

# THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL

VOLUME V, No. 22

ST. JOHN, N. B., NOVEMBER 26, 1903.

Whole No. 126

## The Baptist Position.

As one meets at the present time the apparent ignorance of many in regard to the real nature of the Baptist position he is inclined to question whether a vast proportion of our members really understand it. They think of the denomination too much as one of a number of denominations combining as a whole to form the Christian Church. Hence in so thinking they apparently fancy that it with others could join in a movement to combine the various divisions of the church and form one united body. The former thought of course is true. The Baptist denomination is one of a large number of so-called Christian sects into which the Protestant body has at the present time separated. The latter thought, however, is not true. Baptists could not sink their identity in a general union as others can, and for the adequate reason that they have more that is fundamental at stake.

For example, Baptists stand for certain defined cardinal truths which they believe they find incorporated in and imperatively demanded to be observed by the New Testament. They are principles which they cannot abandon without being utterly untrue to the very foundations of their faith. One of these and underlying all the rest is absolute loyalty to the teachings of the New Testament. Baptists take that as their covenant. They form no creeds which do not, according to their covenant, embody its teaching. They hold no position whose warrant cannot be found in it. If they can be convinced that they are not true to the New Testament teaching, either in doctrine or practice, by their own professions they would be compelled to abandon the position held and take that which the New Testament was shown to lay down.

Growing out of this loyalty to the teachings of the New Testament is to be found the position of Baptists in regard to baptism and the subjects of it. The former from the meaning of the term and from the symbolism connected with it all through the New Testament in Gospel and Epistle, they believe to be immersion and immersion alone. Those who are to receive this baptism are they who have consciously accepted Jesus Christ and are therefore believers in Him. They and they alone, Baptists believe, possess the necessary qualifications for Christian baptism. At once, then, all other forms of administering the rite are swept away and all other subjects of the same but those who believe are denied. Other principles there are connected with the Baptist denomination which render the maintenance of its integrity essential, but these three that we have indicated are most important and most vital.

It will be seen at once then that the position of Baptists differs from that held by other denominations. It is true that these claim to have New Testament authority for the various tenets they hold, but it is not partisanship, it is not bigotry for one to say that to a large extent this New Testament basis is found by special pleading or by a method of interpretation that will not bear scholarly investigation. Baptists, therefore, from the very nature of the foundation on which they stand, are compelled to maintain their integrity. Christian union as proposed to them can obtain on no other basis than that of the New Testament. If from that they can be proven wrong they must change. If by that they are shown to be right then others must come to them for unity while they remain as they are.

Profaneness is an unmanly and silly vice. It certainly is not a grace in conversation, and it adds no strength to it. There is no organic symmetry in the narrative that is mingled with oaths; and the blasphemy that bolsters up an opinion does not make it any more correct. Nay, the use of loose expletives argues a limited range of ideas, and a consciousness of being on the wrong side. And, if we can find no other phrases through which to vent our choking passion, we had better repress that passion.—Dr. Chapin.

## Study John Bunyan

By T. L. Cuyler, D. D.

"Give me a hint or two as to the books I shall find most profitable," is the request of a young minister. In answering him, let me give a hint to some others. Next to your Bible study John Bunyan's immortal "Pilgrim's Progress." Spurgeon's pure, easy Saxon English came from his constant study of the tinker of Bedford, and Bunyan fashioned his style on the English Bible.

He was a man of one book. He had but a small library, and when he went into Bedford jail he took only three or four books with him, for which let us be devoutly thankful. God's Word was the constant companion of his cell, the volume of his morning studies and his evening meditations. This perpetual dwelling in the mine of Divine revelation gave Bunyan the pure gold out of which he fashioned his masterpiece. He had read no other poetry than the sublime poetry of David and Job, Isaiah and Habakkuk, and we trace the effect of close communings with the inspired Hebrew bard in all the grandest imagery of the "Pilgrim's Progress." His description of the "gates of heaven, when the gates open to 'Christians' entering 'to steps,' is almost a literal copy of John's Apocalypse. Bunyan had never seen the inside of a theological school; he got his body of divinity from the fountain-head, by going directly to Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and to Him who spoke as never man spake. Where in the whole range of religious literature can be found a richer, purer, stronger Evangelical theology than is contained in this marvellous allegory? Saturate your soul with it, my young brother; it will give you the right pitch when you sit down to your sermons. No danger of your theology becoming pulpy or unedifying, when you read on the "Holy War" and the "Pilgrim."

Let Bunyan teach you, also, what wonderful things the Scriptures are when approached in the right spirit. He poled over them on his knees, not a shadow of doubt as to their perfect inspiration and infallible authority ever disturbed him for a moment. He went through them, not with lexicons and commentaries, but with a keen spiritual eye that discovered every atom of gold, as sharply as a Colorado miner picks out every grain of precious metal from the auriferous soil. The Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto him. This patient waiting on God's Word, this humble sitting at the gates of infinite wisdom, and this fervent, earnest inquiry directly from God, led Bunyan into the interior truth that so concern most deeply the human soul, with its experiences, and eternal destinies. As your business is to deal with human nature in all its varieties, you will find no ranges of portraits which surpass those presented by the dreamer of Bedford.

Bunyan will also teach you how to read your Bible in terrible earnest. He made it as literal as the flash of the noon-day sunbeams. Not one sharp edge of the Divine threatenings against sin did he ever blunt; in these times there is too little pungent preaching on the "sinfulness of sin" and its just retributions. Nor did Bunyan minimize the ineffable and marvellous love of God in redemption and in providence. Into the bosom of the exceeding great and precious promises he fairly leaped, as a child leaps into the arms of a mother. Every syllable of the Divine Book he pored over and pondered till his memory held it in solution.

You will be constantly delighted with his ingenious introduction of the out-of-the-way passages of Scripture into the most unexpected places. If you can learn how to do this, you will hold the attention of your hearers, and give them happy and profitable hours.

Style is a vastly important element in effective preaching, as the Spurgeons, McLarens, and Bushnells testify. The best style is that which most resembles a window of perfectly transparent glass. The "Pilgrim's Progress" is a well of English undefiled. In every page Bunyan sticks to the stout old dialect which the illiterate can understand, and which the most cultured cannot

improve. Hardly any other book abounds more in monosyllables. There is a model for you in terse, trenchant vigor of speech; and you will be all the more popular and powerful as a preacher if you will learn what Daniel Webster and John Bunyan teach you, viz., that for all the highest purposes of an instructor of the people, pure, plain, simple English is the mightiest instrument. In after years you will thank me for exhorting you to study John Bunyan.

## The Greatest Weakness of The Church.

During the week of prayer in England the Rev. Archibald G. Brown made an earnest address on "The church, her glory, mission and power," in which he maintains that "the mission of the church is not to erect stately buildings; not to be the leaders in political affairs; not to provide secular education, far less amusement, for the people; it is to bear witness to a living Christ; to seek to pluck men as brands from the burning; and that her power lies in proclaiming 'the gospel without any human additions,' in preaching 'the truth, the whole truth, without human adornings, and simple dependence upon the Holy Ghost.'"

"I believe the greatest weakness of the church to-day is her accursed worldliness. What is not done by those who bear the name of Jesus Christ now? What are not some of our sanctuaries coming to? As a minister of the gospel, I say it with the deepest regret, my sorrowful conviction is this, that some ministers are leading in these things. I long for the time when the church shall take her proper place, and her place is 'outside the camp, bearing his reproach.' While we have churchmembers who sit at the Lord's table on Sunday, and go to the theatre on Monday, without solemn protest from the minister in his pulpit; whilst the world is creeping more and more into our congregations, and the clear line of demarcation between Christ and Belial is gradually being effaced, how can the church improve? We shall never win people by meeting the world. May we have grace to take our place by the crucified Christ. The world does not like him more than it did 1850 years ago. Be true to him and the world will not like you any more than it did Christ. Stand by Christ and say to the godless world: 'As you treat my Saviour, so you shall treat me. I will not accept your smiles whilst you frown on my Redeemer. If you spit in his face it is as if you spat in mine, for I am one with my Lord and Master.'"

## The Smoker and His 'Resolute Will'

Robert Louis Stevenson.

The London correspondent of a religious paper, in speaking of the decease of Robert Louis Stevenson, remarks on his resolute will. "It is possible this desirable characteristic and the novelist in some directions, but it certainly filled him lamentably at a very vital point, as the following quotation will show. The St. Louis Republic, commenting on Stevenson's assertion that he had practically overcome the cigarette habit ('I find myself reduced to five boxes of cigarettes a day') says, 'the habits of a man who could exult over a reform like that, must have been wearing indeed.'

One who knew him well says, "He peacefully smoked all day, and was rarely without a cigarette in his mouth. When he was felt unwell. Often when he waked during the night, when he lived in New York, he would light a match and smoke half a dozen cigarettes in bed, while wooing renewed sleep. The result was, that when he left for Samoa, one of his lungs was beyond medical remedy." Thus another great literary light goes out with cigarette smoke.

"A dear old Quaker lady who was asked what gave her such a lovely complexion, and what cosmetic she used, replied, sweetly: 'I used for the lips, truth; for the voice, prayer; for the eyes, pity; for the hands, charity; for the figure, uprightness; and for the heart, love.'"