

The Rich Young Man

The New York World of Monday, Dec. 10th, published the following extracts from sermons delivered in reply to a suggestion from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to the effect that the Baptists drop immersion as a requirement for church membership.

"Two Baptist ministers—the Rev. Frank M. Goodchild of Central Baptist church and the Rev. Charles A. Eaton of Madison Avenue Baptist church—yesterday devoted their sermons to replying to the recent plea of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., that baptism by immersion no longer should be a requisite of church membership.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen," was Dr. Goodchild's text, and he said:

"The proposition to make radical changes in the organization of our church was advanced by one of the younger leaders of our denomination, the son of a man who has organized a great business enterprise that has reached to the remotest corners of the world. It has evidently occurred to him that if his father's genius for organization were carried into the church, the spiritual enterprise to which he applied himself would become as dominant in the world as has the commercial concern with which he has busied himself."

"The preacher spoke on Mr. Rockefeller's dream which grew out of the contemplation of the great multitudes of men who are fighting for the cause of righteousness and justice in this war, and whose ideals were not implanted by the church. He dwelt upon the pervasiveness of church influence which he said was everywhere, and continued:

"So at the outset this slight put upon the church is gratuitous and unwarranted."

"Referring to Mr. Rockefeller's statement that the generosity and self-sacrifice exhibited since the war began is the expression of an inarticulate religion, the minister said that 'an inarticulate church is but a dream—a church without a creed, without a ritual, and without ordinances, but only a right life as its foundation—that is his dream. Such an organization would not be a Christian church; it would not come up to the requirements of a Jewish synagogue; it would not be a recognizable Unitarian church; it would be founded entirely on an ethical basis; it would be a Society for Ethical culture, nothing more."

"Mr. Rockefeller's address is a subtle attack on the validity of the New Testament and the authority of Jesus Christ. An attack on the ordinances of Jesus Christ established is in reality an attack on the wisdom and authority of Jesus Christ."

"Dr. Eaton declared Mr. Rockefeller had raised a very serious question, and continued:

"The Baptist people in their origin stood for some of the greatest realities in the spiritual life of the world—they fought for absolute freedom of conscience—for separation of church and state—for the right of every man to worship God and to do his thinking in his own way—the fundamental basis of these views lay in the belief that religion is purely spiritual, and that all Christian men are on an equality spiritually. Down the centuries these great issues have been fought through until they have become the common property of the world. The question, therefore, is: Shall the Baptist denomination cease to exist, having fulfilled its function?"

Dr. Goodchild protested against "an inarticulate church," and suggested that the abolition of creeds would convert the church into a "society for ethical culture."

Dr. Goodchild is right. There are societies enough now for those who want a creedless church, and if any more are needed they can be easily organized. It is not necessary, therefore, for any church to abandon its creed in order to accommodate those who have an aversion to creeds, and surely no such change should be made merely for the purpose of securing more members.

The Baptist church is a great insti-

tution with a noble record of service and sacrifice. It stands for a certain interpretation of the Scriptures, just as the Methodists and Presbyterians stand for a different interpretation of certain passages, but these differences do not prevent friendship between them and co-operation in defense of the spiritual life against materialistic attacks.

The total number of Christians is probably greater with division on minor points than it would have been with a forced unity in all things.

People do not join a church because of the size of the church, but because it is home to them—and a church home, like the home of the individual, does not depend on bigness but upon harmonious co-operation among the members.

If Drs. Goodchild and Eaton want a Bible illustration to use in support of their contention they will find one in the parable of the rich young man.

Judged by the WORLD'S standards the Master was very much in need of influential friends, and the rich young man gave a very plausible excuse for accepting him as a follower, for he had kept the commandments from his youth. He was, negatively speaking, quite an exemplary young man, but Christ could read his heart and discover his weak point. He put money first, and so, "went away sorrowing." He had "great possessions" and doubtless he had the social prominence that usually goes with great possessions, but Christ did not lower by a hair's breadth the requirements. He lost a follower who would not follow, but he built a church which will grow as long as those in authority have enough faith in their religion to refuse to surrender the moral integrity of the church to please those who want to convert it into a dormitory.

W. J. BRYAN.

A LETTER OF THANKS

The following letter explains itself. Words fail to express Mr. Bryan's grateful appreciation of the generous words of his esteemed co-workers:

"Hon William Jennings Bryan, Miami, Fla. Dear Mr. Bryan: As general superintendent, legislative superintendent and legislative committee of the Anti-Saloon League of America, we wish to express to you our very great appreciation of the service you have rendered in helping to secure the adoption by congress of the resolution for national prohibition.

"As democracy's greatest prophet of reform you have many times rendered conspicuous service for the right; never more so than in the present case. During all the recent months leading up to the final battle, your voice has sounded the high note of idealism in this fight for humanity, has inspired your friends to confidence and enthusiasm, and has sent the shock of alarm throughout the ranks of the liquor forces. This period of continued and distinguished service found fit completion in your great address last Wednesday night at the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal church and the overflow meeting at the First Presbyterian church before the annual convention of the Anti-Saloon League of America; in your return to the national capitol for the final struggle in the house, and in your history-making and memorable reply to Mr. Gompers which, added to your unquestioned influence with the members of the congress, did so much to put the cause of temperance and prohibition 'over the top.'

"But we must not undertake to recount your services. We wish only on behalf of ourselves and our constituency to express to you our heartiest congratulations and good will and our deepest sense of appreciation for your great service.

"Generations yet unborn will rise up to call you blessed. Women and children without number who have had to sit in sack-cloth and ashes, robbed of their right and despoiled of their best treasures by the greedy, conscienceless, lecherous traffic in strong drink, will not cease to thank God that He sent you to help proclaim the day of their deliverance.

"May your 'bow abide in strength.'

"Sincerely and respectfully yours,

"P. A. Baker, general superintendent; James Cannon, Jr., chairman; A. J. Barton; Edwin C. Dinwiddie, legislative superintendent; Wayne B. Wheeler, secretary; Ernest C. Cherrington. Legislative Committee of Anti-Saloon League of America."

Why Not Another Amendment?

The manufacturers of intoxicants have just discovered that it is POSSIBLE for the amendment to be ratified by thirty-six (carefully selected) states—the necessary number—although the ratifying states may not contain a majority of the people of the United States. And they have discovered that a majority in the state legislature may not represent a popular majority in the state. These discoveries are stated as if startling, and yet the facts have existed for a century and a third without attracting much attention.

If these facts have not prevented the ratification of the other amendments already adopted, why should they stand in the way of this particular reform?

If the manufacturers of intoxicants—though they have never respected the right of the majority before—have really been converted to popular government—if they are in EARNEST—let them join with friends of reform and so amend the constitution as to make it more easily amendable. Why not use the present occasion to bring the federal constitution up to date by making it possible for the people to rule?

The constitution now requires the consent of two-thirds of both houses to the submission of an amendment—why not allow a MAJORITY to submit? And, instead of requiring ratification by three-fourths of the states, why not permit ratification by a MAJORITY of the states, speaking through a popular vote taken at a general election, provided, a majority of the people of the nation declare in favor of the amendment.

Such a change in the method of amending the constitution would not only prevent amendment by a MINORITY but would make it possible for the majority to make such changes as they desire, thus putting the federal government in the hands of the people.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE PRESIDENT NAILS A FALSEHOOD

Dec. 17th, 1917.

The White House, Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Bryan,

My attention has been called to a book in which the author states by very clear implication that I demanded your resignation as secretary of state because of language used by you in an interview with Ambassador Dumba soon after the first Lusitania note.

You may quote me as saying that I did not ask for your resignation or desire it, as any one can learn from my note accepting your resignation. And this statement ought also to be a sufficient answer to the criticism of you based upon the Dumba interview, for I could not make it if I thought you responsible for the misinterpretation placed upon that interview in Berlin.

But knowing at the time all the facts I did not give the matter serious thought and may add, in justice to you, that as you promptly corrected the misinterpretation, within a few days, after it was brought to your attention, it could not have affected the diplomatic situation.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

(Signed) WOODROW WILSON.

In choosing members of the legislature that are to vote upon the adoption of the national constitutional amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquors, dry voters should be sure that the mantle of fervid patriotism does not cover the form of some representative of the liquor interests. The candidate who says that he is for America and refuses to say where he stands on prohibition justifies any suspicions of his good faith that may be entertained.

Red tape is very useful in the tying up of packages to send to the boys abroad, but it is a hindrance when used in the departments at Washington. As the surgeon said to the man with the inflamed appendix, "let's cut it out."

The liquor interests oppose the submission of national prohibition NOW on the ground that they fear it will prevent a united support of the government during the war. And yet this is the same crowd that would, if it could, make a drunkard of every soldier and leave the nation defenseless before a foreign foe.

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