

The late Rev. E. K. Jones, D.D.

WALES mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished sons and leaders in the death of the Rev. E. K. Jones, D.D., of Wrexham, to write an adequate memoir of whom would entail the task of recording the history of most of the movements that have featured in the life of the principality during the past six decades.

Born at Bryn Du near Kenffig Hill, Glamorganshire, in 1863, his family moved to Blaenllechau in the Rhondda Valley whilst he was still an infant. Here he began to preach, and later he became a student at the Pontypool Baptist College and Cardiff University College. He was ordained pastor of Calfarfa Church, Merthyr Vale, in 1889, from whence he moved to the Tabernacle, Brymbo, in 1891, and thence to the Tabernacle, Cefn Mawr in 1913. In 1934 he retired from the active ministry and made his home at Wrexham. He died on July 19th, and was laid to rest in the Wrexham Public Cemetery.

"E.K.", as he was affectionately called, was one of God's greatest gifts to Wales, and especially to the Welsh Baptist Union during this century. His ministry was not confined to his own denomination nor, indeed, to the principality. He was a national figure, loved by all Welshmen who interest themselves in the things that matter, and he was well known outside his native land for his many sterling qualities.

The spheres in which he laboured and the many offices that he held are a sure clue to his personality and afford us a clear insight to his beliefs and convictions. He served on the Council of the Welsh Baptist Union for over forty years and was president of the Union in 1928. He occupied the presidential chair of the Denbigh, Flint and Merionethshire Baptist Association for two periods, an honour rarely bestowed twice upon the same person. He was Wales' representative at the Baptist World Alliance and acted as Welsh secretary to the Alliance. For many years he was the secretary of the Welsh Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society and a member of the Missionary Council, and in 1934 he became chairman of the B.M.S., the very first Welshman to be honoured with that office.

In addition to the yeoman service which he rendered to his own denomination he took an active part in social and educational

movements and reform. He was a member of the Denbighshire Educational Committee, chairman of the School Board, governor of Wrexham Grove Park School, and a member of the Council of the University of Wales. That university bestowed upon him its highest theological honour for his services to Welsh education and other social reforms.

His wide interests reveal that he firmly believed that Christ's Crown Rights extended over the whole of life, religious and secular, individual and communal. A cloistered religion appealed little to him. Possessing a deep personal piety he also believed that the Gospel was a power that could mould and fashion life in its entirety, and that its message was revelant to the daily affairs of the individual and the community.

Dr. Jones' chief interests were centred upon three movements: education, temperance and peace. His contribution to the development of educational facilities in Denbighshire was munificent. He lived in stormy times when issues had to be fought, and throughout his long ministry took an active part in every conflict in the history of the development of our present educational system. He was a strong supporter of free education and of equal facilities for all, but he also refused to forsake the traditional Free Church position that religious teaching should be the work of the Churches and not of the secular authority in state schools. A pamphlet on this subject of which he was a joint author, and which was published in 1930, is still well worth reading, since it clearly shows that the authors foresaw the difficulties that have arisen since religious instruction became part of the schools' curriculum. Dr. Jones published a valuable book in 1933 on *The Story of Education in a Welsh Border Parish* in which one gets a glimpse of the wider story of education in our land through the narrow window of a particular district. He did not confine himself to a mere theoretical study of educational matters. Being a member of many educational boards and councils he was able to influence the course of educational developments throughout a great area of North Wales, and to give very practical help to many scores of school pupils and make it possible for them to enter into the realm of higher education. It is no doubt true that we could not turn back the clock and return to the secular idea of day school education which Dr. Jones advocated, nevertheless, educationalists would have avoided certain pitfalls had more attention been given to what he wrote. If the Roman Catholic Church insists upon claiming enormous sums of public money to renovate and build schools we may even yet be compelled to fight once more the battle in which men like Dr. Jones were engaged in years gone by.

His second interest outside what we might term the religious

sphere, was the temperance movement. He was in very truth the Grand Knight of Temperance. He had witnessed the rise of the temperance movement in Wales almost from its very inception, and had been a staunch supporter of the cause from his earliest years. When he began his ministry many of the older ministers looked askance at the temperance movement, and he had witnessed many tragic cases of ministers who possessed incomparable gifts, but who had been brought low by drink. The young E.K. had vowed, as had the young Lincoln with regard to the Slave Trade, that "he would hit this evil and hit hard." The Drink Trade soon came to know how hard he could hit. By his books and pamphlets, and especially by his advocacy of the temperance cause on platform and in licensing sessions, he fought a ceaseless battle. His victories were numerous and remarkable. It is to such men as Dr. Jones that Wales is indebted for the Sunday Closing Act, and today, when the supporters of the Drink Trade are eagerly crusading to repeal that Act we need to be baptised with the spirit of the temperance pioneers. We take this opportunity to appeal to our Baptist friends outside Wales to approach their Parliamentary Representatives and secure their opposition to any attempt made in Parliament to repeal the Welsh Sunday Closing Act. Whatever Dr. Jones undertook to do he did it with his whole heart and ability. He did not simply rely upon an innate hatred of any movement which he opposed, and still less was he moved by blind prejudice. Thus in the cause of temperance he gave many years of patient study to the question, and became an authority both on the history of the movement in Britain and overseas, and on the legal questions involved. He knew the Licensing Laws as well as any solicitor, and time and again met many able advocates in court. At one such session the managing director of a brewery was heard to remark, "That man is ten times better than our man." Dr. Jones published a very valuable handbook on *The Bible and Temperance*, and contributed many erudite and telling articles to periodicals in defence of the temperance cause.

His third great interest was the Peace Movement. To write his biography would entail the writing of the history of the Pacifist Movement in Wales, for he was one of the pioneers of that movement, and amongst the ablest of its advocates. From the days of Henry Richards of Tregaron, the first secretary of the Peace Movement, Wales has possessed a strong pacifist tradition. The 1914-1918 war broke in upon this tradition. Mr. Lloyd George, who was at the head of affairs in those tragic days, was able to bring over the whole principality almost to a man on to the side of war. But even he failed to convince a handful of men who stood fast to the Henry Richards' tradition. We remember Dr.

Puleston Jones, Dr. Thomas Rees, Dr E. K. Jones and others who could be mentioned. Their voice was but a still small voice amidst the tumult of war, but it was never completely silenced. They were an unpopular group of men, who suffered reproaches and even persecution at the hands of their fellow Welshmen, but they refused to be silenced. They addressed public meetings throughout the principality, they wrote regularly to the press, they published books and attended tribunals in support of objectors, they visited camps and prisons. At one time Dr. Jones had as many as fifteen hundred objectors on his list, with whom he corresponded regularly. He had been their able advocate when they had appeared before the tribunals. Dr. Jones pays tribute both to tribunal personnel and the great majority of military officers for the gentlemanly way in which he was received by them. He had no quarrel with men, his quarrel was with war itself. He had learnt the difficult art of hating war without hating the men who, by reason of circumstances, were compelled to take an active part in the prosecution of war.

The pacifism of this Welsh Peace Group was not based upon any political considerations. Neither was it due to the teaching of Tolstoy although they had made a careful study of his writings. These men opposed war because of their deep religious convictions. Their teaching was the New Testament. They had carefully thought out the matter in the light of the Master's teaching as they understood it. Having seen what they firmly believed to be the Lord's will in the matter, they never wavered. Their pacifism was heroic. They believed that love was the law of life, and that it was a far better thing to suffer, and if need be to die, with words of love upon one's lips, even as Jesus Himself had done, than to suffer and die with weapons of war in one's hands. Pacifism to them did not mean passivity. Dr. Jones, in fact, was the greatest fighter that some of us ever knew. He was militant in the service of peace, and in that warfare sustained many wounds. But he lived and died a happy warrior.

Space forbids us to write at any length of Dr. Jones as an historian and research scholar. He possessed one of the most remarkable private libraries in Wales. Throughout his life he had been a keen collector and a student of rare publications, and in his library were to be seen literary treasures not to be found elsewhere in the principality. We are given to understand that in accordance with his wish, these rare books will now go to the National Library at Aberystwyth. He was an able historian, and had made a special study of the history of Welsh Baptists. His very last contribution to Welsh literature was a series of well-informed and well written studies of Welsh Baptist Fathers. It is his careful study of Welsh Baptist traditions that accounts for

the fact that he remained throughout his life a strict Baptist and a staunch defender of Close Communion, upon which subjects he wrote an able memorandum when the Baptist Union Council were considering Baptist Polity. He was a forceful advocate of the strict position and was unafraid to argue its case in the higher courts of the denomination. And he was a conference speaker of no mean calibre.

Could any man in Wales have proposed so many resolutions at conferences as did Dr. E. K. Jones? Wales, unfortunately, has the reputation for being the "land of resolutions and of protests," and Welsh conferences, religious and secular, have often been the joke of playwrights. The danger in Wales has been to rest content with resolutions, and to believe that every issue is settled when once a resolution, unanimous or otherwise, has been passed, and duly written into the minute book by the minute secretary. Someone has pointed out that the singular form of a word is often far stronger than the plural form. This is certainly true of the word "resolutions." Resolutions without resolution are disastrous. Dr. E. K. Jones was well aware of this. He was not only a man of resolutions but was also a resolute man. Never did he rest content with the mere passing of a resolution through conference, he also resolved to see the resolution carried out however much that would cost him in labour and expense. Resolutions, to him, were matters upon which one must act. That accounted for his own active life. One is amazed at the colossal tasks he attempted, and is still more amazed at his great achievements.

The source and inspiration of his whole activity lay in his deep religious convictions. We have not spoken of Dr. Jones as a preacher. It is true that he will not be ranked amongst the great and popular preachers of Wales in his generation. He had not the oratorical gifts with which some men have been endued. Nevertheless he was a most able preacher, and a man of deep convictions who possessed a great conception of the Christian ministry. He was well versed in theology and in Christian ethics, and his preaching was powerful and richly blessed by the Lord whom he loved so well and served so faithfully. In Wales we mourn the loss of a great divine, but in our sorrow we give thanks to God for his gift to the principality in Dr. E. K. Jones.

T. ELLIS JONES.