

OUR PULPIT.

BAPTIST UNION.

(An address given by Rev. F. Allison Currier, A. M., at Woodstock, October 2, 1904.)

The history of negotiations for the union of the Baptist bodies in this province was briefly set forth, showing the various steps leading up to the adoption of the Basis of Union by the chief courts of the two bodies—the Convention and the Conference.

At our General Conference last year we amended sections eleven and sixteen of the original Basis.

The "Basis," as adopted by the Baptist Convention, was passed in our Elders' Conference on the 16th September, and was adopted by the General Conference on the 20th unanimously.

The action of the Baptist Convention has to be submitted to the Baptist churches, and the action of the Conference to our churches for ratification, and if there is a two-thirds vote in favor of union, the long looked for and fervently prayed for union will be effected. The matter of bringing it before the churches is left in the hands of the Union Committee, and at as early a date as possible, and in what they may think the best manner, the churches will be asked to vote on this question.

It is in view of this coming vote and with a desire to instruct my people as far as possible as to the issues at stake that I decided to address you to-day on the question of "Baptist Union."

I.—I believe it is the will of God that these two bodies should be one.—Whether it was the will of God that there ever was a division, I cannot say, but I am as confident as that I am living that it is now the will of God that these two bodies of Christians should be one; and I believe, further, that God has been taking the most effective means to draw us together. For several years past it has become more and more difficult to get men for our churches, and it has been steadily growing worse, until now we are confronted with the alarming fact that something like thirteen of our pastorates in this province are without ministerial care. We have prayed the Lord of the harvest that he might send laborers into the field. We have preached sermons urging the Christian young men to hear the voice of God calling them into the ministry. But if God has heard, he has not answered; and if he has not answered, there must be a reason. And may not that reason be: that we are not using to advantage the men whom God has given us? There are enough ministers in this province to bring the gospel within the reach of every home if they were wisely distributed, but the trouble is that in some places there are so many that they are in each other's way, whilst other districts hunger and thirst for the Word. Take our own town, for instance. We have practically four Baptist churches here, and four ordained men are here to do the work that one man could easily do, whilst within twelve miles of us there are places where the gospel is not preached from one year to another. I do not believe that God will give us more men until we make wise use of what he has already given us.

The thing that more than any other has been influential in bringing these two bodies together is the scarcity of men; the cry of these needy

churches. All over this province there are churches, organized by holy men of God long since gathered to their Father, churches for whose prosperity our fathers prayed and toiled and suffered, and within whose consecrated walls the everlasting gospel of the Son of Man was preached to the salvation of sinners; but the old harvesters have gone home, and there are no young men to go out into these whitened fields. One need not to have lived two thousand years ago, and south of the Hellespont, to have heard the Macedonian cry, for one can hear it every day; the cry going up from hundreds of hungry hearts all over the province, a heart-rending Babel of entreating voices crying, "Come over and help us." Wherever I go I meet the same earnest question, "Why don't you come and preach to us? We are hungry to hear a sermon; why don't you come? Why don't you send us someone?" And I have heard it until my heart has ached; and I have had to choke down the anguish as I have said to them, "We have no men, we can't get men, there are no ministers for our churches." And when we call unto God to send forth laborers into the field, the only answer that he gives us is that there are plenty of men in this province to preach the gospel to every creature if they were wisely distributed.

Whatever may have been the doctrinal differences of these two denominations in the past, they no longer exist, and in the new Basis of Union we meet on mutual ground. Section eleven is gone. God be praised. It ought to have been buried fifty years ago. We have fought over it for more than a hundred years like wild beasts fighting over a fleshless bone, and now we have left it in the great wilderness of forgetfulness. We hope the autumnal leaves will cover it deep, and that no wild boar of the woods will ever root it up again. It is a juiceless, fleshless, marrowless bone. *"Requiescat in pace."*

As to the amended section sixteen, it was an inspiration from God.

There are other reasons why union of these two bodies is desirable. Here is our great Northwest, a legacy that God has given to Britain and her sons that is destined to be the envy of the nations. Canada has the greatest wheat belt in the world. The national song of Canada is the song of the reaper. Day and night the great panting engines are hurrying east and west and south, carrying the ever-multiplying fruits of our fertile west. And great ocean liners are ploughing through fog and storm and gale, hurrying Canadian wheat to the hungry marts of Christendom. And into this great west are pouring immigrants at the rate of a thousand a day, and they are not visitors. Our land is to be their land, and our people their people, and it rests with us whether our God is to be their God. They are the best immigrants in the world; they are the light-haired, blue-eyed races—the Swedes, the Norsemen, the Poles, the Fins, the Germans, the Austrians, the Swiss. The dark-haired and dark-eyed races, that pour out through the Strait of Gibraltar, as refuse out of a cesspool, go to the Republic to the south of us. Thank God for our immigrants, the best that land on American soil.

And their coming brings upon us renewed responsibilities. The great battle between heathendom and Christianity

is to be fought out on this continent, and it is high time that we were getting ready for it. If we do not Christianize them, they will heathenize us. Like mushrooms, new towns and villages are springing up all over our west. And I do not believe it is the will of God that the everlasting gospel should be withheld from them.

But where are we to get the men to send into this great west if we have not men enough to supply our home interests? I believe that denominationalism is one of the crowning iniquities of this century. No matter how small a village may be, there must be a church of every Protestant denomination in it, even if there are not enough people to make one congregation. What is needed in this generation is not denominations that are willing to live, but denominations that are willing to die for the glory of God.

God is solving this problem in spite of our prejudices. A World's Congress of Baptists is to be held in London in July of next year. Every branch of the Baptist family, it is expected, will be represented. The meeting will, doubtless, have the effect of bringing them nearer together, and will, probably, help to organic union in many cases.

Presbyterian and Methodist meetings all over Canada continue to pass resolutions endorsing the proposed union of these bodies.

II.—Others are watching our action.—Another thing that makes this union between the two Baptist bodies desirable is that others are watching us to see what we do. The delegate from Nova Scotia, Rev. Mr. Merrill, stated at our Conference that the Free Baptists of that province were only waiting to see if union were effected here, and if so, the Free Baptists there were ready to follow our example. Whilst I was in that province this summer it was my pleasure to meet most of the Free Baptist ministers, and from talking with them I knew that the sentiment expressed by the delegate was the sentiment of the Conference. Bro. Merrill went further than that. He is an American, and has labored in the United States most of his life, and knows the people there, and he says that the Free Baptists of the United States are watching us to see what we do in this matter of union, and if union is harmoniously effected, they will at once enter into negotiations with their Baptist brethren for a union there.

The time has come when God has demanded that Christians lay aside their petty difficulties and unfounded prejudices and face the momentous issues that confront a united Protestant church in this country. The small denominations must go to the wall if they will not hear the voice of God. We have in the dominion six millions of people, and one-fourth of them are French Roman Catholics, and they are one, under one church and under one head, and inspired with one purpose, to drive Protestantism out of the country. And they are doing it.

Quebec is the menace of Protestantism in Canada. It presents a solid and unbroken front, and almost defies the existence of even a Protestant mission within her boundaries. And the trouble is that they go in masses and they cannot be scattered. And they are pressing their way west into Ontario; and what interests us more, possibly, is the fact that they are forcing their way down from Bay Chaleur to the Bay of Fundy. This used to be a Protestant province, but it is so no longer, and it is getting less and less so. Restigouche,

Northumberland, Gloucester, Kent, Westmorland, Albert, Victoria, Madawaska, are rapidly being dominated by the French Catholic populations. Carleton, York, Sunbury, Queens, Kings, St. John and Charlotte are the only counties that are left, and it is only a matter of time when this dreaded "creeping paralysis" shall have included even these.

There is only one way in which we can meet this awful encroachment, and that is by a united Protestant church. Whilst we have been overlapping and fighting among each other, and our ministers so thick that they are in each other's way, and working against each other, French Catholics, dark, massive, united, determined, awful, like some fearful avalanche, is pressing down over us. God grant that Protestants may wake up in time.

III.—Some Don't's.—Now there are three don't's that I wish to give to my people. For the great majority of you they are unnecessary:

1. Don't say any more hard things about our Baptist brethren. We are to be one in the future, and it is well that we begin to love one another. These two denominations have been saying hard things about one another long enough, God knows. Now, instead of magnifying our differences, as we have done in the past, let us magnify those things in which we agree, and the differences will fade away.

2. Don't talk about one part swallowing up the other. There is to be no swallowing at all. Neither one of us is so small that the other can swallow it.

3. Don't let personal feelings or interests have any weight with you. How union will affect the two churches here, that the will of God may be done. I was talking with a pastor of a small Free am personally interested, and that is that the will of God may be done. I was talking with a pastor of a small Baptist church, where there is a strong Baptist church near, and he asked me how I would like to have to give up and all go over to the Baptists. I said to him, "Brother, God forbid that personal interests will have any weight with me when it stands in the way of God's will. I can say in this matter that I have no will." God forbid that I should ever be so small, so narrow, and so far forget my mission as a minister of Jesus Christ that personal interests would influence me in any matter that pertains to the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world. Whether these two congregations will unite or not, there is one thing I am ready to do at a moment's notice, and that is, I am willing to resign this pulpit, as much as I love it, to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished. Personally, I wish to say for the benefit of my Baptist brethren who may be present at this service, and as God is my witness, I have never spoken an unkind word about any one of your denomination, and there is nothing in my heart but love and faith and good will; and I believe in saying this, that I am expressing the sentiment of not only my own heart, but the sentiment of my church as well; and it is my constant prayer that the day may not be far in the distance when not only these two denominations, but the four Baptist churches in this town, may all worship under the same vine and fig tree. It may not be in my time, it may not be in yours, but some eyes will see it and some tongues will join the grand hallelujah chorus of a happy and united people here.

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