Notes and News

Alexander McLaren was born 150 years ago, on 11th February 1826. When he died in 1910, he had been a Baptist minister for nearly sixty-five years, first in Southampton and then in Manchester, where the large and stately Union Chapel was built to accommodate his hearers. In an age of "Princes of the Pulpit" his royal gifts and graces were undisputed. Contemporaries bore witness to the magnetism of his presence, his matchless voice and mobile, sensitive face. Huge hushed congregations waited, not in vain, for him to speak to their fears and hopes, fire their imaginations and strengthen their faith. The twenty volumes of his sermons prove his intellectual power and command of words, the sustained elevation of thought and the expository genius which could disclose new meaning in a familiar passage while treating the text with critical fidelity. For years his sermons were printed in the *Manchester Guardian* the morning after he had delivered them. His prayers, also published from shorthand records, were classics of chaste eloquence and reverence, reflecting his profound awareness of sin and mercy. The proclamation of the Gospel was his entire vocation, and other marks of his public life (the presidency of the Baptist Union and Baptist World Congress, foreign travel, honorary degrees) added nothing to his essence. He took no part in the stormy doctrinal and political controversies which raged round other preachers of the day. It is difficult to think of any other notable Baptist quite so unrewarding to the biographer, but it is harder still to name anyone of equally prodigious gifts who dedicated them with such sacrificial concentration to the preaching of the Word. The historical situation in which McLaren worked has vanished, but in remembering his ministry we recognize a calling that belongs to all time.

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Reports of the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Stockholm last July leave no doubt that a relatively small Union once more dealt with massive practical arrangements most successfully. It was a very representative gathering, with delegates from every East European country, including Bulgaria. Many travelled from the U.S.A., and the usual good contingent came from Australia. Smaller groups played a memorable part in the fine music, the singing of the Hungarian choir being outstanding and the Nagas getting much well-deserved attention. Personal contacts were perhaps more rewarding than the formal programme, which many felt to be inadequate in view of the problems of the day and the time and expense put into the organisation of the Congress. The revisions in the B.W.A. constitution, prepared by a committee of which Dr. David Russell was convener, were passed

without question; the proof of their wisdom and viability lies in the future. The decision to have a Department of Evangelism and Education at B.W.A. headquarters means that Dr. Ronald Goulding will move to Washington. The closing of the London office may be seen as a sign of the times; it will surely be regretted by many British Baptists. There has been an office in London since 1905 and London has been associated with some of the most important developments in the life of the Alliance—not only the Congresses of 1905, and 1955, but the enlarged meetings of the Executive in 1920 and 1947. A warm welcome will be given, however, to Gerhard Claas, when he takes up his duties as Secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

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To mark the 450th anniversary of the publication of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, a reprint is being issued by Paradine Publications, in association with Bristol Baptist College which owns the only surviving complete copy. This is welcome news to scholars for, in spite of steady academic interest, much remains to be said about Tyndale's scholarship, idiom and achievement. The enduring quality of his translation and the inspiring story of his faith and courage have endowed that small volume in Bristol with a rare power to touch the imagination. Its re-publication will not remove the mystique and value of the "real thing", but will give ordinary non-specialist readers of the Bible the chance to handle and ponder over copies of a uniquely fascinating part of their heritage.

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