A HISTORY OF THE CANSO BAPTIST CHURCH.

Prepared by Deacon C. H. Whitman and read by him at the Jubilee Celebration, August, 16th, 1896.

On Sunday, the sixteenth day of August, 1846, the Canso Baptist church was organized. It was a very modest beginning. Eight persons constituted the original membership. Their names were: Reuben Cohoon, Henry Gruber, Mrs. Henry Gruber, Sarah Bigelow, Matilda Publicover, Jeremiah O'Hara, Lucy Freeman, and Charlotte Wilt. All but the last named have passed away. She, as Mrs. Jacob Whitman, is still with us but in feeble health.

We are told in the record of the church that the new chapel, the present vestry, was opened for public worship on that day, the Rev. James Stephens preaching a sermon from the 7th verse of the 122nd Psalm: "Peace be within the walls"; and the Rev. Mr. Hobbs from Country Harbour, who afterward went to New Zealand, took a part in the exercises of the day. The record goes on to say that "immediately after the service they proceeded to organize the said church, composed of persons who had previously been baptized upon a profession of their faith in Christ." The necessary officers were chosen, and the Lord's Supper was dispensed. Reuben Cohoon was appointed deacon. It does not appear who filled the office of clerk, or what other offices were appointed.

Previous to this the Congregationalists were the only organised body of Protestant Christians in the community, and the religious life of the place had been largely fed through that communion, which had a considerable number of adherents. It had been visited, however, by a number of Baptist ministers. As early as 1818, that devoted servant of Christ, Thomas Ansley, who went about the land in the power of the Spirit, preaching Christ, visited Canso. In his journal we find an entry as follows: "Monday, September 7th, I took passage with a Mr. Hearty to Canso. I arrived about sunset at the house of Mr. A. Whitman. The Lord be praised for bringing me to this house. The family wer eat tea when I came in; and in returning thanks I could but say, 'Peace be to this house.' As a number of the neighbors were in, and stopped till after prayers, I read, lectured on the chapter, and prayed; and it was a most affecting time."

The Rev'd Richard McLearn was another of those saintly men, to whom the Baptist denomination of these Provinces owes so much, who visited Canso in those early days. About 1832, while on an extended missionary tour through the Eastern part of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, this earnest servant of God visited Canso, and the account of his labors, here and elsewhere, as given in his journal, is exceedingly interesting. He tells of one conference meeting held here, beginning at eight o'clock in the evening and continuing till one o'clock in the morning, at which one-half of the professors had not an opportunity to speak. Several persons were baptised at this time but no church was formed.

Among other Baptist preachers who found their way to Canso about this period were David Nutter, Joseph Dimock, Anthony Dimock, Hezekiah Hill, Richard Cunningham, William Burton and John Whidden. It is recorded of David Nutter that he organised a church here, but the statement would seem to be incorrect. They all sowed good seed, however, and laid the foundation for the spiritual building which was subsequently to be raised.

We who live in more favored times can but imperfectly realise what Canso was in those early days. Steam communication either by land or water was unknown, and even the roads would scarcely be called roads today. Communication with the outer world was accomplished by means of boat or vessel, or if the journey was made by land carriages were unknown, and the traveller was obliged to travel on foot or in the saddle. The population was sparse and the people poor. There were no public schools maintained by taxation, such as we have today, and the educational advantages enjoyed were exceedingly limited. Not many could afford to pay the fees necessarily demanded, and the whole educational equipment was such as would not be tolerated today. The site of the present noble building in which the young people of Canso are taught was a forest of thick trees, and the humble school room of that day would be thought entirely inadequate now. The people enjoyed but few social advantages, and their opportunities for acquiring the culture and refinement which come through free intercourse with the world, were necessarily very limited. Still, they tried to make the best use possible of the means within their reach, and if we, today, live under better conditions and enjoy greater privileges it is largely due to the self-denial and effort of those who went before. "Other men labored, and we are entered into their labors." They lived simple, earnest lives, and in zeal and faith and capacity for endurance put us to the blush upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure,
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

These patient, obscure workers for God rest from their labors, but their works do follow them, and we are reaping the harvest for which they sowed the seed, oftentimes with tears.

On the Sunday following the organization of the church, two others, Eunice Kerby, now our sister Mrs. Metre Swaine, and Catharine Malay, now our sister Mrs John Matthews, were received for membership, and baptised the following Sunday by missionary Stevens. On Saturday, October 30th, of the same year, at a conference meeting held at Deacon Reuben Cohoon's five persons who had previously been baptised were received into membership, namely: Mr. and Mrs. James Harrington, John Jeffry, Mrs. Isaac Bears and Mrs. Reuben Cohoon. And so the church grew. Mr. Stevens did not remain long, probably not longer than the first summer. The people were poor, and the flock but a little one, and the support of a pastor was more than they could undertake. To this day, however, the loving ministrations of Mr. Stevens are kindly remembered.

About January, 1850, the Rev. Anthony Martell, then a young man, just beginning his ministry, took the pastorate of the church and during that winter a very extensive revival was the result of his labors. During the winter of 1850 and the two following years, about a hundred and fifty were added to the church. A good many of these were residents of Crow Harbor, Phillips Harbor and Half Island Cove, and were subsequently dismissed to form the Crow Harbor church. A goodly number, however, were residents of Canso, and for many years subsequently were among the most faithful supporters of the cause of God here. Some of them are with us to this day, "but some have fallen asleep." During the second winter of Mr. Martell's pastorate the church met with a serious loss in the death of its first deacon, Reuben Cohoon, the result of a distressing accident. Deacon Cohoon was hauling timber, and by some means fell begeath the sled, which passing over him, crushed out his life. The team came home unattended, and the lifeless body was subsequently found where the team had left it after dragging it some distance. Deacon Cohoon was a man of more than ordinary piety, and the influence of his earnest life is still felt here. The loss to the little church was a serious one, but it was God who took him. The sad event occured Feb. 14th, 1851.

Mr. Martell's pastorate extended over about four years till November 1854, and for the next three years the church had no regular pastor, though occasionally a travelling minister or missionary broke the bread of life to the people. Rev. J. C. Cogswell visited the place in 1855, and baptised two sisters who united with the church. The Rev. J. C. Hurd came to the pastorate in the autumn of 1855. His ministry was blessed by some conconversions, nine or ten members being added to the church. Bro. Hurd was specially active as a temperance reformer, and his addresses in aid of that reform, delivered in the little old school house, which at that time was the only building we had in which to hold other than religious services, are fresh in the memory of some who are with us now. He was an eloquent speaker, full of force and fire, and there is no doubt that his influence was helpful. The cause of Temperance has made considerable advance all over the land since then. Mr. Hurd remained about three years. He was but a young man when he came here, but he has long since gone to his reward, and his sweet, gentle wife as well.

The next minister to labor here was the Rev. Manson Bigelow. He was never settled as pastor of the church, but made frequent and prolonged visits, and there can be no doubt that much good resulted from his labors. His preaching was not eloquent or cultured, but God was with him in his work, and his success was greater than that of many men of larger opportunites and more thorough training. During the period in which the church enjoyed the occasional ministrations of Manson Bigelow, the Rev. John Miller became pastor, and remained about three years. The Rev. T. H. Porter became pastor in the end of the year 1861, and continued till the early part of 1863. From May until August, 1863, Bro. J. Moser, licentiate, preached the word to us, and in the autumn of 1863, Bro. H. J. Gesner, licentiate, from Sydney, came to us and remained until the following February, when failing health compelled him to return to Sydney where, after a period of intense suffering he was called home. During June and July 1864, brother J. Coombs, licentiate, preached to us, and in the autumn of that year Bro. J. Moser visited us again and remained for six months.

On the 9th day of July, 1865, Rev. D. A. Steele entered upon the pastorate of the church, and remained with us until the autumn of 1867, and his labor was not in vain. During this period, March 11, 1866, sister Maria Norris, now Mrs. Armstrong, whose missionary labors have been so blessed to the churches and to the heathens, was baptized and joined the church.

In October, 1868, Rev. A. W. Barss became pastor and remained till the autumn of 1872. During his pastorate in 1870, the first Woman's Missionary Aid Society in the Maritime Provinces, was organized in connection with the church through the efforts of sister Maria Norris. Two hundred dollars were guaranteed toward the support of Miss Norris for the first year, and one hundred dollars for each subsequent year of her connection with our Foreign Missionary Board. Our missionary zeal seems to have reached high water mark on this occasion. It is to be regretted that the zeal and enthusiasm with which we began have been allowed to flag.

On June 19, 1873, George W. Thomas, licentiate, commenced his labors with the church, and on the 13th of May, 1874, Brother Thomas was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry as pastor of the church, in which office he remained till September 1st, 1876, when he left for Newton theological institution for further study.

Bro. W. H. Robinson, licentiate, labored with the church for a year, beginning Sept. 1st, 1897, and was succeeded by Bro. William McGregor, who labored from November 11th, 1877, to August 1878. During August and September of that year Bro. Slocum, a theological student from the United States occupied the pulpit with much acceptance, and at the end of that time returned to his studies. In October, 1878, Rev. A. W. Barss, resumed the pastorate and continued till September 1880, when he removed to St. Margarets Bay. It was during Bro. Barss' pastorate, October 19th, 1879, that Bros. Abraham N. Whitman, Harris Kirby, and David Barss were publicly set apart and ordained as deacons of the church by the laying on of hands, deacons H. R. Cunningham, of Guysboro, and King of Antigonish, assisting. Deacons Whitman, Kerby and Barss had filled the office of deacon for some time previously.

Rev. F. O. Weeks was the next pastor, from September 1882, to June 1883, and was followed by Walter Barss, who preached to us in July and August of that year.

Rev. James Scott, formerly of the Methodist ministry, became pastor September 20, 1883, and was ordained to the Baptist ministry Oct. 16th of that year. Mr. Scott remained pastor of the church till the fall of 1886 and was followed by the Rev. P. S. McGregor who labored with the church from January 1st, 1887, to March 15th, of the same year, and was succeeded by the Rev. F. G. Harrington, who remained for two and a half months, beginning March 20th. The Christian Endeavor society was organised at this time by Bro. Hannington. The Rev. H. B. Smith began his labors as pastor June 12th, 1887, was ordained to the ministry at the meeting of the Eastern Association held at Little River, Cumberland county, on the 9th of September of that year, and remained with the church until May 23rd, 1890, having accepted a call to the Springhill church. Under the pastorate of Bro. Smith, in 1887 the present church edifice was erected and completed in the following year at a total cost including furnishing of about six thousand dollars. The Eastern Association met with the church in the summer of 1888, and the new house was dedicated to the service of God at that time. In the same year Deacon Harris Kerby left us for the home above. Without giving him much warning the Lord took him to the more perfect service.

At the close of Mr. Smith's pastorate Rev. A. Martell, who had been pastor of the church in the early days, offered to supply the pulpit until a pastor could be secured, writing from Newton, Mass., where he then resided. His offer was accepted, and he occupied the pulpit from May 30th, 1890, to Feb. 8th, 1891, when Rev. F. O. Weeks, a former pastor, resumed the pastorate and remained with us till the spring of 1892. He was succeeded by Bro. A. A. Shaw, licentiate, who supplied the pulpit from about the first of July, 1892, to the autumn of 1893. The Rev. W. H. Robinson preached for three Sabbaths in November and on the 26th of November, 1893, the Rev. M. P. Bowie assumed the pastorate, the connection lasting till March, 1895. Bros. S. C. Cook and C. W. Whitman were elected deacons Feb. 7th, 1894. Deacon Abraham N. Whitman was called home, Jan. 16, 1894. Like Deacon Kerby he had but little warning, but the call did not find him unprepared.

Mr. Bowie was succeeded by the Rev. F. H. Beals, who came to us from the church in Hebron, Yarmouth county in May, 1895, and his wise and kindly ministry is still given to the church.

With the time at our disposal we have not been able to give more than a hurried record of the pastorates since the church's organization. The question may appropriately be asked, what has the record of the church been? Has its history been one of success or failure? Has its pathway been as the shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day, or were its first days its best days, and its subsequent history one of failure and defeat? Has it been like a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid or has it lived but to make religion contemptible, and put the crucified Lord to an open shame? We think that it cannot be shown that the Canso Baptist church has been altogether a failure. It has had its dark days, days of failure and weakness, but there have been progress and growth as well. It has maintained the public worship of God. It has stood for the old truths and the old paths, and many who are now in Heaven, owe their saving knowledge of gospel truth to the faithful presentation of that truth given from the pulpit and in the Sunday school. It has sent out some good, earnest workers for God, whose influences where they have gone has been for truth and righteousness. May we not hope that what has been done has been but the laying of the foundation of a larger work, and that the coming year will be marked by an ingathering of souls, a building up of God's cause here and around about us, that will prove that the labors and sacrifices of past years were seed-sowing for an abundant harvest. The time is short for us. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we go. Let us be diligent and faithful and God will bless us and our work for him.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, AND UNIVERSALISM.

BY REV. N. S. BURTON, D. D.

It is claimed for the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, as popularly held, that it implies the final salvation of all men, and those who reject the doctrine charge it with involving this as a logical consequence. I do not propose to enter the lists on either side of the question whether the Scriptures represent God as the Father of all men, but it seems to me pertinent to inquire whether any true conception of the relation of parent and child, that can be conceived as existing between God and man, affords any presumption in favor of Universalism. It has been said, as truthfully as wittily, that the modern popular doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is in fact the doctrine of the papahood of God, that its conception of God corresponds to a petted and spoiled child's conception of a weak and doting father.

Jehovah asked of his ancient people: "If I be a Father, where is my honor?" The claim that God is the Father of all men must be maintained, if at all, without destroying his honor. Fatherhood must be consistent with impartial rectitude and universal benevolence and spotless holiness. God being conceived of as impartially righteous as well as impartially loving, will his fatherhood of men be a guaranty of the final salvation of all men?

It will not be claimed that sonship makes sin less sinful. Rather if God be our Father, our sin of disobedience and our aversion to his holiness are the more unnatural and inexcussible. Absalom's sin of treason and rebellion and usurpation was not the less but the greater because the king whom he sought to dethrone was his father. But will not God deal more leniently with us when we sin, because we are his own children? No argument is needed to prove that God will deal mercifully with sinners, whether he be our Father or not; that he is slow to wrath and ready to forgive. God loved the world and gave his Son for sinners, whether he is our Father or not. What more can or will he do, if he is our Father? Will he forgive our sins if we confess them? This he has promised to do whether he is our Father or not. Will he forgive his own children when they sin and do not confess their sin? There is no such promise. It is not conceivable that a righteous God, even if he be a Father to all men, will save men in their sins unrepented of.

But does not a father feel towards his own children, when they sin, as he does not towards those who are not his children, even though he realizes the sinfulness of their sin? Doubtless he does. David felt towards Absalom as he would not have felt towards the son of a stranger had he been the leader of a rebellion. David was far from being a model father, and we should greatly err if we were to form our notions of the feelings of God, in view of the sin of men, from the example of David. And yet we may be sure that David's grief over the sin and doom of Absalom were not deeper than the grief of God over the sin and doom of rebellious man. David exclaimed: "Would God I had died for thee, my son Absalom." Jesus Christ—God manifest in the flesh—wept over Jerusalem and actually died for sinful men; but Jerusalem perished as he predicted. God's feelings towards sinful men are not merely feelings of righteous indignation, but also of profound grief. He expresses this grief by the mouth of his prophet: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." We know what God's grief over human sinfulness has led him to do to win men from sin and deliver them from its consequences. He has provided redemption for them, through Christ, and offers them pardon and eternal life. If he were a father, would he save them in impenitence? If all men were assurred that they are by nature children of God, would this give them any ground of hope that they should finally be saved though they refused to repent of their sins?

But, finally, if God be our father will he not bring to bear upon us, because we are his children such "irresistible grace" as will prove efficacious in leading us to repentance, and so secure our salvation? Imagine such a question asked by a rebellious son of his father! Nothing could be conceived more presumptuous or insulting to God. Or suppose the question asked by a true child of God, in behalf of his impenitent kinsmen according to the flesh. Is there not in it an implied impeachment of the divine mercy? We justify a human father in being willing to do more and sacrifice more to save his own child than to save the child of another, because he is human and not divine. His love is finite and not infinite love; his power is finite and not infinite. From the truth that God is love it follows, not that God will finally bring to holiness and happiness every moral creature he has made, whatever the degree of his sinfulness, but that he will do for his salvation all that the love of a holy and righteous God moves him to do. Even the love of God does not move him to destroy human free-agency to save sinners, nor to save his own children by undermining the foundations of his own righteous throne, were such a thing possible or conceivable.

If all men are by nature sons of God, then their sin is against a loving Father as well as against a righteous ruler, and is a grief in his loving heart as well as a violence to his righteous nature. Whether God is the Father of all men or not, we are sure that he is doing all that infinite love can move him to do to win each sinful child to repentance. What is it but arrogance for any such child to presume that parental love has some "irresistible grace" in reserve, which will at last overcome the enmity which has thus far resisted infinite love?—Journal and Messenger.

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The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, with thronging duties pressed!
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrow surging round!
On Jesus bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away!
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future here unknown!
Jesus we know, and he is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours!
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough; earth's struggles soon will cease,
And Jesus call to heaven's perfect peace.

Literary Notes.

The November *Arena* contains a paper by Mrs. Mary M. Harrison, who has for years made a study of child life, on "Children's Sense of Fear," which will be of especial interest to those engaged in training the young. Now that child psychology is being made a distinct study, it is to be hoped that the baleful and pernicious old-time custom of filling the minds of little innocent children with frightful pictures, so largely resorted to hitherto as a factor in their moral training, will be relegated to the barbarities of the past.

Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,
Hidden and lost, Thy form within us lie!
Spare not the stroke! Do with us as Thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord!

—*Bonar.*

Do your best loyally and cheerfully, and suffer yourself to feel no anxiety or fear. Your times are in God's hand. He has assigned you your place; He will direct your paths; He will accept your efforts, if they be faithful; He will bless your aims, if they be for your soul's good.—Frederic W. Farrar.

Sarsaparilla Sense.

Any sarsaparilla is sarsaparilla. True. So any tea is tea. So any flour is flour. But grades differ. *You want the best.* It's so with sarsaparilla. There are grades. You want the best. If you understood sarsaparilla as well as you do tea and flour it would be easy to determine. But you don't. How should you? When you are going to buy a commodity whose value you don't know, you pick out an old established house to trade with, and trust their experience and reputation. Do so when buying sarsaparilla.

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