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“Hold fast the form of sound words.”—2d Timothy, i. 13.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863.

THE BAPTISTS OF ST. JOHN, N. B.

TWO SERMONS, ON THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, PREACHED IN GERMAIN AND BRUSSELS STREET CHURCHES, BY REV. I. E. BILL, AND PUBLISHED BY THE SPECIAL REQUEST OF THESE TWO CHURCHES.

SERMON I.
“The hand of the Lord hath wrought this.”—Jos. xii. 9.
In tracing the progress of Zion in any of her sections or combinations, it is well for us to acknowledge her entire dependence upon Divine agency. If rightly instructed, we shall be prepared at every stage of christian advancement to say, in the language of holy David, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth’s sake.” “Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.” “Paul plants, Apollus waters, God giveth the increase.” In no one district of the great spiritual domain has this primary truth been more distinctly unfolded than in the rise and progress of the Baptist cause in this city. When we contemplate how ministers have been raised up for this field, the success which has attended their labors, and the various modes by which the work of grace has gone forward, we have to confess, “The hand of the Lord hath wrought this.”

In my former discourse, you will remember that I brought the history of the Baptist Church in Saint John down to the time when Mr. Casewell first returned to England in 1836. After his return, Elder Samuel Bancroft was again invited to the pastorate of the Germain Street church for a time, and was affectionately esteemed for his sterling piety and sincere devotion to the cause of the Redeemer.

In 1838, Rev. Samuel Robinson, then pastor of the St. George Baptist Church, commenced his ministerial visits to St. John. Some eight years before this Mr. Robinson, by a very marked providence, had become connected with the New Brunswick Baptists. He was born in the North of Ireland, and was educated in the doctrines of the Presbyterian faith. He experienced religion in early life, and when quite a youth, commenced preaching in his own country as a Presbyterian. He emigrated first to the United States, and after a time came to this Province, settled in the County of Charlotte, and engaged in preaching the gospel to the people of that district. In the year 1830, Elder Thomas Ansley visited that district, found out Mr. Robinson, and was instrumental in directing him to an investigation of believers’ baptism, as taught in the New Testament. This examination resulted in impressing his mind with the idea, that there is no valid authority in the Scriptures for infant baptism, and that christian baptism is immersion in the name of the sacred Trinity, upon a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Mr. Ansley’s visit to St. George took place under peculiarly impressive circumstances. He was then pastor of the Baptist church at Bridgetown, N. S. In the early part of his ministry he had visited Charlotte County, and had been instrumental in producing a very powerful revival of religion. Long years had passed, and a great declension in spiritual things pervaded the place; but there were a few who cherished a pleasing remembrance of this revival visit of Mr. Ansley, and who were anxious to hear his voice once more proclaiming the word and testimony of Jesus Christ. Accordingly they wrote him a letter of invitation to make them a visit. The good man received it as a message sent from God. His wife was very unwilling that he should go; but the more he prayed for divine direction the deeper the impression that he had work to do in the County of Charlotte. Full of this idea, he came over and lifted up his voice trumpeted, and a wide-spread religious inquiry immediately followed.

The man of God felt that he had a special message to Mr. Robinson. He accordingly sought him out and delivered it. The saintly appearance of the Evangelist, the solemnity of his address, and the fervency of his prayers, made a deep impression upon the mind of his young Presbyterian brother. By the suggestion of a friend, it was arranged for Mr. Ansley to preach in the neighborhood. Mr. Robinson attended, and as the service proceeded, the preaching, so simple, so unctious, inspired the latter with strange and powerful emotions. He had never heard the like before; he felt his heart drawn towards the venerable preacher with a strong religious affection, and ere he was aware, the mantle of the old Elijah had fallen upon the young Elisha. Still he had no idea of becoming a Baptist. Mr. Ansley took leave of him and his family, not expecting to see them again, and had proceeded many miles on his journey homeward, when he felt himself arrested by the Spirit of God, and constrained to return and deliver a solemn charge to Mr. Robinson regarding his future course. As soon as he entered his house he told him that his God had sent him back to tell him that he was to embrace Baptist sentiments, and take charge of that vast district of country as a Baptist preacher, and that when he had examined thoroughly the word of God on the subject, and had made up his mind, to send for him and he would come over and baptize him. Having delivered his message, he again took his leave and left for home. All this appeared strange to Mr. Robinson, but it took such hold of his conscience that he was led prayerfully to examine the New Testament as he had never done before, in reference to his duty regarding this matter; and the result you all know. He sought in vain to find a plea for infant sprinkling in the inspired directory, and was constrained, contrary to all his previous training and present wishes, to confess that the study of the New Testament had made him a Baptist. In due time he wrote for Mr. Ansley to come over and baptize him. The old servant of God received the letter with a joyful heart, and hastened to fulfill his promise. When he arrived at St. George, Mr. Robinson, not quite willing to meet the reproach to which his change of sentiments and his public baptism would expose him, was half inclined to receive the ordinance in a retired place; but to this suggestion the apostolic Ansley would not listen for a moment. The more public the more favorable to instruct the people. To him scoffs, reproaches, and persecutions were of small moment. His motto was, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Accordingly the baptism of the Presbyterian preacher, converted to the Baptist faith, was appointed to take place at St. David’s, a most central position. The baptismal day arrived, and crowds flocked from all sections of the country, and the venerable administrator came to the discharge of his duty invested with the majesty of the Spirit’s power. He was in the reformation tide, and his words went home to the hearts of the people with irresistible impressiveness. The administrator, the candidate, saints, sinners, friends, foes, all, all felt “Surely God is in this place.”

It was during these evangelistic excursions through the County of Charlotte that Mr. Ansley sought out our esteemed Bro. A. D. Thomson, and placed his stamp upon him as a minister of the Lord Jesus. The youthful Thomson felt that it was the call of God to his soul, and he, too, must hasten with the gospel message, and proclaim it to a lost world.

Having accomplished this great work, Mr. Ansley’s course on earth was done. He took ill, and was at once impressed with the idea that the time of his departure was at hand. He was far away from the wife of his youth, from his sons and his daughters, and from his church that dearly loved him, and that he loved in return with all the strength of ministerial affection; but, his God was with him. It was an awfully solemn moment. Those who looked to him as their spiritual father, Messrs. Robinson, Thomson, and many others, gathered about him, and from

that chamber of death the man of God, feeling that he was upon the threshold of eternity, addressed to them words of warning, and messages of love and grace, which made impressions as enduring as the attributes of heaven or the anthems of the redeemed.

It was through such a process as this that our brethren Robinson and Thomson were prepared for the great work assigned to them in the County of Charlotte, and that the former was ultimately qualified to engage heart and soul in building up the Baptist cause in the City of St. John. Intellectual culture is a most valuable handmaid to the workings of the Spirit in the soul of man, but we have to confess that no amount of secular education could possibly have supplied the place of this emphatically religious and ministerial training acquired, under the unctious administrations of the now glorified Ansley.

After the death of this revered Father, Mr. Robinson continued his labors as a Baptist minister in the County of Charlotte with distinguished success for some seven or eight years. The seed sown sprang up in all directions, and an abundant harvest was gathered in. As before remarked, in 1838 he commenced his visits to the City of Saint John, and he came in the “fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” The church in Germain Street had for some time been in a cold, divided and scattered state; but a change for the better was soon apparent, and the ministry of our brother was so acceptable, that in a short time it was found necessary to enlarge the accommodations for an addition of fifteen feet to the Chapel. This met the demand for sittings, and gave an opportunity to provide a Baptistery.

Soon after Mr. Robinson came, the restoration of several members who had been separated from the church by reasons of differences which had arisen, took place, with the distinct understanding that a second church should be formed. These brethren, therefore, who had been thus restored, received their dismissal, and by the advice of an ecclesiastical council, duly summoned, were formed into what was called the 2nd Baptist Church of Saint John. They proceeded and built a chapel, called different pastors, and for a time enjoyed prosperity, but owing to a combination of adverse causes, the movement did not permanently succeed.

September, 1838, the Germain Street church opened a correspondence with Elder Robinson and his church at St. George, on the subject of his permanent removal to Saint John. As might be expected, his people were unwilling to part with their pastor, but he accepted the call provisionally, and spent a large portion of 1838 and ’39 in the City, laboring with untiring energy and enlarged success. This he continued to do until, by the earnest solicitations of the people, combined with the blessing of God upon his ministry, he was convinced that it was his duty to accept the permanent pastorate of the church.

In January, 1840, a series of religious services were commenced by brethren C. Tupper and Robinson, which were attended with a signal blessing. Elder Tupper continued to labor in conjunction with Elder Robinson during the winter, and on April 19th, 1840, baptized, with others, Abraham Hunt, now, and for many years past, the esteemed and successful pastor of the 1st Baptist church, Cornwallis.

When Mr. Robinson decided to remove his family to the city, it became necessary to provide a residence for him. Accordingly, the church resolved to convert the small room on Germain Street, then used as a vestry, into a parsonage, and a committee was appointed to carry the plan into effect. Bro. S. Hersey took the principal charge of this arrangement, advanced the necessary means, had the building completed at the time appointed, and ready for the reception of the pastor, for which he received the cordial thanks of the church.

On the 9th of July, 1840, the house built by the 2nd Church was dedicated to the worship of God, and Elder David Harris was elected their pastor.

In 1841, a revival commenced in the Sabbath School of the Germain Street Church. A number of the school professed conversion and were baptized. The good work extended to the congregation, and several young men and maidens professed a new born faith.

On the 16th of May, 1841, the Carleton Branch was formed into a separate church.

During this year the vestry under the Germain Street Chapel was completed, and dedicated by appropriate services to the worship of God.

In 1842, Elder Theodore Harding arrived in the city to take pastoral charge of the 2nd Baptist Church. He and the pastor of Germain Street co-operated heartily together in promoting the good cause. They extended their labors to Carleton and Portland, with marked success. On the 21st of March the two pastors commenced a series of special meetings, with reference to the whole field of labor. Elder Harding preached from the passage, “O Lord, revive thy work.” The house was filled to overflowing, and so deep was the impression, that many of the congregation were bathed in tears. The meetings went forward at the different stations with deepening interest, and a general awakening took place. Many professed conversion, and requested baptism. On the 25th of March (which happened to be Good Friday), baptism was appointed at India Town; the day was beautiful for the season, and an immense congregation assembled to witness the administration. The people requested Father Harding to preach a sermon in the open air; he consented, and addressed the assembled multitude from the passage, “The spirit and the bride say come.” It was one of his most eloquent and powerful efforts; the people were filled and overpowered with the solemnities of the truth as it came fresh and warm from the lips of the venerable preacher, and hundreds of faces were suffused in tears. It was a day of mighty power. The sermon being ended, the candidates were conducted to the water side, and Elder Robinson immersed them (twenty in all), in obedience to the divine command. As in primitive days, the Holy Spirit descended upon the people, and the newly baptized went on their way rejoicing in the blessedness of redeeming love. That Good Friday can never be forgotten.

This good work spread its redeeming influences over Portland, Indiantown, and Carleton, as well as over the City proper; and, through the missionary labors of Elder James Walker, extended to Musquash, Grand Bay, and Red Head. A church was formed at Musquash consisting of some twenty members, and at Grand Bay twelve or fourteen persons were baptized by Elder Walker, and received into the Germain Street Church. There were weekly accessions by baptism for months in succession, and a rich harvest of souls was gathered into the spiritual garner. 1842 was indeed a year of refreshing from the Divine presence, and many were added to the church of such as shall be saved.

The commercial crisis of 1843 produced much financial embarrassment, and occasioned many removals on the part of church members; but the labors of the pastor were incessant, and the spirit of revival was enjoyed in some measure, though not to the same extent as in the past year.

The year 1845 was attended with no very signal manifestations of the Spirit’s power, but the church increased in religious vigor by the maintenance of a healthful discipline, and by unremitting efforts to promote the work of the Redeemer.

The year 1846 was regarded as one of singular barrenness to the church. Only one was added by baptism during the year, and the friends of Zion had to mourn over a general declension in spiritual things. On the 4th of April of this year, Deacon Jeremiah Drake departed this life in the 81st year of his age. Soon after the organization of the church, Mr. Drake was appointed Deacon. He was highly respected for his integrity of character and truly Christian deportment. In the infancy of the church he watched over its welfare with the intensity of a father’s love, and by his exhortations, prayers and godly example contributed largely to its growth and stability. His general intercourse with men was conducted on the strictest principles of verity and uprightness, and as such made the impression upon saint and sinner that he was a God-fearing man. He was greatly beloved by the church in life, and when he died devout men followed him to his burial, feeling that a good man had fallen in Israel.

This year the Association again held its anniversary in connection with the Germain Street church. On the Sabbath an interesting meeting was held in the open air in the neighbourhood of the present Bethel; then a most depraved section of the city. A crowd of people assembled, and Rev. G. F. Miles and others proclaimed to the people the messages of redeeming love. The word of truth was applied by the Spirit’s influence, and one very wicked man, the conductor of a playhouse, was convicted, and constrained to cry aloud for mercy. He subsequently professed conversion, and his place of awful wickedness became the house of prayer. Several were converted, and the worship of God permanently established in that section of the city.

In 1847, the cause was greatly revived, and twenty were added by baptism and fifteen by letter. A social meeting had been in progress for some time in a private room in Brussels street, attended by the pastor and other brethren. This year the church commenced the erection of the present Brussels street church. The present Bethel was also completed and opened for the worship of God, December the 12th. The dedication services were conducted by Rev. E. D. Verry, pastor of Portland church, aided by Rev. S. Robinson, pastor of Germain Street, and brother S. Todd and E. H. Duval. It was designed to be a free house open for the sailor, and for all of every class, who might be induced to come to hear the message of life.

It is worthy of note that the Bethel was erected on the very ground where a house once stood, occupied by a coloured sister belonging to the church, and for many years consecrated as a place of religious worship. Ministers, deacons and private Christians were accustomed for many years to assemble there weekly for devotional exercises, and continued to do so until this good sister was called to her rest above. How appropriate that the Bethel should be reared on this consecrated spot.

On the 14th of December of this year, Deacon Thomas Pettigall was called to his rest above. On the 17th his remains were taken into the chapel, where his voice had so often been heard in exhortation and prayer, and where appropriate service was conducted; after which he was followed to his final resting place, by mourning relatives and a numerous procession, wishing to pay this last tribute of respect to one greatly beloved and respected in life, and in death sincerely lamented. For thirty-seven years he had filled the office of Deacon of the Germain Street church. He in fact was one of its principal founders, and had stood firmly at his post not only when the sun of prosperity shone, but when clouds and darkness enwrapped the infant cause. When Zion progressed he rejoiced; when she retrograded he sorrowed. The church regarded him as its spiritual father and guide, and to his unblemished reputation, his uncompromising integrity, his full hearted benevolence, and unceasing devotion, may be attributed largely under God the success which attended the Baptist cause in this city. The words applied to Barnabas may be appropriately applied to Father Pettigall. “He was a good man; and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people were added unto the Lord.”

1848 was distinguished by the outpouring of the Spirit’s converting power. The gracious work commenced in the Sabbath School, under the superintendance of Bro. G. A. Garrison, in the month of March. On the 19th of March eight young persons, all teachers in the Sabbath School, presented themselves for baptism, were joyfully received by the church, and on the following Sabbath were baptized by the pastor, and inducted into the church. It was a day of special gladness and thanksgiving to pastor and people. The good work proceeded, and thirty-three in all were added by baptism during that year and sixteen by letter, twenty-five of the baptized belonged to the Sabbath School.

This year was signalized also by the completion and opening of the Brussels Street Baptist chapel. It was solemnly dedicated to the service of God on Lord’s day, October 1st, 1848. The venerated Joseph Crandal was expected to preach the morning sermon, but something interfered with his attendance, and the service was therefore conducted by Elder Robinson. At 3 o’clock, P. M., Father T. S. Harding preached the Dedication sermon, from 2nd Chronicles vi. 18, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built.” A very large attendance, and the sermon was one of peculiar appropriateness and power. The venerable preacher contrasted the present with the past; forty-six years had passed since he first visited the city. At that period there was no Baptist chapel in St. John, and no suitable place open for Baptist preaching. “But,” said Mr. Harding, “in contrasting that state of things with our present position we cannot but exclaim, ‘and what hath God wrought?’ The doings of this day were recorded in heaven, and Jehovah was in the midst of his people to show that he approved of the sacrifices which they had made, amid the embarrassments arising from years of commercial depression, to build a house to his name.

The church not being in circumstances to settle a pastor in the new house, they made temporary arrangements to obtain assistance from the ministers of Portland and Carleton churches.

The letter of the Germain Street church to the Association bearing date August 31st, 1849, refers to the time when Father Pettigall opened a prayer meeting in the city in 1808, with only three praying brethren to assist him, and says, “Since that period eight Baptist places of worship have been erected within the city of St. John and its environs, through the agency of the church which grew out of these feeble beginnings.” The most of these places were supplied at the time with the faithful preaching of God’s word.

term of one year, Rev. D. W. C. Dimock. This mission was attended with most beneficial results; but difficulties came in, and the Society became defunct. The additions this year were only five by baptism and eight by letter.

September 1st, 1849, the Western Association opened its anniversary in Brussels Street chapel. The introductory sermon was preached on Monday morning, from 1st Corinthians iii. 21-22-23, by Rev. Charles Surden. The session was one of deep interest.

About this time, Rev. J. D. Casewell arrived in the city from England. He was cordially greeted by his old friends, and to them he seemed providentially sent to assist the pastor, Elder Robinson, in supplying the two chapels. He was accordingly invited to perform this service until the May following, at the rate of \$400 per annum. This invitation Bro. Casewell accepted.

On the 2nd of December Bro. James DeMill, now Professor DeMill, of Acadia College, having been joyfully received as a candidate for the ordination at a previous conference, was baptized by the pastor and inducted into the church.

The plan of associate pastoral labor not working very satisfactorily, an important meeting was held by the church, at which a proposition was made, which had been prepared at a previous meeting in committee, to effect an amicable separation, and to organize a new church in Brussels Street.

The plan provided that the old name of the first Baptist church should be dropped, and that the two churches should take the name respectively of Germain Street and Brussels Street. The Brussels Street Church when organized should take the new house, and the Bethel with their incumbences, and Germain Street Church should retain the church building, and parsonage with their incumbences. To this was added the very important provision that Elder Robinson should be invited to assume the pastoral care of the new church. This proposition was fully discussed before a public meeting of the church, and was adopted by a majority of fifty-seven, against a minority of seventeen. At a subsequent meeting the details of separation were agreed upon, and the decision was carried into effect. It was understood that the members should be at perfect liberty to remain with the old church or have their letters to join the new, as they might choose.

On the evening of the same day the church in Germain Street, being left without pastor or deacons, assembled and made choice of Rev. J. D. Casewell for their pastor, and Brethren G. A. Garrison, Edward S. Barteau, Dr. Simon Fitch, and Manual Francis, as deacons. Elder Casewell and the deacons elect, acceded to the wishes of the church, and took their places accordingly. At the same meeting Bro. S. Hersey was appointed Treasurer, and Bro. G. A. Garrison was requested to continue his Clerkship. Between this period of separation and the meeting of the Western Association in the following September, 158 members in all took their letters and joined Brussels Street church. Seven were dismissed to unite with other churches, and two died, leaving the church with a membership of only 167 all told. This number was reduced by some twenty-seven members, who were not in full fellowship; so that the real number was 140. Thus while the Germain Street church had been remarkably successful in adding to her numerical strength by conversions and baptisms, and in sending out her sons and her daughters to plant flourishing interests in Carleton, Portland, and in Brussels Street, she was now left like the generous parent, who so divides his property as to settle his sons respectably, but who in the issue finds that he has retained but a small share for himself.

Elder Casewell had many warm admirers, and it was hoped that his splendid pulpit qualities would soon gather around him a large congregation. Hence, notwithstanding discouraging circumstances, the brethren and sisters took hold with a united determination to exert themselves to the utmost to build up the cause. Old debts were liquidated, and arrangements made for the support of the pastor. The burden of support fell pretty heavily upon a few, and considerable embarrassment was felt, but by united and persevering effort, the expenses were regularly met, and indications were favorable.

The additions for 1850, as reported to the Association, were nine by baptism, and three by letter.

In the month of March, 1851, revival indications were manifest, especially among the young. Special services were held by the pastor and brethren, and several professed conversion and were added to the church by baptism.

An attempt was made to revise the books of the church, and this revision resulted in the following report to the Association in September, 1851.

Added by baptism during the Association year 20, by letter 2, restored 1, added in all 23
Removals 18
Died 4
In all 107
Leaving the total number 197

During this year the health of Elder Casewell again became impaired, and to such an extent as at times quite disqualified him for the duties of the pulpit. The church esteemed and loved him, and were unwilling to part with him, but the interests of the cause seemed to call for a separation. This was intimated to the pastor, and resulted in his resignation. At the same time he took his letter of dismissal.

Our Brother Casewell spent some time in travelling in the United States, where his ministrations were well received. He finally accepted an invitation to the pastoral care of the church in Fredericton, where he labored for some time with much acceptance. Ultimately, however, his health