



INTRODUCTION

BY J. C. MAPLE, D. D.



THE year 1906 marks the beginning of the second century of Baptist work in Missouri. Last July the Cape Girardeau Baptist Association celebrated the centennial of the organization of Bethel church on the 19th day of that month. Throughout the state a deep interest was felt in giving suitable attention to this anniversary. The General Association, therefore, decided to hold the annual convocation for 1906 at the city of Cape Girardeau. On Wednesday of this assembly week the entire body, joined by many who were interested in the historic occasion, went by rail to Jackson, where they were joined by a great throng from all parts of Cape Girardeau county, and other parts of Southeast Missouri and the program was duly observed as had been previously arranged.

Because of the absence of H. E. Tralle his paper was not read, but appears in this book as it deserves. All of the addresses were felt to be of such high merit, that the call for their publication in permanent form was unanimous. In obedience to that call this book is offered to the public. That it will prove of great interest to the present-day readers admits of no doubt, and that, in years to come, it will prove of inestimable value to the student of history, requires no spirit of prophecy to foretell.

It is not the purpose of the introduction to commend the papers printed in the book. Each one carries its own commendation, in the richness of thought expressed, and the admirable way in which it bears witness to the work of our fathers.

With no wish to repeat what has been so well told, yet with a desire to emphasize some things done, by our forerunners, the writer yields to the desire of his coworkers, and writes this prelude to the book.

In taking a general survey of the work of those first upon our field with the Gospel to preach, and the Lord Jesus to glorify in proclaiming the message he gave, we will see that they

ESTABLISHED CHURCHES.

They did not stand alone. They soon found both men and women, who were willing to be enrolled among the servants of their risen Lord. So soon as the scattered sheep could be gathered into one place, they were glad to heed the call of their Redeemer and form a church. Each one felt the need of human fellowship. They had left at the old home, many who were dear to them because of the "tie that binds" all Christian hearts to those who love the common Lord. They knew they would not be true to the one Lord unless they assembled, and thereby reassured each other that they were his people. Fellowship with the Trinity is indeed the most exalted privilege conferred upon any son or daughter of humanity.

Yet in all our struggles with the forces of evil within us and without, each one who tries to serve the Lord feels the need of companionship with others of like precious faith.

There was therefore a twofold motive impelling them to organize for greater work than could be done by single individuals. In fact, in all good endeavors, union intensifies and enlarges individuality; and greatly increases its potentiality.

In order to show that spirit of obedience that is always a characteristic of a saved soul, and to embody in an efficient way the strength that grows from a combination of harmonious spirits they must come into covenant with their Lord and with each other to "keep house" for the Great Master. Obedience to the law, and love of companionship, prompted them to unite in the formation of churches as the central force from which they could show their faith in the Teacher and the lessons he had taught by his gracious words, and his ever-living examples. The very fact that the Apostle Paul was called to be Jesus Christ's (see Romans 1:6, Revised Version) had brought him in debt "to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise," (Rom. 1:14). When one has received the Lord into his heart and life, he is henceforth under bonds to use all his power to save a lost world. These people may have held many unscriptural ideas, but they had something of the propulsive force of the Love of Christ.

THE WIDE SCOPE OF THEIR WORK.

They builded more wisely than they knew. With them the supremacy of the Christ and the inerrancy of the holy Scriptures, were firmly established. No doubts upon these matters found room in their hearts, and they had no words to express any thoughts that looked in that direction. They knew not how to establish the fact of their love for him "who died for them and rose again," save by acts of obedience to his commands. Had some one presented to them an exposition of Eph. 4:12 and Col. 1:18, showing as Dr. Yeaman often did in his great sermon upon "The Church the Reincarnation of the Christ," they would have feared lest it was making too free with the person of Jesus, yet so soon as they realized that the Holy Spirit had really taught this as a truth, they would have delighted to know that one whom they so loved was thus ever with them in his own chosen way. It would have made the fellowship of the Church more sweet had they fully realized that it is the body of the Christ.

That they knew they were a part of the Kingdom of Heaven, that they were subjects of the King Immortal and Invisible, does not admit of a doubt. When riding in the wilderness, alone, with no companion but the invisible Redeemer, they often sang with overflowings of soul their songs of triumph. Some of them kept the Bible in hand and memorized whole chapters so that when the light in the cabin was too dim to read they could repeat the words of inspiration for the instruction of the families who so gladly entertained the Lord's servant. The central thought in all they did was that they might be humble instruments in glorifying the Lord Jesus. They told their own experience of his loving grace in their hearts and repeated over and over again the story of his death upon the cross. They drew this picture so vividly that often both speaker and hearers were bathed in tears. Men and women saw the bleeding Victim as in his dreadful agony he gave up his life, that the sinner might live. And as the preacher cried out piteously, "it was my sins that nailed him to the cross; my sins that overwhelmed his pure soul with such unutterable agony," many of the hearers cried out "yes, *my sins!*" And then came, often even "boisterously," we would say in our staid notions of strict propriety, expressions of grief and manifestations of the sorrow that accompanies true repentance, but is to be differentiated from the complete abandonment of sin that is the essential feature of gospel repentance.

It was this unselfish and unrequited and widely distributed labor that laid so deep and broad the foundation upon which the present generation builds with such wonderful success.

These people were no more ashamed of the ordinances of the Church of the Lord Jesus than they were of the Lord himself. That which was good enough for the Lord Jesus to submit to, and wise enough for him to command to be observed in perpetuity, had for them no dread. They were sure that what Jesus did in the River of Jordan he commanded, as perpetual, upon the mountain in

Galilee, when he gave the Great Commission as recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew. They never thought of "*tinkering*" with the words they found in the book, but only to let them stand, every jot and tittle the Holy Spirit had placed there, and to mean just what the Lord Himself wanted them to mean. They could say of every page of the inspired volume, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

And this faith gave them power that will continue to amaze the "worldly wise," as long as the memory of their work continues. The object of this volume is to preserve the memory and to keep from oblivion the noble deeds of our Baptist ancestors upon Missouri soil. This writer must here say that he is fully convinced that the impulse so widely planted in the hearts of the present-day workers, and here so well executed, to preserve the record of these early struggles and triumphs, is prompted by the Lord himself. He would not have his own people forget to honor those who loved him with such singleness of heart, and served him with all their powers, and then went home to receive a reward, from his own hand, having in this life endured all manner of hardship and received only the reward of a quiet conscience and the joy of the Divine presence.

CRUDE INTERPRETATIONS.

With all their love for the one book, these early preachers sometimes greatly mistook the meaning of the simplest words.

One good brother made, as he supposed, a careful study of the words, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." He pronounced the word wrongly and therefore gave to it a wrong meaning. He was quite sure he was right in saying these people were those who had no tower into which to flee for protection in time of danger. They were without any refuge when the storms should beat upon them and the enemy should encompass them because they were "untowered." He was teaching no dangerous error in claiming that the unbeliever was sure to find himself unprotected in the day when all shall stand before the Judge. Ignorance is certainly not to be praised, nor should any one be encouraged to remain without a knowledge of the meaning of words in his own mother tongue, but it does seem that in some way those who love the Lord Jesus Christ are kept from advocating those theories that imperil their faith or endanger their moral standing.

I heard one man on two separate occasions quote the words "just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined," as a part of the Bible; yet he did not get angry when told the words were not found in the sacred writings, nor did he in quoting them do more than try to enforce the importance of teaching the children the truths of "holy writ."

If we write truthfully of the pioneers, we must refer to another fact. Some of them became hobby-riders. They seized upon some of the teachings of the Bible and seemed fully possessed with the idea that they had in these few points all the Scriptures contained. It made no difference what part of the Scriptures they blundered upon—for they opened the Bible at random and read what their eyes first rested upon, and being assured that it was a sin for a man to study his sermons, they found in every text the doctrine of unconditional election, fore-ordination and predestination taught, and felt sure they were vindicating the way of God among men, in finding such lessons there. They had some skill in "spiritualizing" every part of the Bible. It was all to them a series of allegories. They knew nothing of it as history and felt a great pity for a preacher that could not find the few doctrines in their narrow system of theology in any verse, whether it be found in a genealogical table or in the Psalms or the Sermon on the Mount. That the merciful and allwise God did use these men for some good purpose, our faith may compel us to admit. But that they made the work of those who sought to arouse the zeal of the laity to earnest effort and a liberal support of the cause of Christ, far more difficult than it would otherwise have been, is an established fact. Here were found some of the tribulations through which the advocates of Missions had to pass. This fact, however, only kindled their enthusiasm and trained them to use tact and piety in meeting the issues of their day.

These men were often exceedingly jealous of any one who came among them, who had enjoyed the

advantages of early college training. Human learning was supposed by them to turn men away from the true faith. They seemed to doubt the possibility of any one being possessed of a classical education, and yet be a Christian.

But with all this ignorance, and prejudice, they had great love for the Lord Jesus, and when brought into contact with educated men, and had learned that these men like themselves felt deeply their dependence upon the sovereign grace of God, and could from their hearts exclaim:

"I am a poor sinner and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is all in all,"

they often began to see that there was yet much to learn and became far more humble and useful ministers of the Gospel.

It was, after all, greatly to the credit of their minds and hearts that they were willing to do so much that the next generation of preachers should far surpass them in their preparation for the work of the ministry.

Let us of this day, as far as is consistent with integrity, forget their foibles and pass over the follies of those who blazed the way in the wilderness for us, and delight in the work they did. With no greater opportunities than they had, we might fall behind them in effective work.

They were faithful up to the full extent of their knowledge. If they did seem to despise that which we know is necessary to great usefulness, yet they had not been brought into contact with those people who had been blessed with educational advantages. They interpreted the words "knowledge puffeth up" as applicable to learning of every kind. Had they made a full study of the priceless value the Word of God, both in the Old Testament and the New, places upon knowledge, they would have learned that the more one knows of revelation, the less he sees in human wisdom as a basis of true life.

The writer of this paper once assisted in the ordination of a pious man, who felt called of God to preach. There was present a feeble remnant of that age when men believed hard study was an injury to genuine piety. From this lingering remnant came a question to the candidate implying that constant study was prompted only by human ambition, and that the only purpose of the student of the Scriptures was to make a reputation among men. At once a decision was reached that the text for the sermon—for I knew I would be called upon to preach the ordination sermon—should be "Study to show thyself approved unto God" etc. (2 Tim. 2:15.) Between the time when this purpose seized hold upon the preacher and the hour for the sermon, much concentrated thought was given to preparation. Of course the necessity of study to secure God's approval was urged with whatever of strength the preacher possessed. In a somewhat intimate acquaintance with that brother for a number of years following this event, the subject of hard and earnest study of the One Book, never received from him any word of condemnation, at least not in the presence of this writer. Perhaps we ought to say in justice to these men, who did labor with sincere desire to advance the Kingdom of the Christ, that they did the best they knew. Had there been at the beginning of the century just past, even a few teachers of wider knowledge and larger attainments, with tact to get close to these men, many of their great mistakes would have been avoided.

THE LATE PERIOD.

If we will now move ahead and take up the half way period between 1806 and 1906, we shall find a very different state of affairs. We had then our college in its early beginnings. Many other schools had been established and a body of vigorous and intelligent men were both sowing and reaping upon the enlarged and ever enlarging fields of our great state. We had then our A. P. Williams, the able and profound expositor; E. S. Thomas, the accomplished linguist and accurate thinker, who in the use of perfect English, never had a superior and seldom an equal; and there was Dr. Wm. Thompson, the greatest orator the state has every possessed—but why mention names?

When the present workers came upon the field they followed a roll of giants. They were the men whom God created for that time. All over the state, even among those who were not Baptists, a sentiment favorable to our principles had been planted. They had, except in a very few localities, uprooted the false idea that Baptists were an illiterate people. Not only had they removed many

prejudices against our people, but they had planted the principles that distinguish us from other denominations so deeply in the minds of the masses that those who followed them found a large portion of the population ready to become Baptists when an opportunity came to them. Much of the reaping of this day is from the good seed of the Kingdom sown by these able and consecrated men.

THE COMING CENTURY.

I have no desire to claim the gift of prophecy, but with the present outlook, I can but proclaim my faith in a glorious future for Missouri Baptists. We have, as a people, learned to attend to our own business. We are not trying to manage the affairs of other denominations of Christians. We are willing that they shall do all the good they can. But our mission is to save the lost and then aid them in coming into the full measure of their freedom by becoming the advocates of the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We are satisfied so long as we stand upon the inspired teaching of our divine Master and follow in the footsteps of the inspired Apostles. If it should appear to others that we are stubborn in not yielding to any persuasion, in which we cannot see the teachings of Him who is head over all things unto the church, which is his body, we will bear the reproach and go on singing:

"How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent word."

If it should please the Master to delay his coming, until Missouri Baptists shall celebrate the opening of another century of work in this state, then with the joy of heaven increased thereby, we will look down from above upon a vastly increased band of loving toilers, still advocating the same principles, still triumphing in the name of the same Lord, and still moving onward to yet greater victories.