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T. L. FOWLER, } EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS.
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JAMES BLACK.

On Wednesday, 21st April, in the evening, just as the sun was sinking, Brother James Black passed peacefully away from earth.

He was born August 15th, 1797, in the Parish of Kilmartin, Argyleshire, Scotland, and was, at the time of his death, 88 years, 8 months and 6 days old. At nine years of age he began shepherding in the summer and attended school in the winter. He continued at this employment up to his fifteenth year, when he passed the examination conducted by the examiners of parochial schoolmasters and commenced teaching his first parish school. His aptness in acquiring knowledge soon enabled him to rise in his profession and to take a more lucrative and responsible position.

The schoolmasters of those days in Scotland were required to sign the Confession of Faith and the formulas of the Church of Scotland, and to profess to submit to its government and discipline, and to teach nothing contrary to the Holy Scriptures and to the doctrines contained in the Shorter Catechism, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster.

His mind for several years was much exercised over what seemed to him then, and ever after, the conflicting doctrines of the Confession of Faith with the plain teachings of the Word of God and his own conscience. Yet he was not ready at once to pronounce against a document which had been prepared with so much care by a number of learned men. He sought, however, most earnestly, to become reconciled to God but found no peace, and was about to conclude that he was one of the non-elect.

In the year 1817, while teaching a public school in Balanoch, he went, largely through curiosity, to hear the preaching of the late Dugald Sinclair, at that time a Baptist. He was at once disarmed of all prejudice and his honest heart gladly yielded to the plain gospel of Jesus.

Both the parish and public schools were then largely under the supervision of the Ministers of the Church of Scotland, and he was then called upon to endure the first of many sacrifices, for yielding a conscientious obedience to the authority of Christ, in being refused a position as teacher in the schools.

It was, however, by no means a calamity, but the hand of Providence leading him out into a new and important field, where his energies might have full scope, and his zeal in proclaiming the ancient gospel be richly rewarded in the salvation of many souls.

In the month of June, 1820, he, along with the family, sailed for America, and after a tedious voyage and much delay reached the Township of Aldborough, in the County of Elgin, on the 4th of the following October.

He remained four years and a half in the West and combined teaching and preaching with farming. The settlers there at that time were mostly from Scotland, and those who were not members of the Old Kirk were, with few exceptions, Covenant (Old School) Baptists. The former attended and appreciated very much the meetings of Mr. Black, but the latter characterized his preaching as the "fumes of Typhet."

There were but nine or ten members under his pastoral care at the beginning, but before he left many others were convinced of the truth and united with the little church, which was almost identical with the churches of the Reformation. It may be of interest to the brethren in Aldborough to know that Elder Black was the last charter member of that church to cross over the river.

In the spring of 1825 he moved with the family to the Township of Nassagaweya and spent the four succeeding years teaching school at Milton and Beamsville, spending about two years at each place, after which he settled permanently on a lot in the Township of Eramosa.

He preached regularly on Lord's Days during this time, and never failed to improve an opportunity to enlighten the minds of the people and to impress upon them the great truths which were always uppermost in his mind. When teaching at the former place he preached regular-

ly at a station in Eramosa, a distance of twenty-eight miles.

Some idea of his zeal in extending the interests of the Redeemer's cause can be had when we are informed that he invariably walked to and from his appointments over rough roads and around swamps, over streams and through the woods in all kinds of weather, and as it was then the custom to teach up to noon, at least, on Saturday, he had a very limited time to accomplish such a task.

In the year 1828, while teaching at Beamsville he was united in marriage to Miss Lois Humphrey, who preceded him to the land of rest a few days more than six years. A striking coincidence may be related in regard to their deaths. Both of them died on Wednesday preceding Good Friday, and were buried on Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. She was to him a help-meet indeed, entering at once into full sympathy with the high aim of his life, and willing to share in all the trials and sacrifices incident to a pioneer preacher of the gospel.

Nine children were born to them, eight sons and one daughter. George died in early manhood. Norris passed away at the age of 41 leaving a small family, and the daughter died in infancy. James resides at Deenville, Mich., and has done much for the cause in that section. Judson is one of the leading merchants in the City of Detroit, Mich., and William the youngest of the family lives in Port Hope, and is an active member in the church at Cobourg. Hugh occupies the homestead, and John an adjoining farm. They are pillars in the Everton Church.

The extent and results of his labors after settling in Eramosa up to the close of his active life—a period of more than half a century—cannot be written in a newspaper article. It would require no small volume to speak of all his labors and trials, struggles and victories as a servant in the vineyard of the Lord during that time. Suffice it to say that he travelled, preaching the gospel, east as far as Kingston, west, north and south as far as the rivers and lakes.

A few years ago it could be said that he was acquainted with almost every Disciple in Ontario, and nearly every church in the Province profited by his labors. The most of his time, however, was taken up at home and in the adjoining Townships where he was instrumental in establishing several churches.

The first meeting-house built by the Disciples in Western Ontario he put up on his own place. The present large stone meeting-house, in Eramosa, is about one mile and a half from the old site. During all the intervening years this church was under his fostering care, and though swept by many a storm it never fell nor allowed its light to grow dim. While there may be a few churches with as large a membership, it has the largest general attendance by far of any church among us in Ontario.

In justice to others it must be said that this was also the home for many years of grandfather Oliphant and his son William, and of Elders Alex. Anderson, James Kilgour and L. Parkinson who were fellow-workers with Elder B. at home and abroad.

He early deplored the lack of unanimity existing among the churches and the consequent lack of regular preaching, and to remedy this defect he in 1840 was foremost among others in forming a co-operation of churches and individuals for the more efficient proclamation of the gospel. It may be of interest to state that it was the first co-operation on a large scale among us in America, and that it is still in active operation and has been during all the intervening years.

At first he was much prejudiced against Alexander Campbell from what he heard of his teaching, but having received his writings he was delighted to find that they were co-workers in the same great cause. The views taught by Dugald Sinclair and received and taught by Mr. Black in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, and the sufficiency of the Word of God were identical with the views of Mr. Campbell, although they may not have been stated in the same words or given as much attention.

From the very beginning of his ministry he emphasized the necessity of obedience to the gospel as the only proper expression of faith. He often said he never knew when he became a Disciple and ceased being a Baptist.

He was the first agent of the *Bible Society* in Upper Canada and was its friend and supporter until the day of his death. Very few now have any idea of the nature of the difficulties, which the pioneer agent of the *Society* encountered. Travelling was tedious and difficult, accommodation generally poor, the strongest prejudice existed in the minds of many against the *Society*, and, indeed, he received very little sympathy from the clergy; therefore there was much unreasonable opposition to overcome. His great love for the

Bible and his firm conviction that the truths it contained would bless the world were the only motives which prompted him to endure the sacrifice. The Scriptures he was so active in circulating in his younger days contained the truths which gave him comfort under every circumstance in life. The Bible was his constant companion in youth, and we are not surprised to know that it was the last book he handled and read on earth.

His knowledge of the Word of God was profound, and as a Bible critic he had no superiors and very few equals. It was always pleasant and profitable to sit at his feet and hear the exposition of God's word. His proficiency in the knowledge of *divine truth* can easily be accounted for by those who knew him and his manner of life. It was not the result simply of his superior intellect, but the application of it to the *constant* study of the Scriptures.

He began early in life and spent all his years in honest study. He went at once to the proper channel—the Bible—and received the teaching of men only after he was convinced it was Scriptural. His life in this respect is most valuable to all, especially to young ministers of the gospel.

He was methodical in his reading. During his declining years it was invariably his practice, when at home and well, to devote the forenoon of each day to the study of the Bible, and the afternoon principally to current literature. His sight was good and the amount of reading he did in his old days was remarkable. He kept himself informed on the leading questions of the day.

He had strong faith in the gospel and great confidence in the brethren, and no sympathy with those alarmists whose continual cry was about "Babylonian tendencies." "There was no danger," he often remarked, "of the brethren becoming priest-ridden as long as they continued active in the good world."

He was never known to object to any plan for the spread of the gospel not contrary to Christian principles, simply because it was new. He had no preferences for the old way of doing things because they were old, but kept himself abreast of the times. The world in his estimation was growing better, and gospel principles gaining a stronger hold on the public mind, and he rejoiced at every indication of good will among religious denominations, and every evidence of the triumphs of the gospel wherever manifested.

He took a deep interest in the welfare of the poor everywhere and an active part in the advancement of every benevolent enterprise. He was a co-worker, not only with his own brethren, but with leading men of other religious bodies in the cause of temperance and every needed reform. A little more than a year ago he was indisposed, but desired to live long enough to cast his vote for the "Canada Temperance Act."

He was a reformer in politics as well as in religion and took a deep interest in questions of reform both at home and abroad. He was a sympathizer with the poor and down-trodden of the earth, and an admirer of those who honestly endeavoured to ameliorate their condition.

He was kind to everybody, yet faithful in rebuking the wrong-doer. He was exceedingly patient, yet never allowed patience to degenerate into weakness. He was characterized by purity of life and exaltation of spirit. A nobler, purer human being I never knew. He was a beautiful example of what the gospel of Jesus can do for a man.

T. L. FOWLER.

THE BIG MEETING.

"The Big Meeting" has well-nigh become an institution of the past among the Disciples in Ontario. The time was when Churches as a matter of course had a big meeting once a year, and invited the brethren at large to attend. Grove meetings were held, large tents were sometimes used, no meeting house being nearly large enough to accommodate the vast crowds that assembled. Able preachers from the States were invited to be present, and every effort put forth to excite the interest of the local community, and of the brethren throughout the Province. Diverse views are held concerning the utility of such gatherings, but the preponderance of opinion seems to be in their favor.

In those days there was more life, more general interest in the cause, and consequently more work done than there is now,—at least, so say the older people, who were there and ought to know. Annual meetings a few, there are still, but their interest is chiefly local, and so likewise their influence.

What is the cause of the change? Is it simply that people became tired of them? Or have we lost faith in them? Or have we not sufficient interest in the cause, and sufficient vitality to

sustain them? We shall not now attempt to answer the question, but shall merely express the opinion that the change is not for the better, but for the worse.

Those who have a common interest in a common cause have a very natural desire to become acquainted with one another, to look into one another's faces, and to clasp one another's hands. Not infrequently such persons when prevented from meeting face to face, and before ever meeting face to face, have sought the medium of letter-writing to cultivate the friendship of those whose hearts they believe were beating in unison with their own. And if the opportunity offered of meeting, it was hailed with delight, and embraced with joy.

It is not difficult to understand that 40, 30, even 20 years ago, when most of those who were Disciples had for themselves, cast aside sectarianism, there would be an intenser interest in one another than there now is, and a greater desire for personal conference; but we cannot think that now there is no good reason for, and that no good end would be served by, general gatherings of brethren from all parts of the Province.

The fact of the matter is, we have suffered, and are suffering, from isolation, from misunderstanding, and consequent lack of confidence in one another. There is work to be done which no single person, no single church can do; before that work can be undertaken individuals and churches must communicate and confer; and the most effective and most satisfactory way of doing this, is by word of mouth. This being so, it is a matter of regret that there is so little of actual contact among us, and it is greatly to be hoped that we may soon see a change for the better.

G. M.

THE CAUSE IN ONTARIO.

We can safely say that the progress of the cause in the Province during the past ten or twenty years is proportionate to the amount of proper work done, yet the results are, by no means, creditable to the advocates of a noble plea. It may not be pleasant to be reminded that we have made very little progress during the past years, yet there should be no aversion to take an honest view of the situation.

A knowledge of the true state of affairs would have saved many a man from bankruptcy, and may it not be an advantage to us to know how we stand in the sight of men and of God? And if we have not prospered as we think we ought, might it not be well to make an effort to ascertain if we, as a people, have been properly discharging the high obligations laid upon us as servants of Christ?

We presume that the majority of the Disciples in Ontario are interested in this matter, are anxious that all obstacles should be removed, and are willing to assist in an onward movement all along the line. That man is a narrow-minded Christian, indeed, whose vision does not reach beyond the horizon of the church where he holds his membership. Not among the least of Paul's burdens was his anxiety for and "care of all the churches."

During the last decade a few churches have been established, and as far as our observation goes nearly as many have gone down. A few have taken on new life and have made their influence felt for good, while as many, probably, have allowed their light to grow dim.

We can safely say there has been very little general progress. What is the cause of this state of things? Is there a remedy? Can it be found, and are we willing to apply it? These are some of the pertinent questions which may be asked.

It is certainly not the fault of the gospel, neither can the trouble be found in any new peculiarity of the public mind. The former we verily believe is as potent as when Peter preached it to the murderers of Christ or when Felix trembled under it from the lips of Paul, and the latter is, no doubt, as susceptible at the present time as during any previous age.

If the gospel is faithfully preached and exemplified in the lives of those who embrace its teaching it will still prove itself the power of God in the salvation of many sinners.

No one can attribute it to the work of co-operative organizations against which we have been so faithfully (?) warned, for up to three years ago there was but one such organization in Ontario, and that was limited in its operations to a comparatively small section of the country; and don't forget this, and that locality the churches are more numerous and more prosperous than in any other section of equal area in the Province.

Neither can the whole responsibility in this matter be laid at the door of the pastor. Very few of the churches have been so prodigal of the unrighteous mammon as to participate in the luxury. Yet, strange as it may appear to some,