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Religious.

CONVENTION OF MISSIONARIES IN BURMAH.

The Executive Committee, of the Am. Bap. Miss. Union having been informed that the missionaries in Burmah had called a meeting, to be held at Rangoon in November, for the purpose of consultation on the importance of their work and the best methods of prosecuting it, directed the preparation of an address, to be presented to the proposed Convention. The following are the first paragraphs of the said address, which was forwarded early in August.

To the Missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union in Convention at Rangoon, November, 1864.

Dear Brethren:—The members of the Executive Committee congratulate you on having taken one more step forward in the evangelization of Burmah. They have long had a meeting of this sort in mind, have frequently exchanged thoughts on the subject, and would at no distant day have called your attention to it in a formal manner, had you not anticipated their action. In this movement they see evidence of the presence and power of that wonder-working Spirit, who at one and the same moment touches the springs of thought and activity in minds separated by the breadth of the globe. They venture to express the hope that this will prove to be the first in a series of annual gatherings, which shall reach on through successive generations, and bless unborn millions.

Indeed, they are prepared, at the outset, to encourage the formation of a Baptist General Convention for Burmah, corresponding with similar associations in this country, to be without disciplinary prerogative, but purely missionary in its character; the membership to consist of missionaries and delegates from the churches and local Associations, the latter being much more numerous than the former; its one object being to spread the gospel, and gather Christian churches throughout Burmah by the threefold agency of the school, the press, and the living preacher. This Convention might be incorporated by the civil government of the country; be authorized to hold property to a given amount, and for specified objects; to appoint missionaries; receive and disburse funds, and do all other things not inconsistent with the main design.

For such an association, your brethren of the Executive Committee would anticipate for you personally the most satisfactory results. Its annual meetings would impart health to the body, vigor to the mind, fervor to the heart; affording occasions from which you would derive fresh courage and strength, and from which you would repair to your life-work with increased confidence in God, and in one another.

These gatherings would also afford fit occasions for free conference on subjects of the gravest import. Modern missions to the heathen are yet in their infancy. In plans, agencies, appliances, they have not yet attained to perfection. Much remains to be learned as to the best methods of reaching and saving the different classes of a heathen population; and nothing can be more appropriate than that the different laborers meet, and bring each the result of his experience, and lay the whole together, as a common offering on the altar of missions.

The closing part of the address consists of a series of important questions submitted to the missionaries respecting the future, as follows:

1. To what extent may the supervision of the Press and the Theological Seminary be committed to the proposed Convention?

2. Would it be advisable at once to place all funds for missionaries, in a round sum, in the treasury of your Convention, to be disbursed by you? Have not such funds long enough been appropriated, to the last rupee, by a Committee sitting in Boston? Is it not time the responsibility was assumed and carried by men on the banks of the Irrawadi?

3. A native agency, its importance, and how it may be called out, developed and made most effective. Compensation of such, whence it should come, how large it should be, and

in what manner bestowed, i. e., whether as a fixed salary, or made contingent on time spent and value of service?

4. How many missionaries, speaking one and the same language, may be properly stationed in the same city or vicinity?

5. Jungle and village labor, have we had enough of it, as compared with local and town agency, especially among the Burmans?

6. Is it not time for the missionaries to be members of the churches in Burmah, and hence subject to the care and discipline of those churches?

These, brethren, are some of the topics about which our minds are occupying an inquiring attitude, and any light you may have to impart will be most thankfully received. And if there be any subject, not named above, relative to which you may be disposed to make communications, we shall be most happy to receive the benefit of your experience and counsels.

May the God of peace preside in your deliberations and bring you to harmonious conclusions.

By order, and in behalf of the Executive Committee,

J. G. WARREN, Cor. Sec.

THE BAPTISMAL REGENERATION CONTROVERSY.

Pious evangelical members of the Church of England have long felt much embarrassment in reference to this subject. The language in their formulas so unequivocally asserting that, by receiving the baptismal rite, an infant is made "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven;" so directly conflicts with the scripture demands of a new birth unto righteousness, and of salvation being alone by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they have sought for explanations which would relieve them from the dilemma of avowing the two contradictory doctrines.

The recent sermon of Mr. Spurgeon and the pamphlets and letters it has called forth have added intensity to the controversy and brought out those who do not ordinarily appear in the public prints. Those who love the truth as it is in Jesus should rejoice in this. Much of error, as to the foundation of salvation and eternal life, and, as to the real value of baptism, and the place it should occupy. The teachings of God's Word are neglected, or superceded by tradition and the commandments of men, until many are almost prepared to give up their Protestantism, and, instead of examining the Scriptures for themselves, be content with believing what the church believes, and ignore their own responsibility to act out their convictions according to Divine direction.

We copied Baptist Noel's letter to Mr. Spurgeon a week or two ago. Since then other prominent men have given expression of their views in reference to the subject. The following is from an able and Christian-like sermon by the Rev. Mr. Landells, minister of the Regents Park (Baptist) Chapel, London, preached on Lord's Day morning, August 28th. He begins by saying:—

"I have announced my intention of delivering a discourse this morning on the subject of Baptismal Regeneration, and therein reviewing the recent controversy between Mr. Spurgeon and certain clergymen of the Church of England. Those of you who hear me regularly are aware that I am not in the habit of introducing controverted questions into my pulpit ministrations, nor even of giving prominence to those points of minor importance in which we differ from other Christians; and it may not be out of place that I should give some reasons for thus deviating from my usual course. My great reason is, that owing to the great interest excited, the present is a favourable opportunity for calling the attention of those who may hear me to what I believe to be the teaching of Scripture on the subject of baptism, and

thereby disseminating the portion of Scripture truth, which, though it be not of first importance, is nevertheless intimately connected not only with the Church of Christ, but with the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. A second and subordinate reason is, that believing Mr. Spurgeon to have rendered valuable service to the cause of Christ by the sermon which has occasioned this controversy, I think he deserves the sympathy and support of those who agree with him, under the persecution to which he is now exposed. The number of replies it has elicited may be taken as a pretty sure indication of the effect his sermon has produced. Already their name is Legion; and although some of them display not a little controversial ability, and a special pleading more becoming to the lawyer than the minister of Christ, they only show to those who can detect a sophism, how utterly indefensible is the position assailed.

"It will be impossible for me, within the limits to which I am confined, to quote from these various pamphlets, nor need I mention their authors' names; it will be enough, that so far as they are known to me, I should lay hold of, and show what to my mind is unsatisfactory in, the most powerful arguments they have adduced.

"As in some of the replies attempts are made (I do not say intentionally) to divert attention from the main question at issue, to others of secondary moment, it may be well that at the outset I should recall your thoughts from these side questions, and endeavour to fix them on the great subject in dispute.

"Let me remark, then, that the question is not whether Mr. Spurgeon has been so guarded in his language as he might and should have been. I do not for my part profess to endorse every word he has uttered. He is accustomed to speak out plainly and strongly what he believes. And it may be that in this case he has spoken a little too strongly and uncharitably of men whom we highly esteem. This is to be regretted; but it is a very minor fault in a sermon of such sterling excellence, and does not affect the ground which he takes in his sermon as to the impropriety of clergymen using the language of the Prayer-book, and applying it to baptism as administered in the ten thousand churches of the land. He may have spoken harshly and uncharitably, and yet it may be true nevertheless that they are highly reprehensible in speaking as the Prayer-book requires them to speak of the baptized millions of our country. Making all necessary abatement from the undue strength of his language, in so far as it questions individual sincerity, it seems to me that his representation is sadly true. And I regret deeply that one whose praise is in all the churches should have neutralised its force by what I must deem the uncalled-for publication of a letter remonstrating with Mr. Spurgeon on his want of charity. I should not have expected that where a brother had spoken out so faithfully, Mr. Noel would have used his influence to shield the clergymen of the Establishment—as their exultant reference to his letter shows he has done—from the force of his remarks, especially when his own statements as to the insincerity which the use of the Prayer-book tends to foster go far to justify all that Mr. Spurgeon has said. I wish devoutly that he had thrown his great weight into the opposite scale, by remonstrating with those who use, on the most solemn occasions, words whose most obvious meaning differs from their convictions, rather than with one who, at the expense of much obloquy and persecution, has dared to say what he firmly believes.

"Again, the question is not whether Evangelical clergymen are good men. We admit the goodness, the eminent godliness, of many whom we know. If Mr. Spurgeon means to deny this—which I do not think he does—I for one must differ from him. But it does not follow that because men are good all that they do is right. Evil systems generally depend on the countenance of some good men for support. It only the bad patronised them they could not exist. And the thing most to be deplored in relation to this baptismal question is, that so many good men are found supporting an evil system, and using language which to the common understanding does not harmonise with their belief. We dare not question their goodness, but believing them to be good, we cannot understand

how, while they denounce the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, they can with a good conscience give God thanks for having regenerated every baptized child. To us it appears very much like a good man lying unto God.

Mr. Landells proposes two questions, the answers to which occupy the greater part of the sermon:—1. Do the Scriptures teach that men are regenerated by or in baptism? 2. How far is the language of the Prayer-book consistent with the belief of Evangelical clergymen; or, in other words, does the Prayer-book teach the doctrine of baptismal regeneration? These questions Mr. Landells answers in his usual lucid and vigorous style. Under the second head he says:—Can any one, who candidly considers these quotations from the Prayer-book, wonder at our perplexity, when we find Evangelical clergymen, who do not believe in baptismal regeneration, declaring their unfeigned assent and consent to such language, and regularly using it, moreover, on the most solemn occasions—even giving thanks to the Almighty for having done what, according to their own belief, He has not done? Is it a wonder that with all our charity we can find no explanation of their procedure consistent with high-minded integrity, and with unflinching fidelity to the claims of Christ? We do not say there is no explanation, but we confess our inability to find one. We do not condemn, but they must excuse us, if we say that we cannot understand them. Would they not deem us uncharitable, we should like to ask—and we hope they will so far forgive us as to pardon the question—'Brethren, do ye so cordially approve of the language of the Prayer-book that ye would use it if you were free? Were ye ministers of a free Church—a Church which recognises no authority but that of Christ—or did the Church of which ye are ministers leave you free to use the baptismal service or not—does it so accord with your views of Christian truth, that ye would use it from choice? Do ye not wound your conscience a little, in order, I do not say that you may be ministers of a Church whose worldly emoluments are so large, and which presents so many splendid prizes—but of a Church whose prestige adds to your influence and opportunities of usefulness—forgetting that ye ought not to do evil that good may come?' Alas! we have a partial answer to these questions in the demand raised by some of your members for a revision of the Prayer-book—that very Prayer-book for which in your controversies with us ye are so ready to contend.

WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY.—The London *Watchman* says that one day during the session of the British Conference the president noticed a number of ministers who were standing in groups outside the Kirkgate Chapel, and requested them to come into the chapel. This request being acceded to, the president of the Conference addressed them to the following effect: "If those brethren who remain in knots about the steps of Kirkgate Chapel knew the remarks that are made about them by the very Dorio-speaking people of this neighborhood, who don't use polished, but very vigorous phrase, some samples of which have been brought to me within the last forty-eight hours, they would cease from lounging in front of the chapel. I am quite prepared to tell you what is said, if you desire to hear it." (Cries of "Yes, yes.") "Two words then—first: one of the originals, one of the natives among the crowd, remarked last Saturday, 'This beas all! A lot o' idle fellows basking e' t' sun all t' day, instead o' wurking like other folks.' (Laughter.) The reply was, 'A' but them's t' bad lads, and they want lot 'om inside, an' so they're benging abaught ahtside!' (Renewed laughter.) After these specimens of the Dorio (continued the president) I rejoice to introduce our Attic friend, Mr. Lomas."

He is the best physician who effects the greatest number of cures; and he is the best preacher who turns the greatest number of ignorant and wicked men to Christ and holiness.

IMPROVE the wit you have bought at a dear rate, and the wisdom you have gained by sad experience.

Let the body wait upon the soul, and both wait upon God.