

This is the last transcription of the Circulars of the Contentnea Association that I have. During this period of time, they were not associated with the so-called Beebe Baptists. You can tell this by the emphasis upon duty, duty, duty. However, in 1871 or 72, they were received into that fellowship, but we do not possess any of their Minutes after they came into that fellowship. I hope you enjoy the reading., Stanley C. Phillips.

1859 Circular Contentnea Baptist Association

Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord,

Through the tender mercies and goodness of the great *I Am-* we are spared to see another annual meeting of the delegates and messengers that compose the 28th Annual Session of the Contentnea Baptist Association. And since it has become customary to give you something in the form of a Circular Letter, and not merely because it is a *customary* thing, do we present you with a Circular, but because we esteem it a well cherished privilege by which (in part) we wish to show where we stand that it is not upon the sandy foundation of human inventions such, for instance, as a conglomeration of Bible classes, Sunday schools, union and Bible societies not the retailing of life membership nor life directorship, neither upon the “*pay and obey*” scheme or “*do and live*” system as making pharisaic prayers, paying the priest and obeying his precepts. But upon the mercies, the pure essence of the Rock, the Rock of Ages which is referred to in the 16c 18v of the Gospel of Matthew. “*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Then it is not for mere usage that we wish to present you with a Circular Letter, but that after we are gone to the world of Spirits, that it may be handed down to our children and our grand children after us, as has been done for us by our forefathers, and let them see our footprints and landmarks running parallel with and fortified by the Holy Scriptures. The subject we wish to bring before your minds at this time is that:

Of Good Works

We learn from the holy Scriptures that all men by nature are doers of wicked works for says the Apostle Paul to the Colossian brethren, 1c 21v, “*And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.*” By this Scripture we learn that even the Colossian brethren were while in a state of nature the doers of wicked works and as we learn from 1st Samuel 24c 18v, that wickedness proceedeth from the wicked and in Jeremiah 17c 8v “*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?*” and again in 1st John 5c 19v, “*And we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*” Then it seems, dear brethren, that the whole world of mankind naturally speaking are in a state

of wickedness, and again in Psalm 7c 11v, *“God judgeth the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day.”* From the foregoing Scriptures we understand that man in his natural state does not act good works, for the Scripture says in Matthew 19c 17v, *“There is none good but one; that is God.”* And we learn that the tree must be made good before the fruit can be made good, 7c 17v. *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth the evil fruit.”* 18v, *“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.”* Then we find that it is necessary for the husbandman to graft the branch into the spiritual stock which is Jesus Christ and then the branch brings forth fruit (says the Apostle, Paul), contrary to nature; so man when grafted in Christ the good stock brings forth good fruit and not before. The apostle Paul says in speaking of the Gentiles, Roman 11c 17v, *“And if some of the branches be broken off and thou being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18v, boast not against the branches. But if thou boast thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19v, Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. 20v, Well because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded but fear. 21v “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.”* It seems to us, dear brethren, the above quoted Scripture is enough to stir every Gentile Christian to the very centre (if we are allowed the expression). And again 22v, *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity, but toward thee goodness if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou also shall be cut off.”* Dear Brethren and sisters, had we not ought to be found walking in the performance of every duty which we believe God has enjoined upon us to do lest we through our slothfulness and neglect of duty provoke our God as did Israel of old and be cut off from our children the light of His precious Gospel and graphs in some other, for says the apostle 23v, *“And they also if they abide not still in unbelief shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24v, For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.*

First, then let us be found not with the whirlwind, not with the storm and not with the fire, but with the still small voice, by watching our own selves, families and our brethren and sisters and quietly absenting ourselves in the secret chamber or grove there to pour out our prayers to Him who hears the prayers of His people to bless us in all things that accord with His will, to give us grace and Christian fortitude to withstand the fiery darts of the devil in all his devices and to bless our families, our neighbors, our rulers, our land and country, and especially His Church and ministers; for dear brethren, it seems to us by the bereaving hand of Providence in taking away annually from us some of our ministering brethren and a coldness among the churches that there is something wrong among us. Therefore we think it our every duty to carefully and prayerfully examine ourselves, and try to see where the Jonah-like spirit lies. 2d, Let us be found round our family altars in prayer and supplication to a throne of grace and

filling our seats at our regular appointed meetings, singing praises and giving thanks to the Lord for His abundant mercies and goodness, setting an example before our children in all our acts worthy of their initiation and let us endeavor to know our ministering brethren who labor in the word, as saith the apostle, 1st Thess. 5c 12 and 13v, *“And we beseech you brethren to know them which labor among you and are over you, in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.”*

Now dear brethren, it seems to us that we are not merely required to *know* the fixtures of our ministers but that we know *them*. 1st, In *doctrine*: see that they are not wolves in sheep clothing; see that they preach Christ and Him crucified the only name given under heaven whereby sinners can be saved; see that they give God all the glory for the salvation of sinners; see that they belong to none of the worldly institutions of the day, and that they have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them.- 2d, And after we are satisfied that they are called and qualified of God to preach His everlasting Gospel, then dear brethren, it becomes our duty to *know them* in a temporal point of view. We believe it is our duty to **visit them and their families**, and see that they have the proper necessities for a comfortable living for says the apostle Paul. 1st Cor, 9c 11v, *“If we have sown unto you spiritual things is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”* We should not, after feasting upon the spiritual food which God has been pleased to give us through them, fold our hands together and say, “be ye clothed or fed,” for the Scriptures says, James 2c 14v, *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works, can faith save him?”* 15v, *“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16v- and one of you say unto them “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit? 17v- Even so faith if it hath not works is dead being alone.”* Then, dear brethren, let us endeavor to prove our faith by our works in contributing our carnal things unto those who administer unto us of their spiritual things and also to the poor saints for says the apostle Paul, Romans 15c 27v, *“It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things,”* and again, Galatians 6c 6v, *“Let him that is taught in the word communicated unto him that teacheth in all good things.”* And again, 1st Timothy 5c 17v, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine. 18v, For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn;”* and *“the laborer is worthy of his reward.”* Perhaps we have quoted Scripture enough on this point. Then, dear brethren, while we believe the way that God has laid down for the government of the household of faith, or the church of Jesus Christ militant, is too narrow for any of Mystery Babylon’s crew to walk in, we do believe that it is amply wide for every Christian with all and every duty that God has enjoined upon him, and though we should be cautious and watch, lest we go off in the ways of the god of mammon, we should be equally cautious and watch, lest we leave off

the performance of our duties and fall into the ditch on the other side. We should always bear in mind that the Christian way is a strait and narrow one, just wide enough for him to press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The wall on the one side is not low enough to take the god of mammon over and carry him along, neither is the one on the other side inclined so as to encourage the Christian traveler to lounge in idleness, but in the language of the Holy Writ, "*Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" Then let us endeavor to be found walking in every duty worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, even to the administering to the necessities of the poor saints, bearing of each other's burthens (sic) and endeavoring to live in the enjoyment of a conscience void of offence toward God and our fellow man that in our last days on earth we may be enabled to adopt the language of the apostle Paul whereby he says, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.*" May the language of the above quotation be fitly applied to us all in our last days on earth, is our humble petition to a throne of grace. Amen.

So farewell, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, and may the God of Israel govern and direct us all through this unfriendly world and at last own us, and crown us, His in heaven is our humble prayer for His great name's sake. Amen.