

ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON.

Contending for the Faith.

THE INTRODUCTORY SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE NOVA SCOTIA EASTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION AT PORTAUPIQUE, JULY 9TH, 1877.

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"It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude vs. 3.

These are the words of Jude, "the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, designated "the less," and of our Lord; the same who put the question contained in John xiv. 21, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Of this writer and apostle very little is certainly known. He is supposed to be synonymous with "Lebbeus, whose surname was, Thaddeus," (Matt. x. 3.) Modern Greeks affirm that he preached in Edessa, and throughout Mesopotamia; in Judea, Samaria, Idumea, Syria, and principally in Armenia and Persia. The Syrians claim him as their apostle. His letter is found in all the ancient catalogues of the sacred writings of the New Testament. Clemens, of Alexandria, cites it as "the production of a prophetic mind." Origen says "that it is full of heavenly grace." It is addressed "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." It would seem that he intended it for the general use of all who embraced the religion of Christ, without distinction of race or nation. It is designed to guard believers against the false instructors who were insinuating themselves into the church, and to encourage them to contend with the utmost earnestness and zeal for "the truth as it is in Jesus;" and to counsel them to persevere in faith and holiness, and by their example and their efforts seek to rescue others from the dangers to which they were exposed. In style, language and spirit it is very similar to the second epistle of Peter, and was probably written at or about the same time, viz., between A. D. 65 and A. D. 70. It is a treatise having reference to "the Common Salvation," and contains vigorous and forcible admonitions upon points of vital interest to all true Christians. It cannot be doubted that these admonitions were timely, and adapted to stimulate them to a sound and faithful adherence to the truths of Revelation. That they are of a general character may be a sufficient reason for selecting them as a fitting basis for reflection upon the present occasion. Let me claim your prayerful attention while I present you with a few thoughts and suggestions in respect to the duty of earnestly

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH, once delivered unto the saints.

I. We must contend for the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church. His supremacy has heretofore been, and still is, assailed. Hence, there is a need that it should be held forth, and maintained with greater earnestness than ever. Brethren, in these days of degeneracy, when a false system unblushingly asserts its own "infallibility";—when men assume the prerogatives of the Eternal, and sit in the place of God;—when titled names, and honors, due alone to divinity, are heaped upon the creature, and human utterances demand the submission: which of right belong to Heaven; in these days when Christ is sought to be dethroned, and his kingdom levelled with the dust, by means of philosophy, falsely so-called;—when Infidelity and Atheism, under the garb of Reason and Science, dare to question the Divinity and Lordship of the "Man of Nazareth";—when bald, frigid, and sensuous materialism, and dead formality, shape their ends to gain the ascendancy, and hurl the Prince of Peace from His rightful position;—when the professed friends and advocates of christianity pervert the truth, or claim the right to employ it for party ends,—shall we not speak out earnestly and manfully for "the faith once delivered to the saints"; and in trumpet tones reiterate the truth, "He is the HEAD of the body, the church, the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things HE might have the PRE-EMINENCE. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" (Col. i. 18-19). That God "hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head

over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephes. i. 22-23). That "Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephes. v. 23). By the mouth of the sweet singer of Israel, Jehovah declares: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm ii. 6). And the seraphic Isaiah chants in sublime verse the praises of our Lord when he prophesies concerning him, "The government shall be upon his shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. ix. 6-7). "He is Lord of all." "The King of kings and Lord of lords." He sits supreme upon the throne of His love, and reigns over His spiritual Jacob "with a peculiar sway." Be it ours as individuals, and as churches, always to accord to Him his true prerogatives, and maintain with devout reverence and awe that He alone has the right to DIRECT, COMMAND, and GOVERN His people after the counsel of His own unerring will. Let us never consent to yield allegiance to any other Lord beside Him, nor allow that any rival power may share a partnership with Him in the concerns of His church. Let us prefer him before all others, and deem it our wisdom and our joy to delight in His laws and precepts more than in all riches; let us bring to him the homage of hearts filled with His love, and services rendered acceptable through the offering of His own precious blood. The Church of Christ can never consent to lose the guidance, light and love of such a Prince and Lord as Jesus is; but must evermore recognize and confess the truth contained in Ralph Erskine's lines,—

"That to the Lamb's fair bride belongs To sound on all Her strings, With tuneful harp, the Song of songs, To Christ, the King of kings."

It is a matter for rejoicing that the Church does not depend for guidance or counsel upon the shifting sands of human opinion, nor upon the varying shades of religious thought, for the principles or practices which she holds and exercises, but upon the infallible and immutable principles revealed and proclaimed by her great King and Head, who is "God over all, blessed forevermore"; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Deprived of the Headship of Christ, and left to herself, or to the wisdom of her sons, she must needs bewail her situation thus: "Deprived,—ah! I languish in my plaint, My bones are feeble, and my spirits faint; My longing soul pants to behold again Thy temple, fill'd with Thy majestic train: Those palaces with Heavenly odor strewn; And regal Courts, where Zion's King is view'd To see the beauty of the Highest One Upon His holy Mount, His lofty throne, Whence virtue running from the Living Head, Restores the dying, and revives the dead. For Him, my heart with cries repeated sounds, To which my flesh with echoes loud responds; For Him,—for Him whose sole prerogative is from, and to eternity to live."

Brethren and sisters, let us see to it that His supremacy be maintained in our hearts, and with the earnestness of sincere affection let us contend for it, in all the churches of the saints, throughout all time.

II. Let us contend for the maintenance of THE AUTHORITY and SUFFICIENCY of the WORD of GOD as our only rule of faith and practice. The words uttered by the immortal Chillingworth, "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants," have a peculiar significance for all true Baptists. This is their watchword as it comes ringing along the ages; and we must take it up and send it forward as the grand rallying motto for the ages to come.

With the notions and whims of SCIENTIFIC MEN, who aim at the destruction of the influence and power of the Word of God, we have not the smallest sympathy, nor do their attempts produce in us the least fear or alarm. On the contrary, we are assured that all true science gathers strength and force, in so far as it admits the light of revelation, confesses that "its tapers shine with dim and delegated rays"; and contents itself with bowing reverently before the Inspired Oracle, and exclaiming with the illustrious Paul: "Oh! the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Neither can we for a moment allow the right of TRADITION to prescribe laws and ordinances where Divine revelation has already spoken with clear and telling authority. We firmly adhere to the doctrine "That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God". That it is plain and explicit as our guide and instructor in all matters pertaining to our duty to God and to our fellow christians. That it alone should be consulted as the Christian's law-book and directory. That it contains the record of all the will of God we need to know on earth, and plainly points out the way to endless happiness above. It reveals to man his lost condition by nature, and God's method of saving him. It develops the gospel in all its adaptation to human necessity. It sets forth Jesus Christ as the world's great Saviour, and cordially invites all who realize their need to come to Him and "be saved." It unlocks the mysteries of the Divine will, and opens the treasures of infinite grace. It casts its mantle of mercy over the wretched, hungering and despairing sons of earth, and bears them upon its wings of compassion into the arms of everlasting love.

"This is the judge that ends the strife, Where wit and reason fail; Our guide to everlasting life Through all the gloomy vale."

And for its authority and sufficiency we are called upon earnestly to contend. As we observe the zealous endeavors of those who would set up rules and laws which they have themselves devised, and the persistency of those who strive to propagate merely party or anti-scriptural dogmas, it becomes us who take our stand upon the Word of God alone, to be bold in proclaiming our firm determination to adhere to the Scriptures as the only rule of our faith and guide to our practice in carrying forward the work which the Divine being has assigned to us. And it behoves all christians to wage constant warfare against every attempt to infringe upon, change or transpose any and every of the precepts and directions which are therein delivered unto us.

The maintenance of this principle by Martin Luther was the source of his strength, and it became the bulwark of the Reformation. He declared that "the foundation of Articles of Faith is the Word of God." This principle is embodied in the VIth Article of the Church of England. It has been urged in every conflict between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. It is this principle which has given to the United States and Britain the vast superiority these nations enjoy over those which have not embraced it. "This has been the foundation of national virtue and greatness wherever it has gone, and the source of power such as nothing else in the whole history of mankind has produced." No denomination of christians holds to this principle with the same degree of consistency as do the Baptists. "It is entrusted to our hands to hold fast and push forward with unrelenting fidelity; and to our power must we guard it from the innovations which are constantly being made, and the setting up of principles and practices as divine institutions which have no other or better foundation than human tradition. This must be our standard, and our Creeds and Confessions of Faith must control and govern us only so far as they are the echo of the Divine Word, and as they reflect the sentiment of the Divine Original. Man's thoughts and opinions must on all questions of religion be brought to the test of, and into subjection to, the thoughts and will of God.

Nor can we concede that THE CHURCH has any vested right in herself to alter or amend any existing divine law, precept or ordinance, and substitute therefor something that in its wisdom, or its folly, may be esteemed better adapted to the ever varying condition of things. The church herself grows up, and becomes established upon the principles contained in the Word of God; and the constitution, laws and ordinances by which she exists and is perpetuated, and which she is required to hold and maintain, are all laid down in the Christian's Text-book, the New Testament. That, and that only, is pure christianity which derives its existence from the teachings of the inspired word. Therefore, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not accord-

ing to this Word it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20). The period will never come when the church shall be able to rise above the condition of things therein foretold, or need other or clearer light than is shed upon her path, from this, the only safe and the all sufficient source of instruction. With the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit upon the written word, and a steady following of its teachings, the world will at length be permeated with the "truth as it is in Jesus."

"The beams which shone on Zion's hill, Shall lighten every land; The King who reigns in Salem's towers Shall all the world command."

Till then, let us with heart and soul, by word and deed, contend earnestly for the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, as once delivered to the saints, our only rule of faith and practice.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

An Appeal from St. John, N. B.

To the Baptist Churches of the Dominion of Canada:

DEAR BRETHREN:—The disastrous fire of the twentieth of June, which in a few hours swept away two thirds of the buildings of the city of Saint John and about seven-eighths of its property value, and made over fifteen thousand of its people homeless and destitute, has fallen with special weight upon two of the Baptist churches, viz., the Germain street and Leinster street churches, whose families were turned out of their homes, their business men subjected to severe losses, and their beautiful houses of worship and comfortable parsonages destroyed.

Stricken and peeled—deprived of everything but their trust in the Fatherhood of God and confidence in the Brotherhood of man, they look upward with unwavering faith, and outward upon the work given into their hands with determined will to arise from the ashes and build other places of worship, the glory of which, by reason of the triumph of grace therein to be achieved, shall exceed that of the former houses. But in their weak and crippled condition they require liberal aid from their brethren abroad to enable them to carry to a successful issue the plans for rebuilding which they have devised. That this aid will not be denied we feel assured, and therefore lay before you the following statements of the two churches so that you may have an intelligent basis upon which to rear a trophy of kindly words and generous contributions.

THE GERMAIN STREET CHURCH.

was organized in 1810, and has records reaching back for sixty years. It is the first Baptist church established in the city, and has occupied the corner of Germain and Queen streets, the spot where the Baptists first broke ground in Saint John, over half a century ago. Loyal to Christ and obedient to His commandments, speaking the truth in love, holding forth the word of life, erecting its standards and setting up its banners in the name of the Lord, it has been blessed in "sending forth boughs unto the sea and branches unto the river." From it several of the other churches have sprung, which in their turn have sent forth vigorous offshoots to adorn the parent vine and bear fruit to the glory of God.

The church edifice was a substantial brick building, worth twenty-five thousand dollars, and the parsonage was a plain wooden structure worth three thousand dollars. The amount of insurance is fourteen thousand dollars, of which two thousand dollars belong to the parsonage fund. Out of the remainder must be expended one thousand five hundred and fifty dollars for such additional ground as will be required to furnish a rear entrance, which, though sorely needed, could not be had before, but now can be procured. This will give the church a little over eight thousand dollars with which to commence re-building—too small a sum for their present requirements. The church, however, has resolved to arise out of the ashes and build. The pastor, who with great joy saw the house opened for worship in December, 1866, and entirely out of debt on Christmas Eve, 1873—the first time in its history the church was free from incumbrance—and repaired after the fire of January, 1874, hopes to

see it re-built and better than before, and firmly believes that the brethren throughout the Dominion will promptly and generously aid the Germain Street Church to restore what the fire has swept away.

THE LEINSTER STREET CHURCH

was organized in 1858 with sixteen members under the labors of their first pastor, the late Rev. E. B. DeMill. It has always been an active, intelligent, and vigorous body, in full sympathy with all the principles and interests of the Denomination, liberal, self-denying and zealous of good works. After removing all indebtedness the insurance on the church edifice will amount to eleven thousand five hundred dollars. Out of this sum about four thousand dollars will have to be expended for such additional grounds as will be required to meet the demands of their proposed new building. The church has therefore less than eight thousand dollars with which to commence their operations. Immediately after the fire the pastor decided to remain with the people of his charge, notwithstanding that nearly all the families of both church and congregation had been burnt out, losing their homes, or places of business, or both, and offered to do so without any stipulated salary. This generous act served to confirm the church in their resolution, adopted before the ashes of their church and parsonage were cold, to arise and set about the work of re-building.

To do the work determined on by these churches in a manner creditable to themselves, and for the true interest of the cause of Christ which they represent in the city of St. John, they require all the assistance their brethren and friends abroad can give, and to them they now appeal for such prompt and liberal contributions as the necessities of the time demand, and as the large-hearted benevolence of the Baptist churches of Canada will, we are confidently assured, grant to their distressed brethren of St. John. As to the methods to be adopted by the churches to secure the best results they need no direction from us, but it may not be inappropriate to suggest that a special collection in aid of the St. John Baptist Church Building Fund be taken in every church of the Dominion of Canada between now and the second Sabbath in September, and the moneys so contributed be forwarded to the Hon. Alexander McL. Seely, Secretary-Treasurer, who has been appointed by the Saint John churches to receive all contributions, a full return of which will be given through the columns of the Baptist press of the Denomination.

G. M. W. CAREY,

Pastor of the Germain Street Church,

J. MAROH, for

J. D. POPE,

Pastor of the Leinster Street Church,

Saint John, New Brunswick,

27th July, 1877.

In Memoriam.

MRS. SAMUEL SPINNEY,

Of Meadowvale, Wilmot, departed this life July 12th, aged 73 years. In her demise we can truly say one of the excellent of the earth has passed away. Until the year 1828 there was neither Baptist church nor Baptist minister in Aylesford, her native home; it was in that year the Rev. Thomas Ainsley, of precious memory, came to Lower Aylesford in the spirit and power of the gospel; many hearing, believed and were baptized. Our sister—then Mary Rhodes—was one of the many who found the new born hope in Jesus, was baptized by Father Ainsley, and in the succeeding year, 1829, was one of those who composed the first Baptist church of Aylesford. In early life she was united in marriage to Mr. Samuel Spinney, with whom she lived in harmony, adorning the doctrines of God her Saviour till the close of life. She loved religion and the House of the Lord, and was a faithful worker in the church, her voice was often heard giving glory to God for salvation of grace and exhorting sinners to repentance; in her exemplary christian deportment she evinced to those with whom she mingled that she had been taught in the school of Christ. Her house was always open to the poor and needy, whilst friends enjoyed her hospitality without grudging or ostentation; especially ministers