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Circular Letter.

THE CLAIMS OF THE RISING MINISTRY.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE NOVA SCOTIA WESTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Beloved Brethren,

The subject to which we wish to call your attention in this our annual Circular is The Claims of the Rising Ministry.

The Lord is pleased to accomplish his purposes through the use of means. He makes man his instrument when he causes the briars and thorns to give place to useful plants, when he transforms the wilderness into the fruitful field, or makes the elements subservient to human interests.

When the moral wastes of earth are to be reclaimed, this must also be accomplished through the use of means. By the gospel God has purposed to save all the chosen in Christ. But the sinner must hear and believe the glad tidings in order to his salvation. Hence the necessity for its proclamation, "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

The Lord only prepares for this work. He who raised up faithful men in the Old Testament dispensation to teach the way of life, does as truly in the gospel day, call from his church those who are to be his ambassadors, and who, in His name, are to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Neither power of eloquence, nor human learning, can fit one for this sacred work, apart from that divine call that compels the servant of God to say, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." It has been the glory of the Baptists that they have not only insisted upon a regenerated church-membership, but also upon a divinely constituted ministry. They do not believe that a parent can dedicate one of his sons to the law, another to medicine, and a third to the ministry. The two former he may do, but not the latter. That is God's prerogative.

"Divine operation," as one has truly said, "waits upon human co-operation." While maintaining that the call to the ministry is from God, we must remember that in connection with it the church has solemn responsibilities to meet. He who gave some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, requires his disciples to "pray the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Prayer involves a corresponding duty on our part. Do we seek forgiveness of sin—then we must forsake it, and trust in the blood of atonement. Do we plead for sanctification;—we must accompany our petitions with earnest struggles against the lusts of the flesh. Do we pray "thy kingdom come," our words are but mockery unless we are seeking in the use of means to extend the empire of the Prince of Peace. And if we are required to pray for the increase of laborers in the Lord's vineyard, it is equally our duty to use scriptural means to ensure an answer to our prayers. If we pray aright we expect to be heard, and the answer must come through the church. The preacher must be taken from the company of believers, and chiefly from the ranks of the younger brethren.

In many instances persons who are moved by the Spirit to enter the ministry, through a natural diffidence, shrink from its vast responsibilities. Such, when duly encouraged, often become the brightest luminaries of the pulpit. Whenever a youth of devoted piety, gives promise of usefulness as a preacher of the gospel, he should be met with words of kindly admonition, and reminded of the claims of Christ and his cause, and urged to consider whether it is not his duty to consecrate himself to the gospel ministry. This many need; for when struggling between opposing convictions, they may regard the expression of their brethren as "the voice of God," and be thus enabled to decide as to their duty when otherwise they would be wavering and irresolute.

Thus far we shall probably have none to dissent from the views expressed. If we go somewhat farther, as we propose to do, it may possibly be otherwise. We shall, therefore, endeavor to tread cautiously, but nevertheless with the firm conviction that our position is good. To come more directly to the matter in hand, we affirm that the churches are under obligation to afford pecuniary aid to those who, with insufficient means, are undergoing a course of study, with reference to the gospel ministry. We have not discharged our duty when we utter the word of commendation and blessing, "Depart in peace be ye warmed and filled." No profession of sympathy, any more than that of faith, is of any value without the corresponding works. There must be deeds of kindness, not mere words that are worth no more than they cost.

In considering the facts of the case, we are forced to the painful conviction that there is, on this subject, a vast amount of indifference throughout our denomination. True the principle of giving for ministerial education has obtained amongst us. Money is received at our annual gatherings for this object, and comes from the churches represented there; but these amounts are exceedingly small. Many churches send nothing, and it would seem that many in all the churches entirely ignore any claims of that nature.

In the year 1865 the churches of Nova Scotia contributed for this object the sum of \$115.09; only 32 out of the 103 churches represented, contributing. In 1872, seven years afterwards, the three Associations, gave to this fund the sum of \$165.62, an increase of about \$50.50 over that of the previous year, referred to. But the town of Yarmouth furnished the excess. Had all contributed, in the proportion of their reported membership, as did the churches of that town, the sum of \$1921.00 would have been realized.

Dry statistics often furnish matter for thoughtful consideration; and these figures are exceedingly suggestive. They show that our people have very imperfect ideas of their obligations towards those who are, yet, to be their evangelists and pastors. This, doubtless, is greatly owing to the want of proper information upon the subject. Attention has not been sufficiently called to it. Earnest and general measures have not been taken to secure a fund adequate to the necessities of the case.

"But why," it may be asked, "single out candidates for the ministry alone? Have they any stronger claims upon our sympathies than those who are looking forward to agriculture, trade, medicine, or law? We answer most assuredly they have. When a man resolves to

enter upon any other profession he does not make it a matter of conscience, but rather of inclination, and of self-interest. Not so with him who enters upon the ministry of the word. It may, indeed, be with him a matter of choice, for when love constrains, it imparts a cheerfulness to obedience. In many instances, however, the struggle is prolonged and violent between conviction and the will, and would have ended otherwise but for the overruling sense of duty.

And further, between the church and those whom the Lord has appointed to preach his gospel there exist peculiar relations that are not found elsewhere. The church has convictions as well as the individual, and the sentiments of both should move in the same channel. One should not act without the other. Hence arise mutual duties and obligations; and if one needs the help of the other, it should be freely given, according to the ability to bestow.

The sacrifice involved in the abandonment of secular pursuits for the gospel ministry affords an additional argument for granting such pecuniary assistance as may be required. When a man, moved with love for Christ, and compassion for souls, consecrates himself to this work, then in a most emphatic sense he is not his own; he belongs to the Lord; he becomes the property of the church. His powers of mind and body, and all the varied stores of learning he may acquire are given to promote the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Whatever hopes of earthly emolument he may have cherished he from that hour abandons. Henceforth he can truly say of the church of his love,—

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend—
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end."

Possessing such a spirit, he gives the clearest evidence of his call to the ministry, and will, if he be spared to engage in his chosen work, be the means of comforting believers, edifying the church and of saving sinners from eternal death. Shall the brethren treat him with indifference and neglect? Shall they not rather move towards him with words of encouragement, and with generous sympathy? Will the mother forsake her own children, to whom she must yet look for the means of support? And can the church do otherwise than look with affection, and maternal pride upon those of her sons, who, forsaking all others, devote themselves to the defence and promotion of her interests? It is ordained of the Lord, that they who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel;—and we may justly infer, that as the church is under obligation to such after they are laid aside from their work, so also while they are in preparation for it.

He who chose humble fishermen, still calls to his vineyard chiefly from the ranks of the poor. This is an additional reason why the aid we advocate should be afforded. Indeed it is this very circumstance that creates the need. At the "Baptist Educational Convention," recently held in Philadelphia, one of the speakers said, "There are men, and men in this house, and some who have read papers before this Convention, who have supported themselves upon Indian meal and molasses week after week, and month after month." Acadia College might testify to this effect of many of her sons, who are now amongst our most earnest and successful ministers. Could all the truth be told, we might speak, not simply of those who lived upon this simple fare, but of those who cheerfully sawed wood, kindled fires, swept halls, or made up beds for their more favored associates, that they might enjoy, without interruption, the advantages afforded at "the school of the prophets."—This same spirit of self-denial and earnest purpose still exists amongst our students for the ministry. They have the heartfelt sympathy of those who have trodden the toilsome path before them;—would that this feeling were more general.

We complain that so many of our young men go to the United States for the purpose of study, and return not again. The wonder is that more do not leave us for a country where worth is soon discovered, and assistance promptly rendered. There applications from these Provinces for help are generously accepted. It seems but fair that those who do for our young men what is refused them at home should subsequently enjoy the benefit of their labors. Let us imitate the noble example, and we shall not have to complain of so few to supply the wants of our many destitute fields.

It is a hopeful indication that the attention of our people has been recently directed to this subject by a brother, whose official duties must necessarily engross much of his time, but who manifests a willingness to throw himself into any movement that contemplates effort in this direction. It is to be hoped that the matter will not rest here, but that the denomination will discover the best mode of aiding the rising ministry, and apply it with fidelity and earnestness.

Let us not be understood as advocating aid in such a way as to render exertion unnecessary on the part of the student. Whatever is granted should be as an aid to one who is striving to help himself. The assistance rendered should be supplementary to his own exertions. All beneficiaries are not equally needy; the aid should correspond to the necessities of the case, and be so bestowed that the young man shall not be, at the very commencement of his ministry, burdened with a troublesome debt.

It may be urged that unworthy persons will, under this system, obtrude themselves upon the charities of the denomination. It may be so, even as it is under altogether different circumstances. The hands of the presbytery are sometimes laid upon unworthy heads. Would you therefore object to ordination to the ministry? But then there are guards against this evil that you fear. The churches will have it in their power to prevent the giving of such aid to those whom they deem unworthy; and moreover, the student is under the eye of his instructors, and must from time to time give assurance of his unwavering purpose to enter the ministry.

Perhaps it will be further objected that by rendering pecuniary assistance, such as this paper contemplates, we destroy independence of character. "The young man," it is asserted, "needs the discipline of poverty to fit him for life's work." It may be so, but not necessarily, by any means. At any rate these young men have this discipline, and are pretty well schooled before they arrive at this point to ask your aid. Independence destroyed! Why brethren the thought is absurd, and contrary to fact. Do you lose your independence of character when you are paid an honest debt? Ask your professors at Acadia if the paltry sum that ministerial students receive destroys, in any sense, their self-reliance. Inquire of the

churches, enjoying the pastoral services of such as were aided during their studies. We do not fear the result of the strictest search for the truth on this point.

Withhold the aid, we recommend, and the needy may still struggle on, but very likely in such a way as to find him, at the end, enfeebled in body, and unfitted for a life of toil, if indeed, he does not drop into the grave ere that goal is reached.

The common sense, as well as the religious convictions of our churches, admits the necessity of mental culture—not the discipline of poverty—as a preparation for the pastoral office. In this we are all agreed. Now and then we may find those who declaim against an educated ministry, but they are relics of the past age, and do not represent the present. On this point our churches are becoming more and more exacting. They are seeking the studious and cultivated for their teachers and guides. They reject those who will not, by a course of study, work their way to this exalted position. Nor would we wish it to be otherwise. One may be blessed of God in the ministry without the learning of the schools, but it is becoming more and more necessary that our pastors should enjoy the advantages of a liberal education. It was remarked, in substance, by one of those whom we call the fathers, that "he who succeeded him must stand upon his shoulders?" Even so, and the churches seem to believe it. But let them also know their obligations. Let them not be like the Egyptian taskmasters, requiring the tale of briek, but refusing the straw. Let them devise liberally for the aid of those whom God has called to the gospel ministry, and who give proof of that divine appointment by their earnest efforts for the acquisition of knowledge to fit them for their work, and the blessing will most certainly, return in tenfold measure to themselves; and they shall experience the truth of the inspired word, "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE N. S. WESTERN BAPTIST HOME MISSIONARY BOARD.

Your Board herewith presents its 22nd Annual Report. Bro. Benjamin Miller, Licentiate, was appointed to labor one half of his time at New Albany, during the year commencing July 23rd 1872. He reports much kindness from the people, and interest in the preaching of the word. He writes "I have some precious evidence that seed has been sown that will yet yield a harvest to the Lord."

Bro. M. visited occasionally West Sherbrook where there are a few brethren greatly needing one to care for their souls.

He reports:—
Sermons preached, 78; Conference, prayer and other meetings, 21; added to the church, by Letter 2; by Baptism 1.

Rev. P. F. Murray reports a mission of 13 weeks to Greywood, Milford and Dalhousie West. "I found," he writes, "at Dalhousie, a few brethren holding on their way, and with a few Wesleyan brethren, maintaining a prayer meeting on the Sabbath." The church at Milford and Greywood was in a scattered state, without any religious services during the last summer except two or three sermons from a travelling brother. It had been designed to keep the missionary on this field one half of the time during the year but at the expiration of the first quarter it was deemed prudent to withdraw the appointment. Of the work of this mission we have the following summary:—

Sermons 53; Conference and prayer meetings 9; Family Visits, 90; Received in aid, Greywood and Milford, \$14.33; Dalhousie \$2.44. Total \$16.77.

Bro. Murray received a further appointment to labor between Parker's Cove, Litchfield and West Dalhousie. Of his labors at Parker's Cove and Litchfield, he writes, "Our meetings were very interesting. Though hopes were entertained of an ingathering, none were brought to confess Christ. Believers were revived and strengthened. Bro. M. gives the following summary of his work:—

Sermons 22; Conference and Prayer Meetings 5; Family visits 72; Received in aid, Parker's Cove and Litchfield, \$10.13; for rent of property of late George Harris to aid Baptist cause at West Dalhousie \$5.34. Total \$15.47.

Rev. H. Achilles spent 4 weeks in the service of the Board at Argyle and Pubnico. Bro. Wallace had closed a series of meetings at the former place under the direction of the "Missionary Union," in which the Lord had greatly blessed his labors. He found some still inquiring for the way of salvation. The latter part of the mission was spent at Pubnico and resulted in the reclaiming of some backsliders, and some hopeful conversions. As the sleighing was at this time broken up, Bro. A. thought it prudent to return to his home.

Bro. A. reports:—
Sermons preached 24; Prayer and Conference meetings 12; Family visits 75; Baptized 3; Miles travelled 300; Received in aid of the mission \$13.70.

The sum of \$100.00 was voted towards the support of Rev. W. H. Richan at Barrington, Wood's Harbor, Jordan Bay and Shelburne town for the half year, ended December 31st, 1872. The pledge of the Board has enabled our brother to resign the office of School Inspector for the County of Shelburne, and devote himself wholly to the work of the Ministry.

Two new Meeting Houses have been opened under the direction of Bro. Richan, one at Wood's Harbor, and the other at Barrington, and still another at Wood's Harbor, is progressing towards completion. Under date of Jan. 24th, our brother writes, "I commenced preaching in an unpromising field, but hitherto I have held on and the Lord has sustained me. . . I trust that the time is not far distant when the borders of Zion will be enlarged."

Bro. R. writes again under date of Feb. 20th, "There are about 25 persons now in Shelburne, calling themselves Baptists, who would aid in sustaining the cause. About 20 of them are members of churches, but they need to be gathered together. An acceptable preacher would generally have a large congregation. . . were I at liberty to do so I would not hesitate to take the field."

Our brother had in his previous communication intimated that in consequence of poor health he would be compelled to confine his labors to narrower limits. He, therefore, reluctantly on his own part and with much regret on that of others, discontinued his visits to