

Some Thoughts on the Toronto Congress.

THE largest Congress yet held under the auspices of the Baptist World Alliance has closed. We came together from every part of the earth to consider the general subject of "Baptist Life in the World's Life"—an apt and comprehensive title suggested by President E. Y. Mullins and forming the subject of his own brilliant address. The governing idea, in whose light the problems and tasks included within the general subject were viewed, was set forth in the text chosen as the motto of the Congress, "To sum up all things in Christ."

This has been from first to last a singularly happy assembly. The delegates realised that the sense of a common faith and message, of a unified outlook upon missionary and ethical tasks, and of fraternal solidarity, characterises Baptists as a whole. I think it was well that instead of a series of resolutions on particular topics, the Congress decided to confine its deliverances to central issues and to publish as its message the addresses of the President and the General Secretary with the Congress sermon. Toronto demonstrated that, scattered as our people are over more than sixty nations in all continents, differing in race, language, political and social conditions and in manifold other ways, with an organisation which to the onlooker is amazingly "loose," we belong together in virtue of a great religious experience and a transforming loyalty to the one Lord. Dr. Truett at the Coronation Service which formed a worthy climax of the proceedings, expressed the mind of all as he exclaimed: "This unity of the Baptist spirit is the wonder of the world."

While the all-pervading sense of fundamental unity in Christ was the dominant factor in the happiness of this Fourth Congress, other factors contributed to emphasise the gladness of the occasion. The beauty of the meeting-place, with its buildings so conveniently near to one another in a spacious park alongside Lake Ontario, was one of these. Conditions were ideal for fraternal fellowship, and the weather almost uniformly kind—neither too hot nor too cold. In such circumstances acquaintances were readily made, old friendships cemented, and new added; the lives of thousands of Baptists have thus been enriched. The efficient work of the Toronto people in preparing for and carrying through the Congress evoked unstinted admiration and gratitude. A stronger committee than that which was led by Mr. Albert

Matthews, Dr. George T. Webb, Mr. F. L. Ratcliff and the Rev. W. A. Cameron could not have been. How splendid were the women! The "Hall of Friendship" was their special charge, and they were everywhere in evidence as gracious hostesses. Mrs. R. J. Marshall led a band that has done great things. Nor should the reception by Miss Walker be forgotten—a pleasant restful interlude in a delightful private park.

The one shadow was cast by the illness and absence of our honoured and beloved President. Dr. Mullins has contributed more than any other one man to the notable strengthening of the Alliance during his term of office; and it was a disappointment to be unable to express face to face our feeling towards him. The Congress did what was possible by telegraphic messages of greeting and sympathy, by amending the Constitution so as to recognise the distinguished service of President Mullins by ensuring him a permanent place on the Alliance Committee, and—after hearing his masterly address, finely and sympathetically read by Dr. Truett—enthusiastically voting to publish it. (It was good to have reassuring news at the final meeting regarding Dr. Mullins' health.)

With the President perforce absent, the Congress was exceptionally favoured in having in its midst a member of his own Convention whose genius and charm stamp him as an ideal presiding officer—Dr. George W. Truett. As long as memory is able to recall the Toronto Assembly, it will inevitably linger upon the impressive figure and voice of this unique master of assemblies. It was my privilege, as an officer of the Congress, to see much of him and to hear much concerning him. The great Southern Baptist preacher stands higher than ever in the esteem and confidence of all his brethren; and his conspicuous service in this world assembly has confirmed his hold upon their mind and heart. We were happy to have the leadership of Dr. C. A. Barbour and Dr. L. R. Scarborough to guide the business of the Congress and the Executive Committee.

Certain distinctive features of the programme may be mentioned. A larger place than heretofore was given to Oriental representatives, and it was good to hear Japanese, Chinese, Burmese and Indian treating from their own point of view—and in really good English—the problems of the church in the mission field. The Oriental delegations included a gifted Chinese woman, Mrs. C. C. Chen. The presence of such speakers, and the appearance of some of them in the list of nominees for the Executive Committee of the Alliance, are significant signs of the times. Notable also was the finely sympathetic attitude of missionary leaders and administrators in their approach to the difficult problems of readjustment emerging in the East and elsewhere. From Europe came strong groups, including about a

dozen men from Soviet Russia, and the distinctive problems of that continent are better understood than before.

An outstanding characteristic of the programme was the large place given to sectional meetings. It has abundantly justified itself. I think of Tuesday afternoon when the women's section gathered in a strength nearly equal to that of a full Congress session; yet at this same hour the Young People's section was finding its hall too small, although some 2,500 delegates had gone off to the "British-American Fraternal." On Wednesday afternoon three foreign missionary sectional meetings were not too many: China, India and Africa were separately considered. The experiment of Thursday was especially interesting. There had been on the preceding evening three set addresses upon "Industrialism," " Militarism," and "Racialism." But a set speech is an easy means of evading an issue; and the Alliance had no mind to shirk a real grappling with world problems that severely test our Christian faith. So separate sectional meetings were arranged to deal with these three topics. The opening was in each case an informal talk of fifteen minutes by an expert, and the whole remaining time was devoted to free discussion. The reports indicate abundant frankness and a splendidly Christian temper.

It was altogether profitable that educational topics occupied a large part of our time, and that their importance has been emphasised to the Baptists of the world. In my judgment the Bunyan celebration had a quite extraordinary value. That it would prove a popular occasion was a foregone conclusion, and that excellent speeches would be delivered. If that were all it meant, it might as well have been omitted. It will, however, I believe, arouse among our people some deeper sense of God in history. We do not "canonize" our prophets; but if there is no thrill as we contemplate the grace of God in gifted men through whom our fellowship and the world beyond it have been enriched and blessed, the denomination of Bunyan and Carey, Judson, Broadus and Spurgeon has surely lost its soul. A permanent memorial of the great Pilgrim is secured by a window to be placed in the new McMaster University at Hamilton, Ontario. The McMaster University, by the way, availed itself of the opportunity of the Congress to hold a special convocation and to confer honorary degrees. It is significant that in addition to Dr. Truett and other well-known preachers the recipients included a Chinaman, Professor Bau; a German, the Rev. F. W. Simoleit; and a negro, Dr. John Hope.

It seemed to me that the devotional emphasis in these gatherings was on the whole more generally sustained than in earlier assemblies. The spiritual glow was never dim. The truth is, that where so happy a sense of unity prevailed, and of unity

in Christ, the exaltation of Him was at all times—not merely at stated hours—natural and easy. Inspiring messages were brought by the preachers: who will forget “All authority . . . in heaven and on earth,” as Dr. Brown expounded this vast claim of our Lord? That is the conviction which upholds us as we face our tasks. We are sufficient in Him.

Perhaps I may thankfully and humbly recognise as an expression of our sense of oneness throughout the world the creation of a general secretaryship of the Alliance and the united call my brethren gave me to serve in this. I crave the prayers of my fellow Baptists of every land, that I may not be unfaithful or ineffective, but may be enabled by His grace to achieve something for the Kingdom during the coming years. It is a privilege to have Dr. Clifton Gray as my associate. Especially do I rejoice that Dr. John MacNeill is to lead us. From the very beginnings of its story this Canadian minister has been an Alliance man. He was one of the speakers at London in 1905, and his record throughout the years is of the noblest. Baptists everywhere hold him in honour, and as his Presidency of the Alliance brings him into closer association with them, they will acclaim him worthy to form a fourth in the series that already includes John Clifford, R. S. MacArthur and E. Y. Mullins.

The Toronto Congress now belongs to history. With all our hearts we may thank God for its spirit and its message. Will its gains abide? Assuredly; and they will be enlarged if the note of the Coronation Service be sustained, and Baptists are prepared to “Crown Him”—not merely in word, but in deed and truth—“Lord of all.”

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