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## Associational Documents.

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### THE WORD OF GOD, AND FAITH.

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

Dear Brethren,—

The Divine Word commends the housekeeper who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old. Of these the old are often the best. We now, in humble imitation of the word, and without disparagement of the many new things that may be profitably presented, commend to you in this communication the old subjects, the Word of God and Faith. Old, certainly, they are, but capable of new appreciation of their value, and new demonstration of power in the practical operation, through them, of the Spirit of God that may make them become to us as the freshest and newest of truths.

We are not, indeed, afraid that the value of these precious things will ever die out of the world, for we trust that they have much more to do in it, that they are destined to perform here a greater work than they have ever yet done, but we do fear that there may come occasions of temporary forgetfulness of their value, of very hurtful influence. May we ask you whether, for example, the time-honored practice of reading the Bible in family gatherings is now cherished with the care and fidelity that some of you may remember to have been formerly practiced among us.

But, however this may be, we all shall agree that the world, and certainly the churches, need every day, and, if possible, more than ever, the renewed influence of Bible truths. There is no modern source or form of thought, there never will or can be any, that shall carry the weight, diffuse the knowledge, or reflect the glory to be found in God's Word.

But, at the present time, as is well known, a special war is being waged against the Word of God as His Word; and it becomes all His servants, now particularly, to show their allegiance to Him by renewed and increased attachment to His Word, thus warred against. The Divine character of the Word, let us remember, is one of our most important bulwarks, our strong defense against countless evils; and it is our duty and interest to defend it, as soldiers defend a fortress against the enemy, that the word, like a defended fortress, may itself in turn become our protection and strong defense. Around this strong tower let us gather in manner as the Psalmist speaks in regard of Zion: "Go round about her, mark well her bulwarks."

This subject is rich in valuable suggestions, but as we refer here to the Word of God only as a natural introduction to faith in that Word and in God, we abstain from following the rich vein that opens before us, in order to turn to our principal point in this letter, FAITH. Faith in the Word—in God—in Christ—that old subject that demands from us such sort of thought, such character of mind and heart applied to it, as, with God's blessing, shall clothe it all anew with freshness and power. This newness of faith as a great reality, a necessity and a power, attended with great magnitude of results, is what we wish to make the burthen of this address.

"Oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," Luke xxiv. 25. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii. 19. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you," Matt. xvii. 20. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you," John xv. 17.

These, you know, are some of the wonderful words with which Jesus shewed his disciples how little faith they had; and how much they ought to have and might have.

These words and many like them from the mouth of Jesus shew us the same truths as respects ourselves, and were spoken for that end; that is, to shew us the same things which they shewed Christ's immediate disciples; for whatever applies to us and our circumstances were spoken on our account. These statements we believe you will freely admit.

Let us then compare the faith we see or know of as practically in existence with the measure indicated in these words, and what can we say to our Divine Master of the result of the comparison. What should we say if He were now to come and ask, "When the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"

The above quoted words are truly wonderful. How the meaning they contain swells and grows as thought rests on them! And yet they are as plain in their meaning as they are wonderful. It is plain that if we do not believe as the words imply. We are "fools and slow of heart."

It is plain that not only in private but in concert with others, we may ask what we will and it shall be done, to the extent, even, of bidding mountains remove to another place. And it is plain that it needs only to abide in Christ, and for His words to abide in us, in order for these things to be realized,—to become a great reality.

Observe, too, the prominent place thus given to Christ's words,—the words or Word of God. This degree of faith will produce effect if we abide in the words of Christ. It is then a great reality that we see Faith such as this may be.

In all this we see how complete a provision Jesus made even before He left the world for the unlimited growth of His church,—of salvation,—of good, of heavenly good, in men's hearts. And this provision continues; it is not diminished in the least. We have it all here among us, or ready to be among us, so soon as men's hearts shall begin to believe, in the fashion and degree which the Saviour desires, and for which he thus prepared. We hope and pray for such faith thus to begin among us, dear brethren. There can be no doubt that men may thus believe, and that our Saviour expects it to be. For it was therefore he spoke and still speaks these words.

Admitting, then, that such faith may be a reality, need we say, that it is a great necessity? Dwell in thought on the ills in us, and the ills among us, needing to be removed. Dwell in thought on the souls—the dear souls, lovely and beloved, and most precious to our

hearts, or what is more urgent still, ignorant, wilful, worldly, and without hope or God, who stand daily on the edge of time, ready at every moment to drop into eternity.

All these are appointed objects of faith and prayer. Say if you will that their conversion is a mountain of difficulty. Be it so. Is it not the promise that a mountain shall remove out of its place, on the condition named? There is no doubt that there are mountains of difficulty all around us. But there is also no doubt that these mountains are there in order that the glory of Christ may be seen in removing them by the Spirit of God working, often, perhaps generally, through the faith and prayer of His people.

Among these great difficulties to be thus removed is also the terrible fact familiar to all, that there are still 800 or 1000 millions of heathen, men, women and children, who know not Christ. For whom missionaries must carry the wondrous message of the Gospel, and whose darkness and impenitence nothing but God's hand can remove.

There is also a difficulty of perhaps even greater magnitude, flagrant around us. It is the difficulty of restoring fallen churches. Are the Jewish People never to be recovered from their long unbelief? Are the millions who almost or altogether worship saints, or the visible bread and wine, or the mother of our Lord, never to find that Lord himself made to them all in all? Are the innumerable divisions of Protestant Churches never to merge in oneness of faith by the tie of one Lord, one faith, one Baptism? Are the wrongs and errors and evils in those Churches never to be scattered? Is this strange deadness of heart and life, this worldliness and idolatry of spirit so rife among us, this weakness of faith that leaves such a wealth of gracious provision without results. Are all these things to remain thus? Are they never to be remedied. Did not Jesus leave with us a provision for effecting all this necessary work in His Kingdom ere he ascended on high. Is it not plain that there is such provision full, effective, sufficient, as set forth in the words above quoted? Are any of these things requiring to be done a greater difficulty than the removing of a mountain from its place?

There is nothing on earth to be compared in urgency with the necessity of faith, to the removal of great and terrible ills. But it is also true that there is nothing on earth equal to faith in power: He that made the lightning and the thunder, and who moves the inventive genius of man to the discovery of the mightiest forces of nature, has revealed to us the truth that faith, as a grain of mustard seed only, is adequate to the removal of every evil on earth, every mountain of difficulty however appalling it may appear in the magnitude and fierceness of its power.

What, then, can equal in pressure the duty of faith resting on the Churches of God? When, therefore, you gather yourselves together, dear brethren, as the disciples and servants of Christ, reflect, we beseech you, on the vastness of the work you have to do. But reflect, too, how surely this work will be done, if your faith be only as a grain of mustard seed.

Therefore it is that we commend to you faith in the word of God, in God, and in Christ, however familiar, the thought for it is plain that the world groans and is in pain for want of it.

May the Lord move us all to the measure of faith and prayer the case so urgently needs.

### REPORT ON BENEVOLENT FUNDS.

Your Committee on Benevolent Funds beg to submit the following Report:—

#### 1.—AS TO OBJECTS.

There are three great denominational enterprises now calling for large drafts from our benevolent funds, viz.:—Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and the Endowment of Acadia College. A great work lies before the Nova Scotia Baptist Home Missionary Union. Your Committee regret that the funds of the Board have not been sufficient to enable them to do as much Home Missionary work during the past year as seemed necessary, yet they are glad to learn that its financial condition is improving. In Foreign Missions we are committed to the support of three missionary families in Hindustan. The salaries of these, and the extra expenditure necessary to the establishment of our mission to the Telugus requires much money. The recent appeal of the Home Secretary of the Board shews a falling off in the income during the past year. The raising of \$100,000 additional endowment for Acadia College is now on our hands, and the consummation of this great undertaking is regarded in all quarters as absolutely essential to the future prosperity of our beloved College.

There are also three minor benevolent enterprises that must not be overlooked in the exercise of our benevolence, viz.:—the French Mission, Ministerial Education, and the Infirm Ministers' Fund. These objects are deserving, and their funds need replenishing.

#### 2.—AS TO METHOD.

The Endowment of Acadia College is being pushed forward, under the direction of the Executive Committee, by a special agency appointed for that purpose.

With regard to our Missions and other benevolent objects your Committee find it difficult to recommend a system that may be adapted to every church or locality, but they beg to suggest that the adoption of a system of quarterly, or at least half-yearly, collections or subscriptions as likely to be generally advantageous. The circulation of Cards at the commencement of the year, with a view to secure a pledge from each member of the church and congregation, would, they think, be attended with salutary results. The wording might be as follows:—

By the blessing of God I hereby resolve to give for the year ending May 31, 1878, payable quarterly to benevolent objects as follows:—

Home Missions.....	\$
Foreign Missions.....	—
French Missions.....	—
Ministerial Education.....	—
Acadia College.....	—
Infirm Ministers' Fund.....	—

Total.....

(Signed)

The pastors, however, can best adapt a system to the wants of their own people, and success in raising the necessary funds very much depends upon their advocacy of the claims of these benevolent objects, the training of their people as to the duty of giving to the Lord's cause, and upon their supervising the method best adapted to the various churches and communities.

#### 3.—AS TO MOTIVES.

"For none of us liveth unto himself." "Freely ye have received freely give." "Occupy till I come."

Respectfully submitted,

ISA. WALLACE, Chairman.

### REPORT ON SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

The Committee on "Sabbath Observance" beg to report as follows:

We believe the Sabbath day to have been divinely instituted in the beginning for all mankind in all ages—that its gracious design was man's good and God's glory; and that its non-observance as a day of rest and worship is repugnant to both.

Assuming that the resurrection day of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Christian Sabbath its due celebration especially by professing Christians is a matter of the utmost importance, inasmuch as it can be abundantly shown that "Sabbath breaking" is a fruitful source of crime against the laws of God and man. Many a culprit has ended his days on the gallows whose first deviation from the path of rectitude has been disregard for the Lord's Day.

The manner of its observance, according to Scripture, may be stated in general terms to be entire cessation from all unnecessary secular labour, mental or physical, and the employment of the day in devotional exercises such as thanksgiving, prayer, praise, sacred reading, giving and receiving religious instruction, and whatever else is in keeping with the worship of God, both at home and in the sanctuary. The house of God is the proper place of resort during the Sabbath Day for all, whenever and wherever practicable.

The only license to labour on that day may be gathered from the precept and example of our Lord when on earth. He, the "Lord of the Sabbath Day," taught that it was lawful to do well on that day. But even the well-doing was to be restricted to labour absolutely necessary to satisfy the ordinary demands of nature, the alleviation of suffering, and saving the life of man or beast. Thus we find Him performing miracles of healing, justifying his disciples in plucking and eating corn to satisfy hunger, &c., &c. (See Matt. xii. 1-13; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-10, and kindred passages.)

But notwithstanding these plain directions and indications as to the observance of the day it is to be deeply regretted that Sabbath desecration is so common among men. Passing over the open flagrant violations of the Sabbath, which properly belong to another jurisdiction, we would call the attention of this body to the great laxity in the observance of the day on the part of many professing Christians, and the tendency to abuse the liberty given by our Lord, by endeavoring to make out cases of necessity and mercy which only become so on account of past neglect, or a strong desire for pleasure or pecuniary advantage. For instance, it becomes work of necessity to prepare fire-wood to keep the family from suffering, to bake the meat for dinner or the rolls for supper, or to blacken the boots on Sunday morning, and to do a hundred other things because they were neglected on the previous day. Many persons who would not be seen laboring on the field or in the shop seem to have no scruples about performing a journey in order to be ready for the transaction of business on Monday morning. Some endeavor to compromise matters by starting in the morning and attending some place of worship on the way, and finishing the journey in the evening. Many use the day for the interchange of social visits which they regard as harmless, and visiting the sick likewise, which indeed has the semblance of well-doing, but very often the sick-room is crowded to suffocation on that day, while for the next six days the patient is left to suffer for want of proper attendance. And by far too common is the practice of standing around the place of worship discussing all kinds of worldly subjects, making bargains, paying debts, and such like business transactions, but for which, some at least, would seldom be seen at the house of God. These and similar engagements on the Lord's Day by professing Christians go very far to lessen the respect for the day among the ungodly, and tend greatly to the hindrance of the cause of truth in the world.

That reformation in this respect is necessary needs no argument. Your Committee would most urgently press home upon all heads of families the importance of maintaining in their households the Scriptural observance of the day. If this were done many of the evils complained of would disappear. They also recommend that our pastors, missionaries, religious teachers, and all persons of influence, give this subject a more prominent place in their sermons and teachings, and all their public exercises, with a view to the correction of the growing evils of Sabbath desecration, and to the due reverence and observance of the Divine command, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

Respectfully submitted,

I. J. SKINNER, Chairman.

### Joseph Cook on the Baptists.

In one of his late lectures, in the Tremont Temple, the Rev. Joseph Cook paid a noble tribute to the Baptists for what they have done in maintaining the doctrine of a spiritual church membership. He said:—

I remember where I am speaking; I know what prejudices I am crossing; but I know that in this assembly assuredly nobody will have objection to my advocacy, even at a little expense of consistency with my own supposed principles, of the necessity of a spiritual church membership. [Much applause.] If I say that a certain denomination, represented by that man who was driven from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, has, in spite of all we hear of criticism about one of its beliefs, been of foremost service in bringing into the world, among all Protestant denominations, an adequate idea of the importance of a spiritual churchmembership, I know that no generous heart or searching intellect will object to that statement. [Prolonged applause.]