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Nova Scotia Church History.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Baptists of Nova Scotia.

PERIOD VII.

From A. D. 1838 to A. D. 1850.

LETTER LXIII.

THE CONVENTION. ITS ORIGINAL OBJECTS.—ENLARGEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION.—ADOPTION OF ACADIA COLLEGE.—TRANSFER OF THE COLLEGE TO THE CONVENTION.—PAYMENT OF THE DEBT OF THE N. S. B. EDUCATION SOCIETY.

My Young Friend,

When the New Brunswick Association was formed, in 1822, the joint action of the Baptists of this province ceased, the only intercourse between them being carried on by the messengers, who were annually appointed by the respective Associations, to each other. This state of things continued upwards of twenty years. But it was not satisfactory. The brethren naturally felt desirous of union. Though the division into two Associations was a necessity, it was obviously to be wished that some measure could be devised whereby all the churches in the provinces might be united, and their energies combined for some useful purposes.

The first step was taken at the meeting of the Nova Scotia Association in 1844, when it was resolved, "That it is recommended to the messenger who is appointed to visit the New Brunswick Association (Rev. C. Topper) to express to that body the earnest desire of this Association for increase of intercourse and union between the churches of the two provinces, and that they would beg to suggest the inquiry, whether the two Associations might not usefully unite their efforts in the cause of education; and to state the conviction of this body that the interests of both Associations would be greatly advanced by such a measure."

At the next meeting, in 1845, delegates were appointed, to meet delegates appointed by the New Brunswick Association, and power was given to the united body to frame a constitution and act as an Executive Committee till the first meeting of the proposed Union or Convention.

These preliminary arrangements were carried into effect, and the "Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island" was constituted at St. John, N. B., Sept. 21, 1846. The introductory sermon was preached by Dr. Crawley, from John 17, 22; it was published with the Minutes. The Rev. Theodore S. Harding was the first President; the Revs. I. E. Bill and Samuel Elder, the Secretaries; and J. W. Nutting Esq. of Halifax, and N. S. D. Mill Esq., of St. John, the Treasurers.

The objects of the Convention are thus stated in the third article of the Constitution:

"That the objects of the Convention shall be, to advance the interests of the Baptist Denomination, and of the cause of God, generally; to maintain the religious and charitable Institutions hereinafter mentioned; to procure correct information relative to the Baptist body, and to advise and carry out such measures as may, with the Divine blessing, tend to advance the interests of the Baptist Denomination, and the cause of God generally."

The fifth article reads thus:—

"That all monies contributed by individuals for membership, or for the general purposes of the Convention, after the payment of incidental expenses, shall be paid to the Treasurer of the Convention in the Province in which they shall have been contributed, and shall be by him appropriated in accordance with the existing regulations of the Union Societies in the province; and that all monies collected by the Local Union Societies, or by General Unions of such Societies, shall be paid to the respective Provincial Treasurers of the Convention, to be appropriated for such of the above great objects, and in such proportions, as the several Union Societies shall direct."

It will be gathered from these quotations that there was a design to centralise, as far as possible, the operations of the Baptist body in these provinces, by making the Convention

the channel of communication; for though no control of the Union Societies was intimated, yet the proposal to send their funds to the Convention to be apportioned might lead to interference, by advice or otherwise, and issue at last in central government. How far this was contemplated by the original founders does not appear but certainly the operation of the ninth article would have that tendency. It reads thus:—

"That the Boards established for the promotion of the objects contemplated by the Union Societies, shall be requested to furnish the Secretary of the Convention with a full report of their proceedings, annually. Such reports to be presented to the Secretary of the Convention at least one month before its meeting."

As at first constituted the Convention was empowered to appoint annually two Boards; one for the Foreign Missionary and Bible cause, and one "to take charge of and direct the funds for supernumerary ministers and their families." The former was located at Wolfville, the latter at St. John, N. B.

The second Session of the Convention was held at Nictaux, Sept. 25, 27, and 28, 1847. The introductory sermon was preached by the Rev. C. Spurden, from 1 Cor. xiv. 20. At this meeting the constitution was amended and enlarged. The following additions were made:—1. That the business of the Education Societies and Domestic Missions in all the Provinces be added to the objects now under the direction of the Convention. 2. That the Boards appointed annually by the respective Associations for Domestic Missions in each Province constitute a General Board of the Convention, to take charge of the objects of Domestic Missions under their direction."

Practically, these additions were inoperative, because no power was possessed in either case, the business of domestic Missions and Education being carried on by the Boards already in existence in each province. All that could be done was to present reports, from time to time, of the state and progress of those enterprises.

The third Session was held at Fredericton, Sept. 16, 18, and 19, 1848. The introductory sermon was preached by the Rev. E. D. Very, from Rom. x. 17. The following resolution was passed with reference to education:—*Resolved*,—Whereas Education is one of the objects comprised in the Convention—that in the present state of the Provinces we recognise Acadia-College as the College of this Convention, and consequently the College of the three Provinces represented in this body; and recommend that Educational Meetings be held in both Provinces, particularly in New Brunswick, during the next year; and that the Professors of Acadia College and the Principal of the Seminary at Fredericton be requested to attend and preside at such meetings. We further advise all young men preparing for a College course to avail themselves of the preparatory training which is so efficiently afforded by the respective Academies at Fredericton and Horton."

The fourth Session was held at Bridgetown, Sept. 15, 17, 18, and 19, 1849. The introductory sermon was preached by the Rev. S. Robinson, from Psalm cii. 13. At this Session the transfer of Acadia College from the Education Society to the Convention was proposed. The reason for this alteration, and the manner in which it was to be effected will appear from the following extracts:—

"The Committee on Education appointed by the Convention respectfully report:

"That in their opinion the cause of Education and the interests of Society would be promoted were the energies and resources of the Provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island united in the support and government of the Collegiate Institution for extending to the Youth of the three Provinces the means of Education in its higher branches and the advantages of a Collegiate course of instruction:—leaving to each Province the support and duty of maintaining and managing such Schools and Academies as it now supports or may deem proper hereafter to establish."

"With this view the Committee recommend that the support and government of Acadia College should be separated from the Academy at Horton, and that Acadia College should be adopted, supported, and governed

as the Collegiate institution of the Baptist denomination in the three Provinces, and be placed under the direction, supervision, and control of the Convention as an object in which all the Provinces have a common and equal interest; and that the Theological Chair be in like manner placed under the control of the Convention."

"That in carrying this object into effect the Committee further report that Acadia College be separated from its immediate connexion with the Academy at Horton and its constitution be modified and altered in such a manner as may be necessary for placing it in the proposed relation to the Denomination of the lower Provinces and bringing it under the control of the Convention:

"And in connexion with this object, that the debt properly chargeable against the College, contradistinguished from the Academy, be immediately ascertained and stated."

"The Committee recommend that agencies be appointed for collecting funds under the instructions of the Convention—the field of these agencies to be the lower Provinces, irrespective of provincial distinctions, as well as foreign parts."

"And lastly that a Committee be appointed for adjusting the changes necessary to be made in the Constitution and government of Acadia College and the Theological department and for taking the means necessary for effecting these changes; and for ascertaining and reporting the debts of the College."

J. W. JOHNSTON.

Chairman."

The Committee appointed for the above-mentioned purpose reported as follows:—

"1. That this Committee recommend to the Convention that the amount due to the Professors of Acadia College be assumed by this Body, and that the remainder of the amount due by the College or by the Academy be still charged against the Nova Scotia Education Society."

"2. That in the opinion of this Convention it is inexpedient at present to interfere with the Charter of the College, but that Governors be appointed by the Convention from both Provinces to take in charge the College in its behalf."

"3. That an agency be appointed by this Convention for the College, and that while labouring in either Province for the Convention, such agent or agents take the objects of the Union Society of the Province where he is labouring into his agency; and also that an agency be appointed in behalf of the College to England and to the United States."

Another Committee being constituted to nominate a Board of Governors, reported in these terms:—

"The Committee appointed to nominate a Board of Governors for Acadia College, beg leave to submit the following names with the recommendation that six of them yield their trust year by year for the appointment of six new members:

Rev. E. A. Crawley, C. R. Bill, Esq.
" John Pryor, John W. Bars Esq.
" I. E. Bill, Hon. J. W. Johnston.
" W. Burton, Prof. I. L. Chipman.
" S. Robinson, J. W. Nutting, Esq.
" C. Spurden, Dea. N. S. D'Mill.
" S. Elder, " A. M'L. Seely.
" E. D. Very, " Jas. Moren, Esq.
Hon. W. B. Kinnear, Wm. Stone, Esq."

These proceedings being reported to the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society at its annual meeting in June, 1850, the transfer of the College was agreed to, by the following resolutions:—

Resolved, 1. That this Society gratefully acknowledges the kindness of the Baptists of New Brunswick, in voluntarily adopting, in connection with the Baptists of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Acadia College as the Collegiate Institution of the three Provinces, according to certain resolutions, passed at the last Session of the Convention, and cheerfully concur in the arrangements then made for its future government and support; except as respects that regulation which requires an annual change in the governors, it being the opinion of this Society, and a condition on which this Resolution is passed, that it would be more conducive to the interest of the College that the change should not take place more frequently than every three years, and with the power of re-election.

Resolved, 2. That for carrying these arrangements into effect, this Society does hereby resign to the Convention its control and authority over Acadia College, and direct the Executive Committee to apply to the Legislature at its next Session, so to alter the Act of Incorporation that the government of the College may be legally transferred from the present Governors and Committee to such Governors and their successors as have been, and as may be agreed upon by the Convention, and that the Act may be made permanent, and be otherwise amended to suit the altered government of the College: But that due provision be made that the Baptist Education Society continue to retain their title to the real estate and buildings, until the debts and securities for which the Executive Committee, or any former member thereof, are or may be liable, shall be discharged, or the parties be relieved therefrom—on which event arrangements shall be made for settling the title in a manner suited to promote the interests of both the Academy and the College on just principles.

Resolved, 3. That while this Society has ever disavowed the principle of applying public monies to support theological institutions, this Society has always held, and now maintains, on the ground of civil and religious freedom and equality, and consistently with the soundest principles of dissent, that the Baptists of Nova Scotia have been, and are, well entitled to claim on behalf of their institutions for secular education, a just share of the surplus revenue of the Province appropriated for educational purposes. But the Society having surrendered the support of Acadia College to the management and discretion of the Convention, the application of the Society to the Legislature henceforth will not include aid for the College, and

Resolved, 4. That the Executive Committee do at the next Session of the Legislature apply on behalf of the Society for provincial aid toward the Academy."

The fifth Session of the Convention was held at Portland, St. John, Sept. 21, 23, and 24, 1850. The introductory sermon was preached by the Rev. I. E. Bill, from Mat. xxiv. 14.

The first two of the resolutions passed by the Education Society having been reported, the transfer of the College was perfected in the following manner:—

Resolved, 1. That this Convention does hereby confirm the transfer of Acadia College on the terms expressed in these two resolutions.

Resolved, 2. That the Convention do petition the Legislature of Nova Scotia to make the necessary alterations in the Act incorporating Acadia College and to give that Act permanency, and that Hon. J. W. Johnston, Hon. W. B. Kinnear, and Dr. Simon Fitch, be a Committee to prepare and cause to be presented in the name of the Convention the petition for that purpose; and if they shall see occasion, also, to petition the Legislature of New Brunswick for extending to Acadia College and its graduates such privileges as may be reasonable and just.

Resolved, 3. That the following gentlemen form a Board of Governors of Acadia College together with the President of the College as an ex-officio member of the same. (The names have been already given.)

Resolved, 4. That at the expiration of every three years six of the governors shall go out of office, subject however to re-election, and that an appointment of six be then made to complete the Board. But nothing in this resolution shall be held to control or abridge the power of this Convention at its pleasure to remove any one or more of the governors and appoint others in their stead as occasion may make necessary."

Thus was this highly important and desirable change effected. The College, originally founded by the Baptists of Nova Scotia, became the Institution of the three Provinces, and all the Baptists of those Provinces, as represented in the Convention, pledged themselves to its support.

Although it is a slight anticipation of the history, it may be as well to state here that an application was successfully made to the Nova Scotia Legislature in the Session of 1851, and an Act passed, legalising the transfer of the College to the Convention, and repealing the clause of the original Act, by