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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Baptist Anniversaries.

### The Baptist Union.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain held its Annual Session on Monday the 27th of April at Upton Chapel, Lambeth, London.

The Moderator for the year Rev. J. Aldis of Reading delivered the inaugural address on "The True Nature of Dissent, and its consequent claim upon Baptists." Many of the sentiments were of general adaptation to all christian churches, but some considerable portion of it, could only be applicable in that country, where an Established Church exists; of course it was an able protest against the assumption that the State can properly legislate for the Church of Christ. The right of christians to exercise their privileges free from molestation was ably insisted on.

We quote a few paragraphs from the latter part of this masterly paper:

"By becoming Christians we do not cease to be patriots. As citizens, we must take our post and discharge our duties with a fearlessness, honesty, and earnestness, which none but a Christian can know; and whatever part we take, our grand, though difficult, task should be to elevate the political into the Christian. But as Baptists, we should hold all our agencies and organizations apart for nobler and higher labours. Worldly politicians are glad of any ladder by which they may climb, and therefore on fitting occasions will invite our aid, and will repay us by assiduity and civilities which are the more seductive because they are so rare. But as a rule, they are the most selfish and unscrupulous of our race. They cannot understand our first principles, and if they could would most heartily deride them, and having used us as tools, would fling us away in contempt.

Of the ultimate issue of our principles we can entertain no doubt. The duty, and therefore the right, of all who believe the Gospel to profess and teach it without social hindrance or detriment—the independence of the Church in relation to all matters of worship, discipline, and self-extension—that it exists by divine authority, and must neither be subsidized nor controlled by the secular power—that it must consist only of convinced minds, purified consciences, and loving hearts, and thus become both the product and the home of faith, holiness, and charity—and that its allegiance is not to Cæsar but to God. These are our fundamental principles, at once a charter of rights and a code of laws. We can never go beyond them or swerve from them, but we forfeit our privileges and are condemned as transgressors. There may be our present confidence, as they assure us of final victory.

Circumstances combine to illustrate the worth of our principles and to assure all men that none else will do. The compromise betwixt the old superstitions and modern infidelity, by which all religions are equally taken into pay, and equally pronounced good or bad, is beginning to shock the understanding as absurd, and to outrage the conscience as wicked. Wherever Christian life springs up or common sense rules, this wretched policy must be scattered like the chaff of the threshing floor. Many thoughtful men, who have little sympathy with our principles, predict their triumph. The demands of those who would be fed by Parliament, yet live beyond its control, are so preposterous that they are almost incredible; still they betray an inward feeling for an ecclesiastical paradise lost, which can never be regained but with liberty and self-government. For this they try hard to lead us back to the darkness of the middle ages, that while the people are benighted they may be alternately deluded and terrified, and while the priest reigns what is called the church may be nominally free but really dominant. The effort is as absurd, and must prove as futile, as if they should command the mid-day sun to sink to the east. The men, who show by their activity that they believe it may be successful, may easily gain credit for believing in transubstantiation and the immaculate conception. The history of the

world plainly moves on in one direction. For ages all power to rule was claimed, as a divine right, for kings and nobles in the world, for the pope and priests in the Church. The sure destiny of the future is self-government by the many. In the world this is felt and confessed, though men neglect the only means by which this can be either possible or safe. The church, so-called, lags behind and dreads this result, though it professes to spring from the New Testament, which not only originated this idea of self-government and created the impulse to seek it, but alone can render men fit to attain and use it. The future, under God, depends on co-ordinating those two things—the full liberty of each as a brother, rendered safe and happy by all submitting themselves to God. If, as some predict, the future inevitable government by the many is to be mean, corrupt, and anarchical, it will be because men have neglected or obstructed the reign of truth and love by the Word and Spirit. In order that it may, as we trust it will, be wise, generous, just, and peaceful, the Church must be free to do, not the work of man but of God, with no authority but His will, and no help but His grace. Standing on its divine origin, with no treasury but goodness, no tribunal but conscience, and no weapon but truth, it will save society by enlightening and sanctifying it. This is our high vocation, of which to-day before God and man we claim the honours and incur the responsibilities. No words of mine can exaggerate the sense I have of the temerity which our assumption of this position implies, if we have not pondered it, or of the glory to which it leads when rightly understood and pursued.

That we and our organizations shall be honoured to work out the final result is a widely different, and much more doubtful thing. The greatest diffidence in regard to our parties and plans, is perfectly compatible with absolute confidence in our great principles. The one is a human growth, the other a divine creation, and the more we admire the majesty of the latter, the more we mistrust the former. Looking away from ourselves to our principles, the more astounding is the contrast betwixt what we are, and what we ought to be. We feel that they who shall be the ripened fruit of such Divine culture, must be men of loftier stature, freer movements, and mightier force than we. We expect plans and methods nobler, vaster, better, and bearing less of the impress produced by ecclesiastical dominion, theological strife, crippled resources, and secular policy. We dare to hope for a day when mechanism shall melt away into life, and men shall become unconscious of forms, because they are absorbed in the power of God—when the Denominations shall be one Church, not by rounding off their peculiarities so as to resemble each other, but by their all becoming transformed into the likeness of Christ—when, not as a figure of speech but as a living fact, there shall be on earth a reign of God and a regeneration of man.

Meanwhile, whereunto we have already obtained let us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same thing. With the light and grace we have let us be faithful, and He who appoints our work will not refuse our reward. There is more than enough of misery before our eyes and thrilling in our ears to stir our deepest feelings. There is more than enough of holy duty laid on our conscience to exhaust all our energies and resources; and even now there is more than enough of honour, and peace, and joy to recompense our beneficence and toil. And beyond all these there is the coming of our Lord, the final "Well done," and the repose and gladness of immortality.

The Annual Report was read by the Rev. J. H. Millard the Secretary. The following is a comprehensive summary:

"The report stated that the labours of the Union began proceeded with during the past year with encouraging if not with entire satisfaction. By slow degrees a tolerably exact account of the membership of the Baptist churches was approaching. Last year 1,808 churches reported 198,295 members in communion. This year 2,023 churches had made returns, and reported in all 109,772 members, being an excess over last year of 11,478. This was not to be considered as so much clear gain, as 180 churches had now reported

for the first time; and as these 180 churches returned a membership of 6,505, the actual increase as near as it could be reached, was 4,973, a number under the mark, as 400 churches, but mostly very small ones, still remain altogether unreported. There was no reason to infer from the statistics received that the additions made during the year had been at all above the average. Indeed the returns of the associated churches showed a much lower state of additions during the last three years than in the seven years preceding, and as low a rate as in any year for thirty years past. The committee concluded that their present rate of increase was from 5,000 to 6,000 per annum. Whilst the ministry had suffered losses through death, it had been strengthened by the accession of no fewer than seventy-five brethren, fifty-nine of whom had passed under the training of one or other of their collegiate institutions. Between October 1864, and October 1865, 56 new chapels were erected, supplying sittings for about 25,000 persons, at an aggregate cost of £88,787, making a total expenditure of £115,271 in this direction alone. Besides, twenty-five new churches had been originated during the year. The committee marked with satisfaction the growth of a tendency to associate for the express object of spreading the Gospel. They declared that no event of the past year had yielded them greater pleasure than the establishment of a powerful Association of churches in London, having for its purpose the erection of at least one new chapel in each year, and urged the imitation of this example in those parts of the country where associations do not exist. To show the necessity of continued Christian zeal, the committee referred to the fact that in twenty-one associations the increase had been less than 100, and in fourteen of these less than fifty souls for each association. In conformity with the instructions of the last annual assembly, the committee invited the churches to secure the proper enrolment of their deeds before the expiry of the allotted time in the month of May next. Some valuable properties had by this timely measure been preserved to the denomination which might otherwise have been lost to it at some future time. An invitation had been received from Liverpool to hold the next autumnal meeting in that town. It was expected that the memorial which had been addressed to the King of Saxony will obtain for the Baptists of that country the liberty they have asked for. This and other practical matters rendered it highly desirable that the finances of the Union should be put on a broader footing. In common with all true Christians, both at home and abroad, the committee heard with indignation the charges made against the missionaries in Jamaica on the occasion of the recent lamentable riots in that island, and observed with sorrow the revival of that rancorous spirit of hostility to religion which prevailed in the days of slavery, but they heartily rejoiced that the timely abolition of the corrupt legislature of Jamaica took away the fear that any acts of tyranny would in future be allowed. The committee thought it right, however, to offer for the adoption of the meeting a resolution declarative of the undiminished esteem which the Union cherished for their honoured and devoted missionaries, and the people under their charge, and of the sympathy, deep as it was universal, which their severe trials had excited in the brethren at home. The plan proposed at the last autumnal meeting for enabling the ministers to obtain at a moderate cost a really good education for their children, had been carefully considered by the committee, and was one of those matters submitted for the approval of the assembly that day.

"The Rev. W. R. Stevenson, of Nottingham read an admirable paper on "Religious Beneficence in Baptist Churches."

The reading of this paper led to an animated discussion on the present condition of ministers' salaries, which was started by the Rev. N. Haylor, of Bristol, who proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Stevenson. He said he wished they could get rid of what he considered to be the sixth doctrinal point among so many, viz. that the way to make a minister spiritual and humble was not to give him a proper salary. He thought that the small pay of ministers was the greatest sin of the denomination. He did not believe that Bris-

tol was low in the scale of liberality to ministers; yet he knew there were not twenty men in that town who annually gave £10 each for their minister's support. He did not think any central fund would work well, as the denomination was broken up in too many directions. He had a strong feeling that a minister should respect his family, and not take charge of a church at so low a salary as to act as an injustice to himself and his children. The evil he believed was too frequently to be attributed to the minister. He maintained that they ought to do justice to themselves as ministers, and if they were to do so the evil would not exist so extensively as it did."

"The dinner, prepared by the London Baptist Association at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was a very pleasant affair, the provision made being most ample and elegant, and the social hour which succeeded being one that was evidently much relished by all present. Then followed a number of light and sparkling speeches of a strictly post-prandial character, on such topics as the relations between brother ministers, the denominational literature, and the educating of young men for the ministry. The speakers who touched on these and other topics were the Revs. F. Trestrail, W. Landels, C. H. Spurgeon, and S. Manning."

"At a quarter past three o'clock, the proceedings of the Union were resumed in the Tabernacle, Mr. Aldis presided. A very long and somewhat desultory discussion took place on the scheme for the Education of Ministers' children laid before the meeting by the Rev. Dr. Evans, of Scarborough."

"Mr. Benham, as a representative of the London deacons, very warmly seconded the scheme. The churches (he remarked) would never do their duty until they fulfilled the ideal pictured by Mr. Stevenson that morning in his most excellent paper."

"The Rev. W. Barker, of Hastings, thought the best way to accomplish the object they had in view would be for each church to give its pastor a proper salary."

"The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon advised them to remember the advice given by Mrs. Glass with respect to the cooking of a hare, "First catch it." Do not let us enter upon this scheme unless we see that we can do it. He referred, in passing, to the fact that he had at one time been the unhappy victim of such a school."

"The Rev. J. Stock, of Devonport, thought it would be better for them simply to vote grants in aid to parents, leaving them free to spend the money in any way that they thought best."

"H. M. Bompas, Esq., barrister, of St. John's College, Cambridge, then moved the adoption of a petition to Parliament in favour of the University Tests Abolition Bill. The few remarks he made were exceedingly forcible and pertinent. He showed how, by the insidious Act of 1856, all the colleges in Cambridge had been turned into Church of England institutions. He remarked that the regulations were so ambiguous that the slippery and dishonest could get all the advantages of the collegiate establishments of the land, while the legitimate fruits of his honest toil. Nor did he omit a grateful reference to the fact that the very presence of their chairman reminded them how some connected with the Baptist body who had taken the highest honours at Cambridge were suffering because of their honesty to their convictions—a reference which was received with loud cheers.

M. Foster, Esq., M. D., of University College, seconded the resolution, and showed the great desirability of the legislature opening the colleges freely to all the citizens of England irrespective of creed. The motion was carried by acclamation.

On the motion of the Rev. J. Stent, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Pike, of Lewes, a petition to Parliament was adopted in favour of the bill for legalizing marriage with a deceased wife's sister."

"Dr. Underhill moved the following resolution:—"That the Baptist Union hereby records its entire and unabated confidence in their honoured and beloved brethren the missionaries in the island of Jamaica and the churches under their care. That deeply touched at the painful trials through which they are still passing, the Union fervently