

CIRCULAR LETTER.

THE DUTIES AND CLAIMS OF OUR DESTITUTE AND WEAK CHURCHES.

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

Dear Brethren,—

We propose to address you upon the subject of the duties and claims of our destitute and weak churches. Our object in presenting you with a few thoughts relative thereto is that we may give serious attention to some of the lamentable evils which tend to cause weakness where there should be strength, and division where union is essential to prosperity, and devise such remedies as we may recommend to the prayerful and serious consideration of all who desire the prosperity of the churches and the consequent advancement of the cause of God. In order to do this, we must remember that while as churches we are independent of each other, at the same time, by a well defined law of the New Testament, we are to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Let us also remember that while we maintain our independence, at the same time, as churches, we are *one* in practice, *one* in polity, *one* in our views in matters of faith and doctrine, *one* in sympathy. Therefore, that which affects the interests of the weak, must necessarily affect the strong, and no church is so strong that it may ignore the claims of the weaker without suffering loss, and none so weak that it may plead exemption from its share in the common burdens without similar results.

Prompted by this feeling, we shall attempt to define what we mean by a strong church and what by a weak one. By a strong church, we mean one that is able and *willing* to meet its local financial liabilities, sustain its local religious interests, give a competent salary to its pastor, and contribute liberally to the benevolent objects of the denomination. But of those who do this, we can find, according to the Minutes of the last Association, but three churches within its bounds, *viz.*, Amherst, Truro, and North Sydney. Thus, out of sixty-four churches, which comprise this Association, there are but *three strong churches*. We shall therefore find it necessary to bring under this head those that agree to unite together for the purpose of supporting a pastor, and are thus enabled to enjoy regularly the preaching of the Word and the ordinances of the Gospel. Among the sixty-four churches there are but twenty-two pastors who are able to labour with regularity. Fourteen of these are engaged in pastoral work among thirty-four churches in the counties of Colchester and Cumberland. Three of