

SOUTHERN CONVENTION TOUR

AT THE SUGGESTION of the Newspaper Syndicate which handles our weekly discourses through about 1,500 newspapers, we made a visit to Colon, Panama and Havana, in order that the discourses might come from those points bearing a measure of local color. Incidentally, we arranged for other meetings, as follows: Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 16th and 17th. –

A convention of Bible Students gathered here on the 15th, to the number of about 200. They reported having had a splendid season of spiritual refreshment prior to our arrival, and that our coming in no wise diminished their joy and zeal.

We gave one public discourse at the Duval Theater. We had excellent attention. Crowds were turned away, unable to gain admittance. We hope that some good was accomplished – that some of the Lord's people were refreshed and strengthened in spirit; and that others, not consecrated, were enabled to see a light attractive to their hearts, which may bless them in after-days, leading them to righteousness and the Golden Rule, if not to the grand climax of full consecration to the Lord.

At Colon and Panama we gave public addresses, on Feb. 22d and 23d. In both instances the theaters were packed in a way not permitted in the United States. At Colon it was estimated that about 600 stood during the service, while many hundreds were turned away. At Panama we gave additionally an address to the Bible Students, numbering about 100. They came from different parts of the Canal Zone. Nine-tenths of the attendance of the interested in those parts are colored, very few being white.

Kingston, Jamaica, we reached Feb. 25th. We found a large convention already in session, crowding Collegiate Hall – about 600

– nearly all colored. These gathered from various parts of the island, and represented one-half of the interested there. Some of these dear friends spent nearly all that they possessed to come to the convention. [R5209 : page 94] We found them a very interesting company, very earnest for the Lord and for the Truth. Their singing was excellent.

On the next day we had two meetings in the theater. The one in the afternoon was attended by convention friends and about as many more of the public, invited by special cards. These friends assembled in the evening at Collegiate Hall, so as to give the full benefit of the theater to the public. And the public came in crowds. The theater seats about 1,100. Besides these, approximately 700 were jammed into all the aisles and corridors and windows, and probably 2,000 were turned away. These were nearly all colored, not more than ten per cent. whites.

The friends had arranged to reserve certain seats for the whites, desiring especially that they should have an opportunity to hear; but the crowd, while orderly, insisted on taking possession of these. A number of ministers were present. They all remarked the eagerness of the people to hear, and seemed surprised that anything religious should have such a drawing influence. The Episcopal minister thoughtfully and wisely observed that the secret of the interest lay in the fact that our Message was a "Gospel of Hope."

The newspapers, commenting on the people comprising the convention, commented upon their cleanliness, order, etc.; and the fact that they used neither tobacco nor liquors, and needed no attention from the police. In substance, they said, "This speaks well for the work of Pastor Russell and his associates. We hope that they may accomplish still more of their commendable work in Jamaica." [R5209 : page 95] They also referred to the fact that money and collections were not mentioned in connection with this convention.

On the 27th we gave an address on the Oneness of the Body of Christ, through Baptism of the one Spirit; and later we had a consecration service for children. The convention closed with a Love Feast, in which four brethren especially representing the Society in Jamaica, stood with us in line and shook hands with the company as they filed past, meantime singing some of our beautiful hymns of praise and thanks to the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

In the evening our boat departed for Santiago, Cuba. About 150 were on the pier, singing and waving us goodbye. Their order, cleanliness and earnestness were afterwards commented on by passengers on our boat. We were complimented on having such friends and adherents.

Santiago was the scene of the principal battle in the war which brought Cuban freedom from the yoke of Spain. We had the opportunity of visiting the battlefield – San Juan Hill, where the principal part of the battle was fought, and Kettle Hill, celebrated as the point where Colonel Roosevelt and his corps were engaged and suffered severe losses.

A journey of about 500 miles brought us to Havana, in time for a publicly announced meeting, with just one hour to spare. English is comparatively little used in Havana, and our congregation was small – about 200. However, even in this small number we had the satisfaction of knowing that some received a blessing, of which we trust to hear further on.

Monday, March 3, was spent in crossing from Havana to Key West. We arrived at Key West just in time for an advertised meeting in its largest auditorium. We had a splendid hearing on the topic, "Beyond the Grave." Our boat for Tampa permitting, we announced a meeting for the following night at the same place. The second subject was "Where Are the Dead?" The attention was excellent. Approximately, from five to six hundred of Key West's most intelligent and thoughtful people thus heard the Truth discussed for

altogether four hours. We have hope that some of the hearers had eyes and ears of understanding, that some of them are of the consecrated class, and that the number of Bible Students there will be considerably increased.

Tampa was our next stop. Our steamer arrived in good time for the appointed meeting on Wednesday, March 5th. The Casino was crowded with a very intelligent audience of citizens, Bible Students and tourists. About three hundred were turned away. Our topic was, "Beyond the Grave." After the meeting many stopped to greet us. Altogether, we had a very enjoyable time.

The friends had made arrangements for a little convention of Bible Students, following the public address. We arranged our time of departure so as to permit the service of blessing the children, and a discourse for an hour on "The Three Bodies of Christ" – the Church in her three aspects portrayed in the Word of God. We trust that the brethren were encouraged, and that the fruitage of our visit may appear in the Kingdom, if not sooner.

Pensacola, Fla., was our next stop. There we had from noon until 10:10 p.m., March 7th. The Bible Students here also had arranged for a little convention, and visitors from nearby towns were in attendance. The programme was the same as at Tampa – a semi-public meeting for the Bible Students, and another meeting for the general public, with the same topics as at Tampa. As usual, we had a crowded house and closest attention.

Leaving at 10:00 p. m., Friday night, we reached Washington on Sunday morning, in time for a morning meeting with the class of Bible Students, and the usual Sunday afternoon meeting at Washington Temple. Leaving the capitol, we reached Baltimore in time for the appointed meeting in the Academy of Music. The public discourse at Washington and Baltimore was the same – "The Grandest Inauguration." All interested, we presume, already have

had reports of that discourse, as it appeared in the newspapers regularly publishing the sermons.

Incidentally, we remark that a fund has been provided, so that any of the Lord's people who cannot afford to take a paper publishing the sermons weekly may be supplied free. The dear friends who have arranged this matter voluntarily are not only willing to pay for the papers, but very much pleased indeed to do so. We are again living in the time when the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Be sure to avail yourselves of this, another Divinely arranged matter.

Address all requests for sermon papers to THE WATCH TOWER office. But will each ask for himself and not for another? It is the intention not to send papers to any who do not express a personal desire to have them. Send in your name thus for a free subscription. You need not be in fear of ever being asked to pay for the paper. Any such request would be a mistake, and should be promptly reported to THE WATCH TOWER office.

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