

Messenger and Visitor

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The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

At the anniversary meetings of the Baptist Union recently held in London the sermons and addresses on missionary and other subjects appear to have been marked by that high degree of excellence which is characteristic of those meetings, and the discussions excited at least the ordinary degree of interest. The death of Dr. James Spurgeon, who would have presided over the meetings of the Union, made it necessary to elect a president, and Dr. John Clifford was chosen to that office.

As usual in these meetings, the subject of Missions was given the place of first prominence. In connection with the 107th report of the Missionary Society, Mr. A. H. Baynes said: "It is impossible to read it without feeling devoutly thankful. There are large additions to the native churches, additions to the number of 1,400; the fields are wider; the number of English and native agents has been increased; there is large extension in the elementary day schools, Sunday Schools and Christian Endeavor Societies, and there is enlarged liberality in the church at home." Special reference was made to the success which has attended the work of the Society in the Congo Country, where, after twenty years, five unwritten languages have been reduced to character, and portions of the Scriptures have been printed in them, and eight native evangelists are supported by native Christians, not a few of whom were Cannibals before their conversion. It is hoped that the effort to raise the annual income of the Society to £100,000 will be successful.

It is interesting to note that one of the largest and most enthusiastic meetings of the week was that of the Total Abstinence Society. The twenty-fifth annual report of the society shows that—

"Seventy-five ministers have become members of the association during the year. The total ministerial membership is now 1,735. The returns from our Colleges show that about 99 per cent. of the students are total abstainers. Thirteen societies have either been commenced or re-started, and the number of adult pledges taken have been 1,297. Returns have been received showing that 167 new Bands of Hope have been formed during the year, bringing the total of Baptist Societies of which we have information up to 1,652. As many as 378 churches report that they have no temperance organizations at all. One hundred and ninety-nine churches have adopted unfermented wine at the Lord's Table during the year, bringing our total up to 1,544. As many as 498 churches report that they still use an alcoholic wine."

Among the speakers at this meeting were Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Dr. Clifford. Sir Wilfrid quoted Lord Wolsely as saying in reference to the enemies of the country: "We have one worse than all the rest put together, and that is strong drink." We pay £50,000,000 annually to keep the others out, but, nothing to keep the drink out; but how much do we pay for what the drink does in promoting crime, misery and pauperism? And you great fools pay the money for all that. But the bishops are coming round to our way of thinking, and after that what may we not expect? When Archbishop Temple was Bishop of London he went down to a meeting in Exeter, and in the course of his speech said, 'I was never drunk in my life,' and the next morning on the posters appeared, 'Startling statement by a bishop.'

Dr. Clifford felt that in view of the work accomplished by the Society and the position it had come to occupy in connection with the Union, it was a time for rejoicing and thanksgiving. But many things seemed to indicate that the forces with which teetotalers had to contend were for the time being in the ascendant. Notwithstanding the growing numbers and influence of total abstainers—the drink bill of the country was increasing; excluding

teetotalers, the drink bill was now £5 a head, higher than it had ever been in the history of the nation. Dr. Clifford quoted from leading public men and influential newspapers strong statements in reference to the drink traffic:

"Mr. Chamberlain had described the trade as a swollen tyranny. Sir Wilfrid Lawson had said that it was one of the most portentous features of the time. Lord Rosebery had remarked, 'Unless the State controls the liquor traffic, the liquor traffic will control the State.' It was indeed doing so now. Lord Rosebery's opinion was not that of a misguided total abstainer. The drink traffic was the great factor in our political life, and the controller of the policy of the country. It had been reported that three hundred and eighty members of Parliament were prepared to vote for almost anything that might be asked for by the traders in drink. In such a situation temperance men must unquestionably take to their heart lamentation and mourning, but out of the lamentation there ought to come quickened consecration to the fight to which God summoned them against this terrific evil. 'A priest-ridden country,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'was very much to be pitied. A publican-ridden country was very much to be despised.' And Mr. Chamberlain further said that he looked forward to the time when a political party should proclaim 'war to the knife' against this swollen tyranny. Such a party already existed. The temperance party had declared war to the knife against the traffic, and they would not cease to strike their blows until that traffic was underneath their feet."

Dr. Clifford spoke of the money made by the liquor business as "stained through and through with the blood of men." In conclusion he spoke eloquently of what the Anglo-Saxon had accomplished in the cause of human liberty. They had fought and struck effective blows against crowned and mitred tyrannies under Oliver Cromwell and men of his stamp, and they now had upon them the responsibility of leadership in emancipating men everywhere from the tyranny of drink.

The scheme for raising a Twentieth Century Fund of £250,000 was discussed at the meeting of the Union and the work was entered upon with so much heartiness that before the meeting closed one-eighth of the fund had been already subscribed. The following scheme shows the purposes to which the fund is to be devoted:

£125,000 For (1) Evangelization in the country districts and church extension in the cities, towns and villages.

£30,000 For (2) The assistance of the weaker churches in the maintenance of their pastors.

£30,000 For (3) The Annuity Fund for aged ministers and the widows of ministers.

£6,000 For (4) The establishment of Scholarships to be held at some seat of learning, open to any students in our Colleges who intend to enter the home ministry. It shall be distinctly provided that if at any time a Baptist College is established at Oxford or Cambridge these Scholarships may be transferred to it.

Not exceeding £34,000 For (5) The erection of a Baptist Church House.

£25,000 For (6) Educational and other objects, which, in the judgment of the Council, may appear to be desirable in the interests of the denomination.

Total £250,000.

Christ before Pilate.

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.*

"And they themselves entered not into the palace, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover" (v. 28). Mr. Motley tells how Philip II of Spain was as regular at mass and vespers and sermons as a monk, yet at the same time was grossly licentious, fiendishly cruel, as to his promises utterly untrustworthy. He was like those punctilious Jews who would murder Jesus, but for fear of ceremonial defilement, would not enter Pilate's palace. Beware of thinking that scrupulosity of ritual observance can atone for or excuse any wrong feeling or wrong doing.

"What accusation bring ye against this man?" (v. 29.) Put Pilate's question to yourself. What accusation can you bring against Jesus Christ? What reason can you offer yourself for standing against him, with these hostile Jews, and refusing to accept him as your Saviour and your Lord? His character,—ought not that to win you? His sacrifice,—ought not that to break your heart? His promises,—ought not they to lure you? His tender invitations,—ought not they to charm you? His help,—do you not need it? His limitless forgiveness,—dare you front the eternities without it? Said Dr. Wayland long ago, to a company of students in Brown University, "Go by yourselves, and give one-half hour to honest thought as to why you should not become Christians." One young man did. He could find no reason why he should

not, but every reason why he should. He gave himself to Christ. Take you one-half hour, and ask yourself why you should longer stand with these hostile Jews against Christ. I am sure, if you will be honest with yourself, you can find no reason.

"That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should die" (v. 32). It was for blasphemy the Jews had condemned Jesus to death. But the penalty for that was stoning. That was not a Roman penalty, and the Jews were, under the Roman rule, powerless to execute it, except in lawless and mob fashion, as in the case of Stephen. But Christ had said he was to die by crucifixion. And only the Romans could execute that penalty. And, through the vacillation and injustice of Pilate, his case was forced over into Roman hands. They crucified him, and so Christ's word about himself was fulfilled exactly. As this word, so every other word, of Christ shall be fulfilled exactly. Nothing in the universe can stand against a word of Christ's. You cannot. Oh! I beseech you, adjust yourself with Christ's—words. Repent, believe, accept. Do not presumptuously attempt to stand against them. With Christ, the forces of the universe are on your side. Apart from Christ, you are helpless as a withered leaf in the November blast.

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king" (v. 37). The emphasis is on the "thou" of Pilate's, Thou,—a prisoner, with no armies, wreathed with suffering instead of royalty. But Christ is King, even the King of kings,—king by birth, character, divine destiny. Therefore he is to be obeyed; therefore we may not play fast and loose with his commands; therefore the deciding question concerning this or that is, Does the King order it? The rule for a true, strong, shining life is, swift obedience to the King.

"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" (v. 37). The answer to Pilate's question is Christ himself. Truth incarnate stood before Pilate. Thus does Christ stand before you. Hunt not other where. Vainly hope for no other and further revelation. What is the truth concerning God, man, destiny, sin, forgiveness, heaven, hell, concerning any of the great questions with which men perplex themselves? Christ. Riding once through Leadville with a young mining engineer, who was telling me of his doubts, I asked him, "To whom would you go for the best information about this mineral region?" "To the best expert," he said. "Then go with your religious questionings to Christ," I answered. "He is the truth, the expert in morals and religion."

"I find no crime in him" (v. 38). Christ's character challenges investigation. And investigation will declare that he is the one sinless. That has been the answer of the ages,—no crime, no sin, in Christ. Therefore what Christ declares must be the truth. It is contradiction to suppose that the sinless one would tell us falsely.

Not this man, but Barabbas (v. 40). You marvel at such choice. But is your choice less strange when you prefer to Christ your own stained morality, your darling sin, your pet bad ambition? I urged a man to yield a habit he knew was robbing him of his manhood, and take Christ's forgiveness and Christ's help in overcoming it. He would not. Did he not essentially choose Barabbas instead of Christ?

Editorial Notes

—The May anniversary meetings of the great Mission and Education Societies of the United States Baptists are held this year in San Francisco. "The Baptist Anniversary train" left Boston on Monday of last week, and, according to programme, should reach San Francisco on Tuesday of this week, after having spent Sunday in Salt Lake City. The trip and the visit to the Pacific Coast at this season should be, for those who are privileged to go, a very pleasant experience, to say nothing of the inspiration of the meetings.

—Dr. Gunsauls, who having recovered from a severe illness, has been called to succeed Dr. Hillis at the Central Music Hall, Chicago, is quoted by 'The Advance' as saying: "Before my sickness I spoke of boats and rigging and ropes. As I lay suffering terrible pain I resolved that if ever again I had charge of a life-saving station I would use the boats and the rigging. It is time for work and not for theory. If I become pastor of that church, I intend to make it a warm place, a life-saving station."

*In the S. B. Times—on John 18: 28-40.