



ADDRESS OF WELCOME

BY REV. A. M. ROSS, PASTOR, JACKSON BAPTIST CHURCH



IT becomes my pleasant duty in behalf of the people of Jackson, and especially the members of the Baptist church, to extend to these delegates and visitors a most hearty welcome into our midst. We are grateful for the chain of circumstances that brings so large a part of this centennial program to the very door of our Jackson people. It is eminently fitting that you are assembled here in the home of the church which comes nearer being a lineal descendant of the old Bethel church than any other. We are glad you are here because of what you have in store for us and because of the significance of this occasion.

It is a thing highly appropriate that Baptists should take time for a centennial celebration, and climb like Moses of old, to the top of Pisgah's lofty height and view their promised land. Then, too, I am persuaded that Moses, while on that enchanted eminence, turned from the scenes of Canaan, and reviewed that Wilderness journey with its wonderful history. To-day, while Baptists and their friends are assembled on this auspicious occasion, to review their glorious achievements during the first century of their efforts in Missouri, may we not let our retrospective vision sweep back across the centuries to view for a moment the beginnings of Baptist history, when that man sent from God, eloquent and mighty, turned the wilderness of Judea into a scene of momentous activities? Since that epoch, the world has had to reckon with Baptist doctrine and Baptist thinking. From the days when John the Baptist began his preaching in the wilderness until this good hour, we have never been without a wilderness in which to preach. Then, too, it should be remembered that our liberties to preach the Gospel were not always co-extensive with the wilderness, but full many a time were confined to the narrow limits of dens and caves in the mountains. It shall be a glad day in the world's history, when all patrons of our doctrine shall in all parts of the earth and at all times, be unshackled in their mission to set forth the teachings of Christ.

It is a glorious thing that we assemble here to recount our blessings and take stock of our heritage in matters concerning our faith and what it has wrought, No century of Baptist history equals in its achievements that which was accomplished by the Christians of the first century A. D., who were all Baptists. To claim that all Christians in this century were Baptists, may appear to some, an extravagant statement, but it is truly a matter of claiming what belongs to us. In obedience to the exalted commands

of their Lord, those Baptist Apostles of the first century began at Jerusalem the herculean task of bringing the world to Christ. They preached a powerful gospel and it wrought a wonderful effect. And when the Lord wanted to give to the world the New Testament, every man that he used in writing the entire Book was a Baptist, This being so, it ought not to be regarded such a strange thing that reading the New Testament is a sure way to make Baptists, and, that they outstrip the world in their interpretation of the Book.

I shall quickly conclude these historic suggestions lest I trespass upon some field of thought covered by the chosen speakers for the day.

This afternoon, you are to visit the site of old Bethel church. There you will see the graves of some of the pioneers in God's Kingdom west of the Mississippi river. There your feet will tread upon holy ground. Let this centennial occasion carry you back to the days when those sturdy pioneers met down there in the rude log house where the Lord God was pleased to be one in their midst and make the place holy. It was there that they found the source of strength and courage for their pilgrimage. Like Israel of old, there, they received the manna from heaven which preserved their lives while they crossed the wilderness and made it possible to bequeath unto this and succeeding generations, a land which, indeed, flows with milk and honey—a Canaan not beyond the Jordan, but beyond the great Mississippi river.