

Where Have All the Baptists in Canada Gone?

A while back I was looking at an old *Chamber's Encyclopaedia* (published in Toronto c. 1906), and I came across the figures of the **1901 Canadian Census**. In 1901, Canada had a population of 5,371,315. **Baptists** were **5.9%** of the entire population (316,477 people). I began to wonder, "How are Baptists faring in Canada one hundred years later?" Well, the **2001 Census** reveals that Canada's population has multiplied to 30,007,095 with 729,475 people claiming to be Baptists. In other words, only **2.4%** of the entire population. If we had just maintained the status quo over the last 100 years, **there should be almost 3 times as many Baptists in Canada as there presently are!** By the way, the fastest growing religious group in Canada is the **Muslims**, which grew by **129%** in the ten years between 1991 to 2001 (largely by immigration).

What accounts for this decline and what can we do about it? Here are some observations...

1. Most Baptist churches in Canada have not stood for **sound doctrine**. We are commanded to "*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*" (Jude v. 3). Unfortunately, a large percentage of Baptist churches have succumbed to the heresy of liberalism, and of course, we can have no fellowship with them. Even as early as 1919, T.T. Shields, pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto and member of the Board of Directors for McMaster University, was contending with liberalism in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and at McMaster (yes, believe it or not, McMaster University at one time was a Bible-believing Baptist institution). **Dead liberal churches do not win souls or plant new churches!**
2. We have not effectively **evangelized** and **retained our own children**. "*I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth*" (II John v. 4). How often we meet people who were raised in Christian homes but now are pagan and know not the Lord. It is imperative that we win our own children to Christ and disciple them to walk in the truth.
3. We must greatly increase our **soul winning** and **church planting** efforts. God's plan for this age centers on the local church. "*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved...so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily*" (Acts 2:47; 16:5). Thousands of towns and cities across Canada are without a sound, evangelistic church. Especially we need to target **immigrant groups**: 54% are of no religion or non-Christian religions. Every new church that is planted is a new lighthouse shining "*in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life*" (Philippians 2:15, 16).

If we do not evangelize, we will fossilize. If we don't stand for the truth, we will lose the truth--and a whole lot more.

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