

## Southern Baptists at a Crucial Hour

President E. Y. Mullins' Address at Southern Baptist Convention, Jacksonville, Fla., May 17, 1922.

**S**OUTHERN Baptists have come to one of the supreme hours in their history. One of our poets has written of the choice that comes "once to every man and nation," and of "some great cause God's new Messiah." For us it is the same Messiah, our Lord Christ, speaking in a new way.

Some interpreters think the Book of Revelation was purposely written in symbolic and figurative language in order that Christians in the early persecutions might understand and be comforted while their enemies could not understand. This may or may not be true. In any event, Christ in every new age gives a new revelation of opportunity and duty which only the initiated can fully understand. In the world of today he is giving a new apocalypse which Baptists better than any others can understand. It behooves us to read prayerfully his new revelation. What, then, is our Master saying to Southern Baptists today? He is saying, as I see it, four things, which set our task in great relationships.

Now, we have a duty to the Protestant world. It is to define, maintain and propagate the New Testament religion in its fullness in doctrine, ordinance and polity. It is to carry out completely every principle of the Gospel and every command of our Master.

### A Remarkable Spiritual Movement.

Second, Christ is saying to us: "You are called to reinforce the most remarkable spiritual movement in modern Europe." That movement is a spontaneous return to the New Testament and expressing itself as a Baptist movement in practically every European country. Beginning in frozen Norway and Sweden, on the north, down through Denmark, Holland, France and Spain; around through Jugo-Slavia, Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria; up through Russia, Poland, Germany and contiguous countries, and finally to Finland in the cold north again, this striking spiritual phenomenon has been going on in recent years. Little groups



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First, He is saying to us: "You are called to complete the greatest religious reform movement of the Christian centuries, the Protestant Reformation." Early Protestantism, coming out of Roman Catholicism, was like a newly hatched chicken which came forth with some of the egg shell clinging to its head. Protestantism made great discoveries and then great compromises. It tried to mix the gold of truth with the clay of error. It tried to mix the gold of personal faith in its doctrine of justification with the clay of proxy faith in its doctrine of infant baptism. In the ordinances it mixed gold of symbolism with the clay of sacramentalism. It mixed the gold of obedience to Christ with the clay of obedience to centralized governments. It tried to mix the gold of soul liberty with the clay of union of church and state. And so on through the whole range of doctrine and life. Like all great movements, the Reformation had two groups of leaders—the men of compromise and expedients and the idealists.

Now, the Anabaptists, our spiritual ancestors, with a history running through the ages, were the idealists. They separated the clay from the gold at every point. Other bodies represented the various stages of emancipation from error, like the gradual passing of the moon from the face of the sun after a total eclipse. The Anabaptists, in their principles, represented the stage when the moon had passed completely off.

of people in state churches, reading their New Testaments, without missionaries or preachers or outside help of any kind, depending wholly on the Holy Spirit for guidance, are rediscovering for themselves the doctrines, the ordinances, the polity of the New Testament churches. The result is a Baptist movement all over Europe, containing at every point the exact truth needed to meet the errors of sacramental hierarchical state churches—a movement as yet weak in numbers, but full of potencies of every kind, and calling to American Baptists for aid in their tremendous struggle. Who can read and understand this apocalypse of Christ except Baptists?

Third, Christ is saying to us: "You are called to meet the greatest emergency in the political life of mankind by supplying the Spiritual means for the world's renewal." What is now going on in Genoa is full of meaning. World politics has come to an impasse, the end of a blind alley. The nations have the will to do, but are without the power. Nations have been loosened from their old moorings. They are like ice-floes caught in a great whirl-pool of the sea. They swing round and round in a great circle. They beat against each other in constant friction in the effort to adjust their relations.

One of the most moving and pathetic magazine articles was recently published. It analyzed world conditions. It began with the outstanding fact: The fail-

ure of militarism and the need of something else. One by one the proposed remedies were reviewed. One is the limitation of armaments. But, said this writer, if war starts the nations will swiftly arm themselves again. Another remedy is to humanize war. Eliminate poison gas and abolish the submarine. But this also is a vain hope. You can humanize football and baseball, because they are friendly games. You cannot humanize war, because it is not a friendly game. These inhuman methods will return when war returns. Another proposal is complete disarmament. But, said the writer, this is a palliative to save taxes, not a remedy. The desire for commercial supremacy will lead to new wars, and new armaments.

Next the writer named the more spiritual remedies proposed. Apply Christian ethics to the nations. Abolish the German doctrine of the survival of the fittest based upon a materialistic philosophy. Cultivate the international mind. Promote democracy in the earth. Make men brothers. But, alas, alas, concludes this writer, none of these things can be done so long as human nature remains as it is. He ended his article with a wail of despair because nature refuses to accept and apply these great ideals. You must remake men before you can remake the world. It is strange that men cannot read the apocalypse of this new age which Christ has "writ large" on the face of the world. Yet it is not strange when we remember that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. A Baptist can read that apocalypse and supply the key to the world's riddle. He can summon the statesman who has come to the end of the blind alley, and the philosopher whose logic ends in pessimism, and the idealist who is paralyzed with despair. He can say: "Gentlemen, there is one key which fits the lock of the door in your blind alley, one premise omitted from your logic, one remedy for your pessimism. It is a spiritual truth as high as the eternal God, as wide as human need, and as simple as the most elemental truth of science; the doctrine and the fact of the new truth. By it you remake the individual. By it you remake society. By it you remake politics. By it you remake all your ideals; brotherhood, democracy, friendship between nations. All the great political and social slogans are children of the new birth. Liberty, equality, fraternity, equal rights to all and special privileges to none; government of the people, by the people and for the people. Therefore the evangelist and missionary and pastor are the builders of the new world under the guiding hand of our Christ.

Fourth, and finally, Christ is saying to us: "You are called to fulfill your historic mission and complete your glorious task." He is saying to us: "You have partly completed a glorious undertaking. Carry on to the end."

#### We Will Settle Our Differences.

We have developed some differences in viewpoint during the past year. But we have come together with a deep and abiding sense of unity and co-operation. Both the divergencies and the unity are tokens of our spiritual freedom in Christ. Each is free to think his own thoughts on all our problems. But our great privilege is to think ourselves together around the will of Christ.

As I see it, we need our Boards. We may discuss the difficulties and problems of any of them, but I do not believe we are ready to abolish any of them. Their work is too valuable and necessary for us to think of abolishing them.

We have been much concerned over modern rationalism and the false assumptions of materialistic science. We are rightly jealous for the deposit of truth committed to us. It seems to me three things are clear: First, we will not tolerate in our denominational schools any departure from the great fundamentals of the faith in the name of science falsely so-called. Second, we will not be unjust to our teachers, nor curtail unduly their

God-given right to investigate truth in the realms of science. Firm faith and free research is our noble Baptist ideal. Third, we will be loyal to every fact which is established in any realm of research, just as we are loyal to the supreme fact of Christ, His Virgin birth, His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection and present reign. It is He who speaks to us today.

#### We Shall Never Turn Back.

He is saying to us as we face our great task: "You have a glorious heritage, a heritage of suffering in your struggle for existence in the dark centuries of persecution, a heritage of courage in your heroic battle for religious liberty in Europe, in Rhode Island, in Virginia, a heritage of vision of foreign missions transmitted to you by Adoniram Judson and William Carey and Andrew Fuller and Matthew Yates and R. H. Graves; a heritage of educational ideals transmitted to you by the Rylands, the Taylors, the Furmans, by Jesse Mercer and Rufus Burleson and a host of others; a heritage of vision for a trained ministry transmitted to you by a Boyce, a Broadus and their associates in the first great faculty of the Seminary and by a Carroll who founded the Southwestern Seminary. You have a heritage of spirit-



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ual passion, a sense of divine calling to a world mission transmitted to you by a Tupper, a Willingham, a Tichenor, a Gambrell. What a glorious cloud of witnesses is this which surrounds us. Back in Atlanta in 1919, during that forever-memorable night service as we were launching our great Campaign, somehow as I looked out on that great and eager audience of earnest faces it seemed to me there was just the thinnest of veils between us and these great souls of the past days. I wondered if the spirits of Poindexter and Carey and Luther Rice and Tupper and Broadus and Carroll and Yates were not "listening in" on the great scene. I wonder now if they and the Angels are not straining their gaze to catch the dominant note of this Convention.

It was said during the World War that the end came so quickly after our boys got into action because in the training camps at home they had never been taught to retreat. They did not know how. With them it was advance or death. At Chateau Thierry they turned the tide of war and swept autocracy forever from the earth. We Southern Baptists are at the Chateau Thierry, not only of the five-year Campaign, but of our history. We shall never turn back, for the Lord Christ is our Leader and Commander.