

It was exactly in that region where Anabaptists were most numerous that Robt. Browne set up an independent church of Englishmen about 1580, thus becoming the father of English Independency. It is commonly held that he derived at least some of his ideas from the Anabaptists, though he differed from them sharply on other things. Dr. Henry M. Dexter has declared that Browne "is entitled to the proud preeminence of having been the first writer clearly to state and defend in the English tongue the true—and now accepted—doctrine of the relation of the magistrate to the Church."⁴ If this be true he probably derived the idea from the Anabaptists. But is it true? It is exceedingly doubtful and the latest investigator of this subject, Dr. Wallace St. John, does not think Browne was in favor of religious freedom. Extracts from his published works would seem to justify the conclusion that he was not clear in his own thinking on the subject. Some passages look toward religious freedom while others undoubtedly give to the magistrate a large place in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. If Browne's position was ambiguous and uncertain other early Congregationalists were perfectly clear in their belief that the magistrate should regulate ecclesiastical affairs. In a Confession of Faith drawn up by the London-Amsterdam congregation in 1596 and representing the whole body of Congregationalists they give expression to views of the authority of the magistrate which are wholly incompatible with religious liberty. Article 39 reads as follows, "That it is the office and duty of Princes and Magistrates, who by the ordinance of God are supreme Governors under him over all persons and causes within their Realms and Dominions, to suppress and root out by their authoritie all false ministeries, volutarie Relligious and counterfeyt worship of God, to abolish and destroy the Idoll Temples, Images, Altares, Vestments, and all other monuments of Idolatrie and superstition and to take and convert to their own civil uses not only the benefit of all such idolitrous buyldings, etc. . . . And on the other hand to establish and mayntein by their lawes every part of God's word

⁴Quoted by St. John, p. 5.

his pure Relligion and true ministerie to cherish and protect all such as are careful to worship God according to His word, and to leade a godly lyfe in all peace and loyalltie; yea to enforce al their subjects whether ecclesiastical or civile, to do their duties to God and men, etc.”⁵ In view of this repudiation of religious liberty it is not surprising that the attitude of the Independents continued to be ambiguous or hostile to religious freedom in England until the middle of the 17th century and that in New England they were the most relentless persecutors of every form of dissent. Freedom of conscience is therefore not found among the Independents even though they were a minority party and proposed to erect independent churches composed of believers.

The next party to come under review is that of the English Anabaptists. They came into existence as a party among the Congregational refugees in Holland. John Smyth had fled with his Congregational Church of Gainsborough to Amsterdam about 1606. Here he came in contact with Arminian theology and the Mennonite belief as to the baptism of believers only. He adopted both and some other Mennonite doctrines beside. In seeking to unite with the Mennonite body he and others signed a statement of doctrine drawn up by Hans de Ries a leading Mennonite pastor. Article 35 contains a clear statement of the doctrine of liberty of conscience in the following words: “Worldly authority or magistracy is a necessary ordinance of God, appointed and established for the preservation of the common estate, and of a good, natural, politic life, for the reward of the good and the punishing of the evil; we acknowledge ourselves obnoxious, and bound by the word of God to fear, honor, and show obedience to the magistrates in all causes not contrary to the word of the Lord.”⁶

A confession published in English by Smyth’s party after his death is even clearer if possible. Article 84 reads: “That the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine; but to leave Christian religion

⁵Walker, *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, pp. 71, 72.

⁶McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 63.

free, to every man's conscience, and to handle only civil transgressions . . . for Christ only is the king and lawgiver of the Church and conscience."⁷

On the other hand the confession of 1611 also in English drawn up by Helwys, Murton and others who opposed Smyth's efforts to join the Mennonites, is not so clear in its doctrine of religious freedom. They were about to return to England where it was far more important to them at that time that they should recognize the legitimacy of magistracy than assert the principle of religious freedom. They assert, therefore, their belief in the lawfulness of magistrates who "are the ministers of God to take vengeance on them that doe evil."⁸ Religious freedom is implied though not clearly stated. But this was not because they were wavering in their devotion to this principle. For in the year 1614 was published in London from the pen of Leonard Busher, citizen of London and Anabaptist, the first great "Plea for Liberty of Conscience" to appear in the English language and one of the most powerful pleas for freedom that has ever been written in any language. Sixteen cogent reasons against persecutions are stated in vigorous language. This powerful pamphlet was followed by two other similar and supplementary ones on the same subject, all emanating from the same Baptist company within five years. Such an output of literature in favor of religious freedom is without a parallel in any other body in any period. These pamphlets were presented to king or parliament and were reprinted again and again.

The most widely used of the General Baptist Confessions was that of 1660, which was formally presented to Charles II shortly after his accession with a plea for liberty of conscience. The Baptists foresaw that persecution and suffering almost certainly awaited them in the near future, but they repudiated the principle of State control of religion with the greatest possible clearness and vigor. In Article XXIV, they say: "It is the will, and mind of God (in these gospel times) that all men should have the free liberty of their own conscience in

⁷McGlothlin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 82.

⁸McGlothlin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, p. 91.

matters of religion, or worship, without the least oppression, or persecution, as simply up on that account; and that for any authority otherwise to act, we confidently believe is expressly contrary to the mind of Christ."⁹

Nothing could therefore be clearer, more consistent and forceful than the testimony of the Arminian Baptists for liberty of conscience. They were the earliest and most vigorous protagonists of this great doctrine in England.

The Calvinistic Baptists came later, but they were equally as consistent in their advocacy, if not quite so clear and vigorous in their credal statements, of this doctrine.

The English Baptists so far as history can inform us, therefore, were absolutely loyal to the great principle of religious freedom, and persistent and aggressive in their efforts to obtain it, while they remained entirely obedient and loyal to civil government when acting within the sphere of civil affairs. This attitude continued unbroken till Englishmen at last conceded universal religious toleration, though separation of Church and State has not yet been attained.

VI.

Let us now turn to the American colonies. Here the Anglican Church was established in Virginia and some of the other colonies, while the Congregationalists constituted the State Church in Massachusetts and some of the other New England colonies. The establishments were as intolerant as in the mother country; even the Congregationalists who had fled from persecution adopted the policy of uncompromising uniformity. Roger Williams, one of the prominent pastors of Massachusetts Bay, for daring to differ from the authorities on some religious as well as civil matters, was banished. He made his way to Rhode Island where in 1638 he founded a new colony on the basis of absolute religious freedom, the first time in all history that the State renounced both the duty of supporting and the right of controlling religion. It was one of the boldest experiments in human history, dangerous if not fatal, it was thought, to religion, to the peace of society and to the

⁹McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 119f.

stability of the State. Williams is the first Calvinist, so far as we are informed, to espouse the cause of religious freedom and the first person to realize a separation of Church and State in actual practice. He was then a Congregationalist but with some important deviations from the views of his brethren, and we are not surprised to learn that he soon became a Baptist. The young colony had serious difficulties with unruly spirits who used religion as a cloak to cover ulterior purposes, but it was able to weather its own tempests and at the same time to preserve its standing with the home government. The glory of realizing a separation of State and Church in actual practice is thus the trophy of the Baptists.

The second government to be established with religious liberty was the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, where freedom was as broad and as firmly established as in Rhode Island. This colony never wavered in its allegiance to this principle. Indeed the Quakers were always and everywhere consistent advocates of religious freedom.

The question now remained substantially *in statu quo* in the colonies for a century. Absolute uniformity could nowhere be maintained, but there was severe persecution in the effort to do so, extending even to the death of some Quakers on Boston common. When the Revolution was over and the question of adopting a Federal Constitution came up the principle of a State Church was still firmly imbedded in some of the states. And yet it was now obvious that a majority of the people in the states as a whole, composed of many different religious sects, were opposed to an established Church. The proposed Federal Constitution provided, that "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Article VI. This provision prevented discrimination against any man on account of his religion in so far as Federal offices were concerned, but it did not prevent discrimination on religious grounds in other matters. At least that was the feeling of the Virginia Baptists, who opposed ratification until they received assurances of an early amendment in the interest of greater clearness and strictness in this direction. Accordingly the first amendment provides that "Con-

gress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The principle of absolute religious freedom and equality was thus finally embodied in the fundamental law of the new republic, the first instance in history. Gradually the remaining State establishments were abolished until the last shred of an establishment disappeared from the United States early in the nineteenth century, and it is safe to say that few if any in the great Republic would go back to the old regime. Religion has prospered, the State has been free from harassing religious questions, and, while there has been a greater variety of religious belief than in any other land, still society has probably been freer from religious rancor and strife than elsewhere. As time passed most of the newer countries of the world have followed the United States and incorporated the same principle into their fundamental laws, while separation has come in Ireland, France and Geneva, and religious toleration has been almost universally adopted.

Through all the long struggle the Baptists have been absolutely loyal to the principle of religious freedom and equally loyal to the authority of government in civil affairs. They and the Quakers can justly claim a consistent record in favor of this principle, and no other Christian body can. Why this strange phenomenon? Was it accidental or did it flow from some fundamental principle which made them loyal?

What is the tap-root of religious freedom? Not Calvinism as such. Men who held Arminian theology had been contending and dying for religious freedom for a century and more before the first Calvinist took up the contest. Besides, the fundamental Protestant principle, common alike to both types of theology, is direct personal access to God and His grace. Religious liberty is not the fruit of theology but of other things. (1.) It is one of the trophies of a minority. No majority in the whole course of Christian history has voluntarily granted religious freedom. It has been wrenched from the majority by the sufferings of the minority. (2.) It is the fruit of believers' baptism. Infant baptism is the fundamental denial of religious freedom and liberty of conscience; it tended

to identify society and the Church and to reestablish the conception of primitive man that religion is wholly an affair of society. The only two Christian bodies who have been consistent, unwavering advocates of religious freedom are the Quakers who repudiated baptism altogether and the Anabaptists and Baptists who repudiated infant baptism. The baptism of believers only necessarily implies the right of each individual to choose his religion for himself. On this principle persecution is impossible. Infant baptism has been the fruitful source of all persecution, for it implied the right of society to determine his religion for the individual and is a denial of religious freedom at the very beginning of life.

(3.) Independent, democratic church government has contributed much to the same end. It is, therefore, no accident that religious freedom is the trophy of the Baptists who were the first and the steadily consistent representatives of Christian individualism.