

Baptists and the World's Crisis.

FROM the time when John the Baptizer was preaching repentance to listening crowds in the wilderness of Judea and baptized in the Jordan those who in earnest responded to his appeal, till the present day, Baptists have been conscious of being entrusted with a special message to their fellow-men. Their mission has been and continues to be to emphasize and defend the truths of the gospel as they are revealed through Jesus Christ, taught by Him, and committed to His followers in the New Testament scriptures. The call to repentance and faith in the Son of God as Lord and Saviour, which was the key-note in the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, and the apostles, is ever the watch-word of the Baptists. They adhere to and lay stress on baptism as it was taught and practised by Jesus and His disciples. They organize their churches after the apostolic pattern, and insist on maintaining the New Testament principle that only regenerate persons are entitled to baptism and church membership. They stand for the right of every man to worship God and serve Him according to the dictates of his own conscience, and they believe that the access to God and His throne of grace is open and free to every individual, without mediation of priest or saint. They hold that love should be the law regulating the relation between God and man, between man and man, and between nation and nation. In faith they are waiting for the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of righteousness and peace, to be established on earth through the workings of the powers of God.

The acute crisis, with its indescribable confusion and suffering, into which the world has been betrayed in our days, calls for radical changes. A time is come for old things to pass away and leave place for new and better things. The situation demands new men, a new social order, a new standard for international relations, and a revival of the religious life in the Christian churches. In view of this we may well ask: Who has a message better adapted to the needs of the hour than the message of the Baptists? Others may preach the same truths wholly or in part, but that is no reason for the Baptists to be reticent or hesitating. Let us rather be confident that God has called them out and made them strong in numbers and rich in resources, because He expects

them to play a prominent part in the great efforts that must be made to solve the tremendous problems of the present world crisis.

To the call for new men Baptists can best respond by repeating again and again with new emphasis the momentous words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again." That is to point out the only way in which men can be renewed and become new creatures in Christ. The Baptist message has always pointed to a new social order and to peaceful relations between the nations, in fulfilment of prophecies of Old Testament prophets and upon practical application of the teachings of Jesus as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. No company of believers can be more zealous for an ardent spiritual life in union with Christ within the church than are the Baptists. They are a missionary people peculiarly adapted to meet the yearnings and burning questions which fill the hearts of innumerable men among the present generation. They would be blind to the signs of our time if they did not realize their calling and be awake to the fact that they are expected to be a crying voice in the world heralding the advancement of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord, and King to deliver individuals and nations from present misery and bring about a new era of righteousness, prosperity, peace, and happiness.

An opportunity is before the Baptists now the equal of which has never been before. Everywhere the people hear them gladly and appreciate their work. This is true of other parts of the world, but it is especially true of Europe. The Commissioner of the Baptist World Alliance, Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke, knows this better than anybody else, and his reports are wonderfully hopeful. It is significant among other things that he has been permitted to explain the Baptist position and plead for liberty of religion according to Baptist principles before leading statesmen in countries where laws for extended liberty are in the making. Obstacles which formerly have blocked the way for missionary efforts are being removed, and the people are longing for the liberating power of the gospel and the consolation of the gospel message. Surely a challenging opportunity is before the Baptists. Are they prepared to meet it?

The formation of the Baptist World Alliance which has been developing since the first World Congress was held in London in 1905, has united Baptist bodies of the various countries, brought them into contact with each other, given them occasion to learn to know each other and has awakened a consciousness of solidarity which was unknown before. The unions who are numerous and strong have reviewed the world-

wide mission fields together, and have become inspired with a growing zeal for a victorious extension of the evangelizing movement which they represent. The small and weak sister organisations in different lands have been encouraged and made to feel that they may count on support from their more favourably situated brethren, and be enabled to go forward with their work in the sure hope that, some day, they too shall be numerous and strong.

At the call of the Executive of the Baptist World Alliance a conference was held at the Baptist Church House, London, in July 1920. Besides members of the executive committee this conference was attended by representatives from the United States, Canada, and many European countries. There the need of evangelical mission work in European lands, and relief work as well, was discussed and plans for systematic efforts were agreed upon. Each of the leading mission organisations was to share in the relief work and take upon its responsibility certain areas for evangelising mission work and ministerial education. The mission societies concerned approved of the plans drawn up, and began to act upon them as soon as necessary arrangements could be made. The result is that a systematic and most promising movement for the revival of New Testament Christianity in Europe is fairly started. This is evidence enough to show that the Baptists are awake to their opportunity, their call from God, and their responsibility at this eventful juncture in the history of the world. They are also intent on going forward in earnest determination and carry out their mission. This was fully realized from reports made, from words spoken, from decisions made, and from the spirit prevailing at the conference held at London in the first week of August 1922, which was a repetition and an augmentation of the former conference in 1920.

This year, in the month of July, numerous representatives of the Baptist world from nations near and distant are to meet at Stockholm, Sweden, to hold the Third Baptist World Congress. Then the whole situation to which we have wished to call attention with these lines, will stand out in full view before the great assembly. Suggestions will be made as to what it involves and what it demands from the millions of Baptists connected with the Baptist World Alliance. We are confident also that resolutions will be adopted which shall voice the determined intention and resolute will of the constituency of the Alliance to be true to the challenging call of the hour in face of the need of suffering and erring humanity. Voices have been heard, who would fain tell the Baptists to desist from evangelizing efforts among nominally Christian

people, but over against this stands ever the Master's command: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

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Baptists in Continental Europe.

A Survey and an Appeal.

The Baptist Commissioner for Europe is issuing this statement simultaneously in America.

BAPTISTS have in Europe a magnificent opportunity; British Baptists in one degree, and in still larger degree, American Baptists are rising to it. It is not that they are called upon to send over large numbers of missionaries. Only in two or three countries would the presence of foreigners be of advantage, and even in those exceptional cases it is to be hoped that ere long native leadership will suffice.

It is indeed a distinctive feature of the Baptist movement in the "old continent" that it has almost everywhere depended from the outset upon native workers. To a large extent it has arisen as a result of the simple reading of the New Testament, without the intervention of any human expositor or preacher. The most influential of all leaders in continental Europe has been Johann Gerhard Oncken, and in this respect he is typical. He was converted as a youth in England, but when he returned to his native land as a colporteur and evangelist he had not yet come into contact with Baptists. It was his keen interest in the Book he sold, and his constant perusal of its pages, that led him to withhold his first child from "christening" and soon afterwards to reach the definite conviction that it was his duty to be baptized as a believer. He waited five years for a "Philip," until Professor Sears of Newton came to Hamburg. The date (April 22, 1834) when Oncken was baptized with his wife and four other persons, in the river Elbe, may fairly be regarded as the birthday of the modern Baptist movement east of the North Sea. There were already in France and elsewhere tiny groups of Baptists that had come