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Associational Documents.

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Common Errors respecting Christian Churches, and Ordinances.

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

Dear Brethren,—

In harmony with our usual practise we send you our annual epistle, in reply to, and by way of return for, the one sent by each of the churches to this body.

Our combination is formed for the purpose of mutual sympathy, edification and co-operation in Christian Work.

Whilst we disavow all right, on the part of Associations, to interfere in the management of the several churches, organized according to gospel teaching, yet we acknowledge the obligations that arise from our common fellowship, to do all in our power to help in efforts to extend the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. These obligations rest on us, as individual members, as churches, and as an Association of Churches.

We must labor to remove whatever obstacles we may find hindering the progress of truth, and must help each other in efforts to spread the gospel at home and abroad. These obstacles often appear in the form of errors of doctrine and practice and in inaccurate views prevailing respecting the church and its ordinances:

1. With regard to the Church we find errors very common respecting what, we believe, according to the Sacred Scriptures, to be its constitution; and the nature and design of its ordinances.

These may be occasioned largely in Christian communities, so-called, by the term church being associated with an ecclesiastical organization formed on the model of human governments, having as its depository of power, a pope, a bishop, or certain courts, and being governed by laws framed without reference to the teachings of the New Testament, having for their object the securing of influence, power and wealth, rather than as we affirm in our Articles of Faith, and Practice:—

1. A particular visible church of Christ is a number of his saints, by mutual acquaintance and communion voluntarily and understandingly covenanting and embodying together, for upholding and promoting the worship and service of God, to show forth his declarative glory, and for their own edification. 1 Peter ii. 5; 1 Cor. i. 2; Acts ii. 42-47.

1. The term "Church" is sometimes, even by Baptists, applied to the aggregate of Baptist churches, instead of saying "churches" when referring to more than one individual organization. There is no such thing as "the Baptist Church." The Association or Associations are not the Baptist Church and have no power of discipline, or of administering the ordinances, nor of ordaining ministers. To regard an Association as the Church would be interposing some other authority over an individual church, instead of holding Christ as Lord and Master, and His Word and Spirit as Teacher and Ruler. From this common error many evils flow. It is one of the great mistakes on which the great apostasy is founded.

2. Membership in our churches is often held as a privilege to be enjoyed without the responsibility which should always be connected with such privilege. Each member should contribute towards the support of the Ministry and the Benevolent Objects of the body, according to his or her ability. Even absent members should not be excused from these duties so long as they remain members. In case of removal to another locality, where fellowship cannot be continued, the membership should be removed to a church that is nearer and convenient to attend. Contributions should then be transferred without loss of time. The benefits of such fellowship would then be enjoyed both by the individual and the church. Membership without fellowship is an anomaly in Christ's Church to be corrected only by applying New Testament principles in its government.

3. Then thirdly with respect to Gospel ordinances. Our practice with regard to the two ordinances of the gospel is sufficient to declare how we understand New Testament teachings. It is evident to all that Bible Baptism involves a public profession of religion. It plainly teaches the need of previous conversion and a change of heart. A death and burial is unmistakably shown by the act of baptism and the rising again from the baptismal waters shews the rising to newness of life. The common error we meet with, in this respect, is that of *thinking something else will do instead of baptism*, and that the use of a little water might be a sufficient substitute for immersion. The fact that this is applied to those who make no profession of faith in Christ is, we hold, cherishing and encouraging the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration and leading men to trust in that ordinance for salvation rather than looking alone to Christ. When it comes to this it is of course a most terrible evil which is destructive of all evangelical religion, and leads on ultimately to Ritualism and Popery in its worst dogmas.

The necessity for the existence of Baptist Churches is sometimes called in question. Many supposing that the only or principal point of difference between ourselves and others is the initiatory ordinance of Baptism, whereas the far greater one, we hold, is that the membership of a Christian Church should be only of such as have made a credible profession of conversion to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Without supposing that we are better than others we hold that a church of Christ can only be formed of His followers.

4. Respecting the Lord's Supper we meet with errors of a grave and mischievous character. Instead of making it an observance for the church only, it is sometimes held that it may be administered to others without any such restriction as we observe. Then again in other bodies, instead of allowing all the members to participate some who have received in infancy what is regarded by them as the initiatory rite to the Church are not permitted to partake of the Supper. Thus making a distinction between the members, having some in full fellowship whilst others are not, and are consequently debarred from Church privileges, but nevertheless are held to be in some sort, members. Again, in cases of dangerous illness of children and other persons who have not received baptism, or the,

so-called, sacrament, one or both are frequently hastily administered as a sort of preparation for death. Thus leading the person to trust in such observance for salvation rather than in Jesus the Saviour of sinners. This, we hold, is all wrong, and, among Protestants, almost equal, as it appears to us, to the extreme unction of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is incumbent on us to guard against all such infringements of gospel order, and be ready, at all times, to give a reason for our practice. Our rule in these matters is we think scriptural, plain, and consistent: 1st Faith, 2nd Baptism, then 3rdly Fellowship and communion, as given in a few sentences in No. 2 of Part 2nd of our Articles:—

2. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming and the former is requisite to the latter; that is to say, those are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to partake of all its ordinances and privileges, who upon profession of their faith, have been baptized, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26; Acts ii. 41, 42; viii. 12, 36, 39; Matt. iii. 6-16; Romans vi. 4; Col. ii. 12; John iii. 23; Acts viii. 26-39.

Brethren, we need hardly say that the human heart is full of error respecting the way of salvation. Men allow all sorts of mistakes to prevent them from accepting Christ. Instead of regarding the gospel as offering a present and immediate salvation, some hold that a certain length of time is required for the various stages of experience, or for the development of gospel truth in the heart of the unbeliever before he is changed from an awakened sinner to a trusting obedient follower of Christ.

Many of our churches suffer from a want of appreciation of the power of Christ to save. They are disposed to wait for some time of revival before they expect to see the results of the faithful preaching of the gospel. This we need not say is an error which vitally affects and hinders the progress of the cause in such churches. This error is very specious and requires close examination, and carefully watching against. The grand design of the gospel is to remove from this world the darkness of heathenism and sin, and to bring in the light of truth, to drive the clouds of error by having the rays of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us. This light should be reflected on the world by Christians, whose aim should be to enlighten and bless all with whom they come in contact. It is for the members of our churches by their lives and conversation to meet the errors as they appear, and to remove them as they have opportunity, by the testimony they bear to Christ's truth. We have a glorious inheritance. The work was well begun and has been transmitted to us by those who have suffered and died in defence of the truth. We have entered into their labors which they have left us as a precious legacy, to use for future generations. Brethren let us be faithful to our trust, and we shall meet the Master's commendation: "Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

As the following report has reference to united action in the management of this Fund we have thought it desirable that it should come before our readers, outside of the N. S. Eastern Association, we therefore insert it in our columns for general information. Ed. C. M.

Report on Infirm Ministers' Fund of Eastern Association.

Report of Committee appointed last year "To report on a better method of making the Infirm Ministers' Fund more permanent." (See Minutes 1878, page 8.)

Precisely what is meant by the said resolution, your committee, do not profess to understand. All the funds in the hands of the Board may be regarded as "permanent." That is to say, the funds are in one way or another, invested, and bearing interest.

Your Committee, however, deem it in keeping with the resolution to lay before the Association the exact state of the funds held by the I. M. Board of this Association.

In Treasurer's Report.....	\$175 88
In W. Faulkner's hands.....	170 00
Invested on Mortgage.....	500 00
Unpaid Interest.....	80 00
	\$928 88

Your Committee beg leave to make the following suggestions:

1. This Fund ought to be largely augmented. It is miserably inadequate to the purpose designed, the relief of men who have been laid aside by failing health or old age. While other bodies make stated provision for their infirm ministers, the Baptists in these Provinces have scarcely conceived the idea of their duty in this respect. If the whole of the disposable funds were voted to one individual, he would not be kept in comfort for six months. If a family were to be maintained, or an establishment of any kind kept, the interest, &c., available per annum, would not pay the expense for six weeks. And yet, any day there may be several applicants to this Board for assistance.

Your Committee would urge upon the Baptist people the necessity of making this Fund more worthy of our care and anxiety. It should be possible to vote any one who is compelled to retire, at least one hundred dollars a year from this Fund.

2. As to the methods of increasing this Fund, your committee are of opinion that every minister should himself contribute a stated sum yearly. Some of the Denominations require their ministers to pay so much a year to the Fund for Infirm Ministers and Ministers Widows. In other bodies, it is left to the option of the ministers, who may, or may not, pay the annual premium, according to a regular scale of fees, for older or younger men. The Committee would press upon the pastors themselves the necessity of self-help. Ministers are liable to look upon a fund of this kind only as an aid, to which they have a certain kind of claim. Because they are incapacitated ministers, they make application to participate in this Fund. But is there not something of the feeling of mendicants going to a kind man's door, humbly suing for relief? Suppose that each man should contribute his annual subscription, say of ten dollars; he would then apply to the Board for his right—for what in part at

least, belonged to him. With what feeling of independence would the old man approach the august council who dispense the monetary favors of the denomination. Instead of hat in hand, beseeching for a pittance, he would simply have to present his claim.

In addition to these payments, your Committee would respectfully urge that a collection be taken in every church in connection with this fund be respectfully solicited. The late Gardener Colby of Massachusetts, has left by will twenty-five thousand dollars to a Society to be incorporated for the relief of aged and indigent Baptist ministers. Such munificence should be held up as an example to our people. We cannot expect such men in these provinces, but our people can give proportionally.

EXPLANATIONS TO BE MADE.

Your Committee would urge every pastor to explain to the people in public, the nature of this Fund. He should not be kept from this by any mock modesty. If a man give himself to the work of the ministry, body and soul, as every minister ought to do, he will not be able to provide for sickness or old age. The ministers should make this clear to their congregations, who would respond to the justice of the claim.

CAPITAL OF THIS FUND.

Your committee would suggest that the Capital Stock of this Fund consist of the securities now held by the I. M. Board; the annual subscriptions, together with all legacies and donations; and any excess of current income over the claims in any year.

CURRENT INCOME.

and that for the current expenditure only such monies be available as may accrue from the collections, and from the interest received on the investments of the Board.

THIS FUND OUGHT TO BE PLACED ON A DENOMINATIONAL BASIS.

Finally, your Committee would suggest the advisability of having one Board of Infirm Ministers' Funds—for the Maritime Provinces. There are many reasons why such a Fund should be placed upon the broadest Denominational basis. The application should be considered by a Board removed from local influences. All the capital could be easily managed by one Board, and more profitably. The funds should never be left at the disposal of a sectional Committee, but by those who are completely independent. Other reasons may appear to business men, but these seem to your Committee grave enough to warrant the statement, that one inter-Provincial Board should be formed for the purpose of answering and administering all such moneys as may be now held or hereafter contributed for this praise-worthy object.

D. A. STEELE, Chairman.

In Memoriam.

REV. ROBERT BOYD, LATE OF WAUKESHA, WIS.

The Canadian papers inform us of the death of the Rev. Dr. Boyd, who entered into rest on the 1st. inst., being nearly 59 years old. He was a native of Paisley, Scotland, and was born in the year 1820. He was for some years Pastor of the Church in Brockville, Ontario; after that, at Chicago. Loss of health occasioned his removal to Wisconsin, where he fulfilled the duties of a brief pastorate, at Waukesha, and was greatly endeared to the people. Exchanging the pulpit for the press, he wrote a number of useful religious treatises, which have had a wide circulation, and have instructed and comforted thousands. The readers of "None but Christ," "Rock of Ages," and other edifying books have continually given God thanks for the talent bestowed on his servant, and so abundantly blessed to the edification of the brethren. The divine compensation was remarkable. For twelve years Dr. Boyd's health was completely broken down. His lower limbs were hopelessly paralysed, and he was confined to his room, mostly to his bed. But he was not idle there. His pen was always busy. The muscles and nerves were helpless, but the brain was in vigorous action; and thus he was enabled to provide for his family. How graciously does the Lord set one thing over against another!

About thirty years ago I spent a month in Dr. Boyd's company, on a collecting tour for the Canada Baptist Missionary Society. We travelled over a considerable portion of what was then called "Canada West," now "Ontario." Dr. Boyd's conversation was very pleasant and edifying; it was a delightful contrast to the uncourteous treatment met with from some of the Western brethren, who might have profitably studied Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

Our dear brother was exceedingly happy in his religious experience. He lived in an atmosphere of exalted spiritual mindedness. He fed on Gospel truth, and became stronger and stronger, and "his lips fed many." By his writings, "he being dead, yet speaketh."

J. M. C.

A Baptist Association in Japan.

The Baptist churches in Japan have formed themselves into an Association for mutual encouragement and Christian work, and the first associational gathering has just been held. The church at Yokohama offered hospitality, and it was on a liberal scale. There was some good, hearty preaching, and two "lay" brethren, with two native pastors, were the appointed preachers. One of the former was a telegraph operator in the Government employ, and the other was an aged deacon of the Yokohama church, who is a very active servant of Christ, testifying of the grace of God in the outlying villages. The two native pastors were, first, a good brother who gets a very small salary and no summer holidays, but then the salary is never allowed to fall into arrears, and that is something. The other is Dr. Brown's assistant in Bible translation. He used to be one of the famous samurai, and daily carried about his two swords for his Japanese lord, the daimeo; but now as he says, he is carrying for Jesus the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A correspondent who was there thus pictures the scene.—"They seemed to have very little business except at the throne of grace, praising God for His signal favours thus far, and entreating for still larger manifestations of His converting and sanctifying power among the thirty-