DR. PIERSON'S VISIT AND "CONVERSION."

BAPTISED BY DR. SPURGEON AT CROYDON.

By a Special Reporter.

As foreshadowed in last week's *Baptist*, in connection with the visit of Dr. Pierson to this country, a series of somewhat remarkable services and meetings have taken place at West Croydon Baptist Chapel, where Dr. Spurgeon usually ministers. On Saturday afternoon Dr. and Mrs. Pierson were met at Dr. Spurgeon's house and tea-table by some fourteen of Dr. Spurgeon's own deacons and friends, and thereafter proceeded to the chapel, where—somewhat to the surprise of some at least of the little company—Dr. Pierson was immersed in the baptistery by Dr. Spurgeon. Dr. Pierson took occasion to say a few words, explaining the change of his views on Baptism.

On Sunday last Dr. Pierson occupied the pulpit at West Croydon Chapel both morning and evening, and on the following day a reception "to give Dr. and Mrs. Pierson a hearty welcome" was held. The school beneath the chapel (in which tea and coffee were served) was specially decorated for the occasion, and by seven o'clock—the time announced for "speeches and singing"—there was a very large company present. It was at once to be recognised that many of these were from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London. After Dr. and Mrs. Pierson had "received" the guests, assisted by Dr. and Mrs. Spurgeon, an adjournment was made into the chapel. The area was well filled, and a small overplus occupied seats in the gallery. Altogether there must have been about six or seven hundred persons present.

Dr. Spurgeon addressed the meeting. He said: My wife remarked that it made me look quite young again when I found that Dr. Pierson was coming to stay with us for a while. It was a sore disappointment to us that we could not give him a hearty welcome when first he landed. Some did, and they are to be envied and admired. But here we are to-night to give our dear friends one of the heartiest welcomes that even English people can give. It is some time back since I first met with him. I did not know him then as well as I do now. One day he came to the Orphanage, and my dear brother brought him into the Board-room. Now, you would hardly think of what they were talking about. If he does not mind, I will tell you. They were talking about Baptism, and they had a very pleasant conversation upon the point. I will not tell you what they said—(Dr. Pierson: "You may,")—but

BY DEAR BROTHER TOLD THE DOCTOR HE WOULD LIKE TO BAPTISE HIM.

Well, they had a talk together, and I—as a very modest young man—sat still and listened, which, perhaps, accounts for some of the excellence you may have seen in me since. I remember asking afterwards of my brother who the visitor was, and I added, "He seemed to be a very able man." I then concluded that those two were great men, and I have not changed my opinion since. When the shadow of my dear brother's illness came upon him; when that weight which he felt was crushing him first came, I suggested that which was *not* accepted by my brother, and he suggested Dr. Pierson. And the matter was being talked over; when, by one of those strange coincidences with which God sometimes guides, our dear brother wrote one of his kindly letters, *not* offering his services—now, mark that, please!—but saying how he wished he could do anything to help my brother bear his burden, and how gladly he would spend and be spent for him. Not for a moment, as it appeared to me as I read the letter, was there anything more in it than the loving heart he had for my brother—wishing he could do anything for him. That was the sum and substance of all that was in the letter. My brother said, 'Is not that of the Lord?' I thought so, and my dear brother was never in doubt about the point at all. He believed that he was led of God to do what he did. I have never been in doubt either. Well, when the Doctor came, and I saw him again, I came to know him—and to know him has meant to love him. Two years, or thereabouts, of wonderful work I was permitted to share with him, and to see God's hand upon our brother in a wonderful way. I should be recreant to myself if I did not say that when the church over which, in the providence of God, I was then presiding, was threatened with I know not what, everyone amongst us seemed to be ill, and we knew not what to do. Well, I pulled myself together, and at a sacrifice that men knew little of, for it nearly killed me to do it, I tried to keep upon my feet, and I did what little I could do in that awful catastrophe. But there was

ONE MAN WHO STOOD TO HIS FRONT IN A WAY PERFECTLY MARVELLOUS.

I wondered then, and have wondered since, however Dr. Pierson did what he was enabled to do—well, what the Lord did through him—at that time. And, if I ever cease to love Dr. Pierson, I feel that the stones of the place would cry out against me. The way in which he came to my dear brother's rescue at a time of great need, and the way in which he took that huge work upon his shoulders when my brother was compelled to leave it, was simply marvellous. I did my best to help the Doctor, but to the Doctor—or, rather, God through the Doctor—let the praise be given for the wonderful way in which we were helped on then! I should be of all men most ungrateful if I ever forgot that in any shape or form, and I hope that as long as I live I shall never forget it. Our dear friend has knit himself to me by many bonds. There was a time when I thought that he was going to be connected with both my brother and myself. In fact, my brother arranged with me that when he came back—as we all hoped he would do—he should ask Dr. Pierson to stand by his side and help him, and if my brother had been spared, that I believe was to have been the case. Well, you will not wonder if—with hopes that were blighted, and with memories that I never, never want to meet with again—I give the dear Doctor a hearty welcome to-night. The very last thing that either the Doctor or myself want to do is in any shape or form to hurt the church that is dear to us both. We pray for it constantly, we work for it as far as we can, and we wish it peace and prosperity. The desire of our hearts in the past remains unchanged, that the glory of the Lord may be seen in that place; and if you hear anybody suggest that either Dr. Pierson or myself would do anything wilfully to hurt the true work of the Lord in that place—deny it, deny it! But I hardly meant to have gone on so far, except to just say that there are so many reasons which compel me to welcome the Doctor—apart from these personal reasons, that I love him as a brother, and that I have been blessed under the words that he has spoken as I have listened to them. I rejoice that he is now labouring for the country of my birth and of my life, and I am praying fervently that God will be with him as he travels through the land, preaching the glorious Gospel of the Grace of God which my brother preached before him, and which he is preaching to-day.

GOD SPEED TO DR. PIERSON AS HE GOES THROUGH THE LAND.

May he and his dear wife, whom we welcome heartily also to-night—may they both of them be preserved in the goodly measure of health that we are glad to see them in here to-night. May the blessing of God be with them in their travelling, and when they *must* return to their own land to be with their children, and to give a welcome to one that is coming back from Japan well, may God's blessing be upon them. At all times, and everywhere, may the Doctor experience a better and a fuller blessing than ever has been known by him in the past.

ADDRESS BY DR. PIERSON.

Dr. Pierson then rose to address the meeting. He said: My beloved friends, I hope that you will not forget in the graciousness of your reception that I am needing your silent prayers to God now, that I may speak to you words that He shall approve, for the position in which I am placed to-night is one that is very liable to misrepresentation, and might very easily be taken occasion of by the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. I am especially desirous to honour my Master first of all—not to honour *you* first of all, but to honour *Him* first of all. So I trust that the prayers of to-day may be fulfilled, in that I shall be guided and guarded in what I say to you. I think that I may venture to say, first of all, that the familiar axiom that "Blood is thicker than water" is quite surpassed by another that I shall venture to give expression to—that there is a tie, that is thicker than blood, and that is the tie of mutual sacrifice for our dear Lord, of burdens borne in common for Him, and of the truth which he permits us to preach and to teach, and which He uses for the sanctification and salvation of souls. I regard this very kindly and gracious greeting on your part as not so much given to me personally as a man, as given to my Master in me. For if I have been made the means of blessing to you, it has been because He has first been a blessing to me. All I have to say I trust you will understand in exactly the spirit in which it is spoken. First, let me say that I have become so dovetailed in your history and your destiny, that it is impossible for time or eternity to part us. When I have been permitted to speak the Word of God to you, with some measure I trust of the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, the Lord has used that word for your edification and salvation. My beloved, it makes no difference whether I am in America, or in Asia, or in Africa, or in Great Britain—our hearts are melted together!

IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN ANY MAN CAN DO TO SEPARATE US.

Will you now let me say—I trust with properly regarded utterance—what I have not very much referred to, and perhaps never referred to in public before? The two years that I was permitted to spend in the Tabernacle were two years of more sacrifice than I ever made before in my life for my Master. They were two years of most delightful communion with you, and with many others not here. I do not speak of sacrifice as having to do with the work which I shared with you. But, during those two years I was more misrepresented, was more abused, was more ridiculed, was more falsely accused than ever before. The best things I did, the most unselfish things I did, and the most loyal things to Christ and His people I did, were subjected to more downright misrepresentation and absolute lying than anything else. And the worst of it was that the position was such that I had to keep silence. I could not speak in my own vindication without accusing someone else, or without making myself a party in controversial discussion. And so, while the newspapers—and, I am sorry to say, a paper that claims to be

THE ORGAN OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION

—were not altogether favourable to me in the representations which were made, both as to my conduct and motives, I made up my mind that I would leave my vindication to God, and I would not undertake to vindicate myself. But there is a time coming—and I leave it to God—when it will be seen how much abuse and how much misrepresentation, and how much diabolical falsehood was connected with my work at the Tabernacle. I have never thus publicly spoken of this before, and I never expect to again; but I do refer to it now, because that misrepresentation is still going on, and it has embarrassed me in coming to Great Britain. I was, indeed, confident that my visit here would be the occasion of similar misrepresentations on the part of some people; and it has already so transpired. Well, I want to ask you to accept what I say tonight in a measure as a confidential communication, though, of course, it is difficult that it should be such in an audience like this. I am not speaking for the public ear at large, but for your ear especially when I say this—that I would have you pay no attention whatsoever to what you see in the newspapers, whether what you see be in favor of, or whether it be against, the Mission which I am now endeavouring to perform and discharge in the name of Christ. During the time I was at the Tabernacle there was not a single paragraph that appeared in the papers about me that was not a lie. I never saw a paragraph that was true, unless it appeared over my own name. That shows you how very reliable those newspapers are. I have been informed since coming here that I have been invited to, and accepted, a pastorate at Buckingham Palace Gate (presumably Westminster Chapel). All I have to say is, I did not know it. Again, I am told that I have come to England to form some new enterprise. All I have to say is, if that is true, I did not know it. And I have heard many other things. Well, all I have to say is, if these things are true, I am the one that does not know anything about them. I have a perfectly transparent purpose in coming here.

I AM HERE FOR JUST ONE THING, AND FOR NOTHING ELSE.

I have come here under the plain and manifested leading of God to undertake to visit the churches of Great Britain at large—not so much on an evangelistic tour as for the sake of speaking to the dear people of God about certain things that I think are very much neglected. First of all, holiness of heart, of life; victory over sin, rest in God; confidence in the Word of God as the inspired and infallible Book; recognition of the personality and power and presence of the Holy Spirit of God; and Christian missions. That is what I am here for, and for nothing else whatsoever, either directly or indirectly. If God has any other purpose in my coming, He has not revealed it to me, and I am quite ready to bide my time until He reveals it. If anyone tells you I am here for any other purpose whatsoever, will you please say in my behalf that it is absolutely untrue. Now, that is enough on the subject, beloved, is it not? There is no use in my saying anything more. The Tabernacle Church, of which I see a small representation here tonight, is very dear to my heart. I believe, brethren and sisters, that I love the Tabernacle Church just as much as any living man. I would not even take a back position with regard to my beloved brother here, who was for twenty-five years connected with its pastorate. I believe I share fully all his love for it. I would do anything for it that I possibly could. And I would have my left hand cut off at this moment rather than do

THE TABERNACLE CHURCH

a damage in any way whatsoever. I pray daily for it; I pray for its dear pastor—that he may be supported in the work that he is doing, that the Lord may anoint him afresh with His Holy Spirit, and that his people may be perfectly harmonious. I would not do anything directly or indirectly, to disturb his relationship with his people in the slightest degree. I would rather do what I can to forward and help, and I want the dear people who attend there to stand by him, and pray for him, and help him in every way. There is a loyalty that the people owe to the man that has been selected to be their pastor; and if the people cannot support the pastor, they should go to another. It is our duty to stand by the man who is called to be our pastor, and we ought to be his helpers in every possible way. But, of course, we all know that the dear Tabernacle people are a loyal people, and that they have been accustomed to stand by their pastor. I want you all to do what you can—by praying for your pastor, and in every other possible way—to make that Tabernacle Church the light of the world, as it has been for twenty-five years. Now I want to say further, as to the mission that I am now engaged in in Great Britain, that I have been singularly led of God. In the first place, I was present at the Liverpool Conference of the Student Volunteers, because I was providentially and incidentally connected with the birth of that great Union in America in 1886. When I was sent for to come to Liverpool, I replied that I could not take the voyage across the ocean for the sake of a single Conference—however important. It breaks up

MY WORK IN AMERICA,

which I will say is as full and promising as any work that opens to me in Great Britain. Then the young men wrote and asked if I could not come and make visits to the various universities of Great Britain and Ireland, and visit the students there that were clamouring for a visit from me? I said even that would not suffice to compensate me for the breaking up of my work in America. And then Mr. Meyer, on behalf of the Missionary Bureau in London—a project formed before I came to the Tabernacle—asked if I would go amongst the churches of Great Britain for the sake of promoting spiritual life. Well, these three calls coming together seemed to justify the absence from home. Of course, I laid the matter before God. It caused Mrs. Pierson and myself more to come to England in this instance than ever before, for our dear daughter, who was married and went out about years with her husband, is now coming home with her four children—somewhere between April 15 and May 15, we expect—to make us a visit. It would seem as if her heart would almost be broken if we were not there to meet and welcome her. And yet, here we are, and very close to the time when she will be starting from Japan. You will know that it must have taken very plain leading on the part of God to lead me here, under these circumstances. Nothing but the most obvious leading of God would have sufficed. But "shall I give to the Lord that which costs me nothing?" Nay. And since I have been here, I have had more blessing than ever before in my life. It seems as though the measure of my blessing has been in proportion to the measure of my sacrifice in coming. Now, I want to say this, I suppose my brother will now be claiming me as a member of the Croydon church.

HE HAS ALREADY BEEN PLEASED TO PUT ME IN THE BAPTIST MINISTRY,

though he has not made any examination of me to know of my soundness in the Faith, and my soundness in the Christain experience. He asked no questions, but simply took me in. I do not mean that in any bad sense. I may just add that when I visited the Tabernacle, one of the most delightful things I did was to go out once a week to the little chapels of about fifty, sixty, or eighty miles away, where Baptist brethren were trying to hold up the standard of Christ. I went and got crowds together, and helped them a little financially with their collections, and also did what I could spiritually with the presentation of the Truth. That is the part of the work that I must say I greatly regretted to leave when I left London. I felt it needed to be done. It is a work that Charles Spurgeon loved with all his heart, and I tried to follow in his footsteps in this matter, and to help these brethren in their difficult fields of labour. Well, that is just the work God is giving me to do now, though with another centre than the Tabernacle Church. You have already heard Dr. Spurgeon refer to the blessing that has been on my work here hitherto. Well, I was never so humiliated before God as I have been since coming here by seeing my own littleness, and I never had such exalted conceptions of my Master before. Since I saw you I have entered on

THE GREATEST BLESSING OF MY OWN PERSONAL LIFE.

I have entered into a life of grace that I have never known before. I dare not speak of it, but it is a very precious thing that God has prepared me for this kind of work by giving me the most precious anointing He ever gave, the most delightful experiences of His love and power and presence. All the experiences of my previous life are nothing compared with what I have had since the 15th day of August last. Oh, I yearn over you. If I could have had such a blessing while in the Tabernacle, oh, my beloved, what these two years might have been! I just look back on my ministry there, and I mourn that I was not a holier man, that I was not a more restful man in Christ, that I did not know more of the Holy Ghost then! Many sins have been brought before me, and I said to my blessed Master, "I have been years trying to give them into Thy dear hands"; and He has not allowed me, from that hour to this, to know a single half hour of unrest and disquiet. Perhaps you will hear more of this—not in the way of personal history, but in the way of my preaching, if the Lord should give me the grace.

I WANT TO GET A CHANCE AT YOU,

only just to impart to you some new blessing to the end that you may be established.

Proceeding to give an account of his mission up to the present, Dr. Pierson said that from the very first meeting up till the previous day he had never had a service without being overwhelmed with the sense of the presence of God. The sense of God's presence, wherever they had been, had seemed to be awful. At Newport the people had said that there had been nothing like the impression of the presence of God then felt there for a quarter of a century.

Having asked his hearers for their individual and continual prayers for the work he was entering upon, Dr. Pierson continued: There is one other thing which the Lord has unfolded to me during the past two years, and it is what I tried to teach when among you: the idea that the Holy Spirit is actually present in the Church of God as the presiding officer in all our services. I now think of that great Tabernacle at London. Just suppose the Holy Ghost were to come into that place, were to come into the pastor of the church, into the elders, into the Sunday-school teachers: just imagine a mighty power of the Holy Ghost, a great wave of spiritual power passing over it and everything connected with it, what a mighty power that Tabernacle would be! Now, I do feel that my heart is greatly knit to you, and it will always be so knit.

IT DOES NOT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO ME WHO IS YOUR PASTOR;

I have an interest in you—and I cannot help myself; and you have an interest in me—and you cannot help yourselves. Well, I am going to hold on to that interest, and however much people may misrepresent, however much people may misapprehend, it makes no difference. I have a clear conscience before God in the matter, and a perfectly single aim. I have shown you the inside of my heart, and there is simply there a great love for you, a great yearning over you, and a great prayer for you and for your pastor. I hope my right hand may forget her cunning, and that my tongue may cleave to the roof of my mouth, before I do or say anything that will hinder your prosperity—either individually or collectively—in everything that makes for a noble people, and a glorious work in the Church for God. I do not think I have said anything to-night that I cannot ask my Master to approve. Oh, before I cease speaking, let me tell you that Saturday was a very solemn day to me. Friday was the anniversary of dear Spurgeon's death, Sunday was the anniversary of dear Gordon's death in America, and Sunday was also the birthday of my dear mother, whose translation on March 10 last left me sadly bereaved. Well, between the two days I have named came

THE DAY OF MY OWN BAPTISM.

Now, do not think that I have not for some considerable time been more and more inclined to take this position. I was brought up in an altogether different communion, and with quite different conceptions of the relation of this ordinance to the believer's life. But, before I came to the Tabernacle—after Mr. Spurgeon and his brother here had been speaking to me—my mind had begun to be very doubtful with regard to infant baptism, and with regard to all that pertains to the position of infant baptism—so called in the Pædo-baptist churches. When I came to the Tabernacle, and met with this dear people, everything I saw of Tabernacle life and people brought me more and more to the conclusion that I could not any longer sprinkle infant children; and I discontinued entirely. Then I began to see that something was wanted in the place of infant baptism, and that that must be believers' baptism. Then I began to meditate upon this matter, and just as soon as I saw the thing absolutely clear, and my convictions were properly matured, I wrote to Dr. Spurgeon, and asked him to undertake that ordinance for me. But when we came here on Saturday we found the devil had been ahead of us, and had blown the bottom out of the baptismal pool. I suppose that even in the most serious business there is often something of the humorous. But this was not humorous for me, and we came here and made up our minds that we would defeat the devil. Well, I think we succeeded, and the damage turned out to be more apparent than real. So that was accomplished, and I felt freer in preaching yesterday than I ever have before. I may just add that

I HAVE HAD SOME UNCOMFORTABLE TEXTS

that will keep coming from time to time. Once when I preached in the Tabernacle about the eunuch's baptism, I was somewhat sorely perplexed to reconcile the teachings, therein shown forth with the practices of my past life. And afterward, when I was preaching on "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," I felt still more uncomfortable. At last I went home, and I told the Lord that I believed I had had a heavenly commission, and that I proposed to be obedient to it—and I have been! Well, now I have told you the whole story, and it is a very honest story—though perhaps not altogether creditable. And now, beloved, in conclusion, "May the Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace!"

A closing hymn was then sung by the congregation, and the Benediction closed the meeting.

Literary Note.

To many thinking men and women the "institutional church" seems hardly, as yet, an established reality. Its purpose, scope, and management are not widely comprehended; and yet the movement is one of the most remarkable activities of the modern philanthropic and religious world. A number of great institutional churches, with all their educational and rescue agencies, may be found busily at work in the large cities to-day, and the work of several will be described in *The Sunday School Times* by noted leaders in this field. In the issue of February 20, the Rev. John L. Scudder writes: "The keynote of institutional work is ministering to the entire man, and interesting yourself in every department of his being;" and he proceeds to tell how this is done at the Jersey City Tabernacle, in its five buildings teeming with busy workers, and planned to suit the special needs of the community.

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