MISSION WORK IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

REV. W. H. MCINTYRE, D. A.

As early as 1814 the Baptists of these provinces, then organized in one association, became interested in devising plans for the spread of the gospel in the regions about them.

The reported membership of the churches in the three provinces at that time was but 1491, and although so few in number and scattered over a wide area, they yet thought themselves called to undertake not only the evangelization of destitute sections at home, but also to assist in carrying the word of life to those perishing in heathen lands. Thus almost simultaneously did Home and Foreign Missions early engage the attention of our ancestors in the faith.

In a copy of the association minutes of 1815 I find the following brief and expressive resolution, marked as number 18 passed by the body: "Voted that the association is considered as a missionary society, and with them is left the whole management of the mission business." Thus by a single stroke the fathers laid missions squarely upon the whole denomination and evidently intended that all should be interested in this most important work.

The first Board to look after Home Missions in New Brunswick was appointed at the Association of 1820 and consisted of the following brethren: Elders R. Scott, Elijah Estabrooks, T. S. Harding and brethren T. Pettingell, W. Wilmot, J. Drake and J. Ring.

After the organization of the New Brunswick Association in 1822 as a separate body, a greater degree of special interest seems to have been taken in this work, and soon more regular and systematic plans began to be put forth for its furtherance.

In looking back today over these first home missionary efforts we can hardly refrain from expressing our amazement at the boldness of faith in the early pioneers and our admiration of their enthusiasm and spiritual zeal. Districts and settlements, where nothing invited them but the lost souls of men, were freely traversed, and in many of them God owned His truth with wondrous and saving power. It is rather remarkable too, to note that in different sections of New Brunswick, where the fathers broke the ground and planted the first germs of gospel principles, their successors have thus far failed to follow up what had been so well begun. A few of these instances I shall notice in passing.

But little is now known of the doings of the New Brunswick Association from the time of its organization until the year 1827, when it met July 9 and 10 at Kingsclear. No account of this session appears to have been furnished for Dr. Bill's History, but I find a report of it in the Baptist Magazine of London for the year 1828. From this we learn that the association then comprised twenty-eight churches and had a total membership of 1347. Scarcely one-tenth our present numbers, and yet they were sending out missionaries, east, west, north and south, to all parts of the province.

From the published account of mission funds expended, dated Feb. 20th 1829, we gather that in the year then just ending the total disbursements of the society existing in New Brunswick reach the sum of $262 63.

At the same rate today, according to membership, we should be expending at least $2,600 annually, or about double what is actually laid out. A little prior to this the fathers had organized "The N. B. Baptist Domestic Missionary Society," which as a Board of home missions continued for several years to do good work in many destitute settlements.

In 1835 the province was divided into four districts, and these a little later into five, with as many branch Boards operating in connection with the general home missionary Board for the whole province. For a few years this departure seemed to promise well, but after a brief period of fairly good work the general interest waned, the five branch Boards dwindled to three, and these almost became inactive, until at length the whole experiment lapsed into insignificance.

The time for a new arrangement, or rather for a partial return to the primitive one, had now come, and at the suggestion of Dr. Bill a meeting was called in Brussels St. church, St. John, as a result of which an organization was effected known as "The N. B. Baptist Home Missionary Society." Great unanimity seemed to have followed this step, and a revival in home missionary interest, unprecedented in extent, swept over the churches, producing a manifest increase in denominational giving.

In 1854 the home mission funds amounted to $1 775; in 1855, $2 272 72; in 1856 $1,866.10. The membership of the churches for 1855 is reported at 6 200, or considerably less than one-half our present statistics. Never for many years of late have our people so exerted themselves in this special department, as in these the halcyon days of home missionary effort. For nearly thirty years this society, at first alone, and afterwards in connection with the Union Society, continued to do most excellent work, until its business was transferred to the Board of the Maritime convention.

Thus much by way of introduction, let us now look more directly at the field as it is, glancing back as we pass at the laborers of other days and calling up somewhat of their work in review.

Rather strangely, our efforts as a denomination, which began with the fathers in courageous attempts to spread themselves over the whole province, have in recent years became largely localized. Certain sections of the field seem now to have been abandoned as hopeless, or handed over to other denominations, while on the other hand in many localities our principles have gained a decided preeminence and almost completely hold the ground. How this has come about we will leave to the future historian of our people to explain.

If we take a map and draw a line across the province from east to west, cutting off the lower third of its area, we would separate that part, where nearly our whole strength is found, from the upper two-thirds where our people dwell only in scattered handfuls.

Here many extensive communities, in some cases covering whole counties, are an utter blank, so far as our principles are concerned. Madawaska, Restigouche, Gloucester and Kent combined have scarcely Baptists enough to make more than a single self-supporting church. An almost solid mass of Romanism covers these counties in a religious night. The thought is appalling, or at least ought to be, to every lover of the truth in Jesus. Even Victoria, Northumberland and large parts of Westmorland are as yet but thinly occupied by Baptists.

Then too many places where we have long done missionary work are still in a rather unpromising condition. Certain difficulties and prejudices have for years impeded the progress of our efforts. In the county of Madawaska, where years since Rev. Peter Knight in an humble and Christ-like spirit sowed the good seed and gathered several converts, we have today less of a footing than at the death of that veteran missionary. Few have ever done more successful work among these people. Well do I remember his annual trips to the southern parts of the province, usually in the winter season, stopping as he often did at my father's house, and thrilling us during the long evening's with the narrative of his experiences among the French at St. Francis and also those along the Gulf shore.

As a specimen of his labors let us take a few extracts of his report to the N. B. H. Missionary society in 1856.

"I have visited Petitcodiac, Dorchester, Baraboua, Cocaigne, Buctouche, Richibucto, and all along the north shores of the Bay de Chaleur, up the Restigouche river, and in all these settlements I can only say that darkness, gross darkness covers the people, and superstition reigns to a great degree. We speak of heathen lands, but these above mentioned places are in as dark and superstitious idolatry as any part of the globe. It is beyond conception; you must travel among the people, you must have close intercourse with them, before you can imagine the ignorance and superstition in which they are involved.

"It is now nearly five years since I first travelled amongst this people, and although I have met, and do still meet, with much discouragement, yet I have reason to believe that God is blessing my labors; several families are very different to what they were when I first visited them.

"I have visited during the year the following settlements: Dorchester, Fairfield, Point de Bute, North Joggins, Dorchester Cape, Salisbury, Butternut Ridge, New Canaan, Johnston, Wickham, Cumberland Bay, First Range, Newcastle, Grand Lake, Norton, St. Martins, Upham, Coverdale, Hillsborough, Sheperdy, Hopewell, Harvey, etc., and in all these places have given an account of the Mission I believe satisfactory to the minds of the people.

"I have just returned from the Big Buctouche River and I am happy to say the French people are anxious for me to return to-morrow with them. I delight in tracts where I can do so. Thus have I labored, sometimes day and night, with the French people, speaking to them of the great love of God to sinful man, and the only way of access to God by Jesus Christ.

May God still pour out his Spirit upon these poor benighted people, and may the lamp of life be lifted up to fight them out of nature's darkness into the marvellous light, and may God bless the united efforts of the Missionary Board in sending those who bring good tidings of great joy."

In Westmorland also Elder Obed Chute a few years previous did a similar work among the French Acadians. An account of his labors furnished to the Western Association of 1849 is said to have had a thrilling effect upon that body, and led for many years afterwards to an increased interest in the evangelization of Romanists. Even yet, here as in Madawaska, we should as yet the Baptist "lone star" against our northern sky. One of the great needs of this county is an earnest French evangelist of Father Knight's spirit.

In the valley of the Miramichi and many other sections of Northumberland the foundations laid by the pioneers have been built upon with more care, yet scarcely enough has been done.

Here in the second decade of the century Bro. Charles Miller, then a schoolteacher, began a Baptist interest, and with the assistance of Elder Elijah Estabrooks, of Canning, organized the Northesk church with nine members. After Mr. Miller's ordination in 1820 he continued to labor in this section until his removal to St. John in 1823. This pioneer subsequently removed to Maine, where he attained a great age, surviving all his early compeers and dying at Skowhegan as late as Nov. 21st, 1887.

Revs. Thos. Magee, James Tozer and David James were also among the first laborers in this section. Elder Tozer came originally from Musquerville, settling on the northwest branch of the Miramichi about 1814. He was ordained in 1826 and at once took the pastorate of the Blackville church. He also labored in connection with the Home Missionary society in Bilsfield, Ludlow, Doaktown and other places, and witnessed great displays of saving power wherever he went. For more than half a century this veteran of the cross toiled unceasingly amid these forests, far from other brethren and churches, a genuine Foreign missionary in the heart of New Brunswick. In a good old age he lay peacefully down to his rest in the year 1880.

In 1826 Rev. David James, a Baptist minister from Massachusetts, visited the Northwest Miramichi, extending his trip to the mouth and visiting in his course several settlements on our Eastern coast. He reports good results, although enduring many hardships, and "after traveling three days, and wading through bogs, marshes and creeks," he says, "I came to the Fabishotak river, where I preached on the Sabbath three times." This it must be remembered was in the months of January and February. He administered baptism for the first time in different localities. An interesting account of this trip from his own pen is given in Dr. Bill's History.

For many years but little appears to have been done in following up the daring efforts of these early adventures. At length Bro. W. A. Coleman came this way and spent some time at Northesk where he was ordained in 1845.

In 1853 Elder Benjamin Scott was appointed by the N. B. Home Missionary Society as their first missionary to the Miramichi. Locating himself at Newcastle, he organized in August of the same year the church at that place with six members. After doing a most helpful work in assisting both the interests at Newcastle and Northesk in the erection of meeting houses, and preaching as occasion permitted in every locality near him, Mr. Scott removed to Nova Scotia.

On this same field Bro. Isaiah Wallace, our veteran evangelist, about this time and also afterwards gave good and successful service, as in scores of other localities throughout the length and breadth of the province. May his bow abide in strength, and may the dew of his youth still be upon him as he continues in the chosen work of his early life.

Other laborers came and went over both the upper and lower Miramichi districts, few, however, remaining for any great period. At last the Home Missionary society found a man who, like brother Tozer, was destined to give himself for a life work in Northumberland. This was Rev. W. M. Edwards, who had just come out of a glorious revival at Upper Gagetown with A. B. Earle, and who in 1860 went to Doaktown and Blissfield, where he was destined to remain for thirty years, our apostolic bishop on the upper waters of the Miramichi. After long and patient toil, cheered often by the companionship of Father Tozer, then in the evening of life, Bro. Edwards succeeded in bringing the churches nearly up to self-support, and has left behind him a work that will stand years hence an enduring monument to his memory.

Farther down the river at Newcastle and the adjoining sections Rev. E. Hickson was stationed from 1860 to 1870 succeeding Brother Wallace. His labors covered the fields known as Newcastle, Northesk, Little Southwest and Nelson. All these besides considerable attention given to the Gloucester Mission at Bathurst fifty miles away.

In 1866 Rev. W. S. McKenzie took a mission here, locating at Chatham, but after a brief period of good work and outlining an excellent plan of operations, his labors were cut short by his acceptance of the pastorate of Leinster Street church.

Various others have toiled in this great harvest field, yet all too few for the pressing need. Today in this whole valley trodden over for sixty years by the feet of the saints, and bedewed with their tears, we have one settled pastor, Brother King on the upper sections, and further down at Newcastle, Brother Bleakney, both of whom, enduring much even yet that the fathers had to endure, are faithfully serving the Master and gathering pearls for the crown of glory by and by. There ought in all reason to be two other English pastors and a French missionary to even moderately supply the needs of this the largest county of the province.

Down in Kent, the next county to the south, the fathers entered as long ago as 1826. In that year Elder William Sears tells of a glorious revival under his ministry on the Buctouche river, where he baptized several after the apostolic method, and then, like the disciples of old, having finished his mission in these parts, he passed on to other labors.

A church was organized at Buctouche at an early day, which, however, soon fell into a decline. I find reference to it in the Minutes of the Association of 1839 as follows:

"*Resolved*, that as the church at Buctouche has failed to correspond with the association for several years past, it be left out of the minutes until some intelligence shall be received from it."

About this time Elder James Bleakney undertook a mission here and succeeded in organizing another church at Richibucto and still another at Big River.

The Buctouche organization was afterwards reassociated and for several years appeared on the minutes, maintaining not only its visibility, but actual life and work. Here Rev. Donald McPhail was ordained in 1846, and here he continued to reside for thirty years, laboring in various parts of the county. Elders Duffy, Coleman, Hughes and others have also from time to time preached in these localities. An interest was started at McLachlan's Road and still others at Cocaigne and adjacent sections of Dundas, which flourished well for a time, but on the whole no considerable ground has ever been taken by Baptists on this part of the Gulf shore.

At Harcourt station, in the interior, we have had a small mission, and some scattering Baptist sentiment still prevails, with here and there a church member, but for the last few years Kent county has been practically abandoned. Without doubt this is a great mistake, not to speak of a serious remissness of duty resting upon us as christians. We should have here also at least two English pastors and a missionary among the Acadian French.

But why particularize further? On every hand the call is loud for more men and more means to carry out the great commission. There is Sackville, once prosperous and hopeful, now going into decline, with a dozen other points in Westmoreland needing help. There lie the scattered fields with budding interests in Kings and St. John, from Gondola Point to St. Martins; there too in Kingston, fast falling into spiritual lethargy, where in 1853 Father Trimble started a successful mission, which two years later reported eleven members, and which even today presents a most excellent chance for Baptist work.

Down in Charlotte, where once we stood in the van of home mission enterprize, where in the opening years of the century, Fathers Edward Manning, Thomas Analey, Robert Chase and Duncan Dunbar unfurled the banner of truth, and where later with equal enthusiasm and power, Elders Samuel Robinson, Thomas Magee, William Johnson, A. D. Thomson and W. C. Rideout with others followed in their footsteps; with all this prestige of the past in our favor, we are today falling in the rear and losing point after point held by our people here not more than a generation since.

These saintly men of God, regardless of modern polish and culture, yet all on fire with a passon for souls, under the mighty, moving power of the Holy Ghost, took town after town and settlement after settlement for God and for his truth, filling all Charlotte with Baptist interests once prosperous and thrifty, while we have now the the mortification of seeing the same ground inch by inch slipping from our hands and in some cases entirely lost to us as a denomination.

On the St. John river also, with but two pastors from the mouth to Fredericton; with the Oromocto and its extensive settlements abandoned; with struggling interests all along as we ascend the valley; with little handfuls and groups of Baptists on the Nashwaak, and along the line of the New Brunswick railway; with the Tobique field almost dying out; with Grand Falls, Edmundston and St. Francis still in their missionary infancy; with all this before our gaze, we may well think it is high time to awake out of sleep, and take alarm lest large parts of that heritage which might have been ours may pass into other hands, or worse still, drift into complete unbelief.

Just here let us pause and look at a few figures that tell of our losses. While we are rejoicing over growth and good work oftentimes it is well to observe any counteracting element. On referring to various associational minutes I gather the following statistics.

In 1855 the St. Francis mission reported 81 members; after keeping its course well for some years it gradually began to decline, until now it has but 15 members; in 1856 and 1859 Restigouche reports 31 members, and Dalhousie 9 additional; in 1861 River Chaleur had 8 members, and in 1862 Flatlands 15; no doubt some of these are identical, but all have since become extinct, although providentially we have some compensation in the county at Campbellton.

Little Southwest in 1859 reported 35 members; Northesk in 1839 gave 60 members and down to 1866 58 members, a total of 164, when about at their highest point. They will scarcely reach the same mark today. As to the Gloucester mission just above, it has disappeared altogether.

Buctouche, organized probably about the close of the third decade of the century, had in 1853, 28 members; it now reports 56, but is practically inactive. Cocaigne in 1864 gave 13 members; it now reports 6. Both the other organizations at Richibucto and Big River, with promising fields about them occupied fifty years since, have now been abandoned.

Shediac in 1864 had 45 members; it now has 17; Point Monarque in 1863 is given at 74 members.

In 1839 there is a report of 1st St. Andrews, with 96 members, and 2nd St. Andrews with 18. In 1861 the St. Andrews church, (probably the 1st), gives 98 members. In 1865 they are reported as St. Andrews, Bayside, with 90 members, and 2nd St. Andrews with 49 members. Today we have them reported, 1st St. Andrews 60 members; 2nd St. Andrews 27; a declension of 27 members since 1839, and of 52 since 1865.

St. George is reported in 1839 as one organization with 332 members; in 1848 we have 1st St. George with 279 members, and 2nd St. George with 138; a total of 417 members. We now have reported on this ground 1st St. George 118 members; 2nd St. George 32, and Second Falls 112; a total of 262, showing a decline in our interest here of 155 members since 1848.

There is an organization reported in 1859 at 1st St. Patrick, having 50 members, of which as of many others I can now find no report. Scores of church names and missions thirty years since on our minutes have disappeared, some of course through change of organization or name, but too many of them because they have simply been allowed to die.

New Jerusalem church in 1859 had sixty-five members, and in 1864 sixty-six members; it now reports forty-seven members, and yet all around this old church lies a most inviting field for our efforts. It has been sadly neglected.

North branch, Oromocto, in 1839 is credited with twenty-seven members. In 1827 Elder David Harris came on a mission here. Twenty-one persons professed conversion at Rushagonish during his visit. He organized a church with twelve members, baptized at that time, and these were strengthened by the addition of eleven others not long after. He writes: "It is evident that the Spirit of the Lord is working on the minds of the people of Oromocto also." A church appears to have been formed here about this time, which for awhile suffered considerable declension. In the minutes of 1839 the following resolution appears concerning it:

"*Resolved* that Elder (T. W.) Saunders be requested to visit the church at the North Branch of the Oromocto, and request that church to forward a statement of its situation to the association next year."

For many years it continued to receive the attention of the denomination. In the report of the N. B. H. M. Society for 1861, under the heading of "Oromocto and Rushagonish," is the following:

"These stations have been occupied by Rev. John Williams for the last year. He reports having preaching stations at the Oromocto, and three or four at Rushagonish. He has met with a good deal of opposition from the enemies of the Baptist cause, but he is sustained by the promises and presence of the Master. He reports a Sabbath school in his district, and says the churches are doing the very best they can for his support &c."

In 1859 and 1864 the Oromocto church continues to be reported as having forty members. Rushagonish also in 1859 had twenty-five members. All that we now have in that section, after so much of effort in years gone by, is the New Maryland church, with thirty-seven members, and that covering but a portion of the original ground. That important half of Sunbury county, lying on the southwest bank of the St. John, and crossed by the C. P. railway through most of its interior, has by mere neglect become virtually lost to us as a denomination. For years no Baptist pastor has been settled here.

All this is saddening to think of. We ought by all means to resume evangelistic work among the 50,000 Acadians in this province. We ought too be looking up some of these early missions, now too long neglected, and to exert ourselves for their recovery. Instead of $100 a month coming into our treasury we should at least have $250.

Brethren, has it come to this, that with all our later opportunities and increase of material blessings we have lost the old-time fervor and self-denying spirit of the fathers, as evinced by them two generations ago? And is this state of things to continue?

Could that illustrious galaxy of the saints now in glory, who in former days trod these mortal shores, come back to us from the Spirit world, and look again upon the fields over which they wept and had much soul-wrestling with God, now lying scattered and desolate, what must be their rebuke to us, blessed as we are with a thousand fold the privileges they enjoyed, yet scarcely putting forth half the efforts in our northern districts displayed by them more than fifty years since, and what humiliation of soul ought indeed to be ours as we would attempt to estimate the little we have done in following the advanced position taken by them in days long since gone by, and under circumstances to which all our modern struggles and hardships furnish no true parallel.

Should the Master Himself in visible form pass to and fro through our midst as in the days of his flesh, and as he still does in his spiritual presence, observing with sadness the many losses to his cause by reason of our remissness, we can imagine how, while indeed pleased with the glorious victories of His truth in many quarters, he would be compelled again to call up to our minds the memorable reproof of old, "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." We seem to be living as though this were mere fancy, yet the Master above takes knowledge of our neglect of his kingdom here.

Brethren, we have been playing at Home Missions long enough; let us get back once more to apostolic methods and Christ-like giving. Never did any people have finer or more glorious opportunities. Let us bestir ourselves for the field spread out before us, and pick up the lost ends dropped by the fathers' hands in death long, long ago.

Let the Baptist hosts of this fair province arise as of old, turn their faces northward, and in the name of the God of Israel enter these regions in darkest New Brunswick, carrying with them post after post, and lighting up with heavenly lustre every home and hamlet from Shediac to Madawaska; then pausing at the lakes for a fresh baptism of the Spirit from above let us press our lines forward to the banks of the St. Lawrence and far up along that beautiful river, until joining hands with the men of Grande Ligne, and the brethren from Ontario coming down, we shall have parted the serried ranks of Romanism, and take Quebec, and with it all Canada for Christ by a conquest greater than that which Wolfe achieved, or worldly conquerors ever knew.

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