

**THE CHURCH CLERK; A
HANDBOOK FOR CLERKS
OF BAPTIST CHURCHES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649200207

The church clerk; a handbook for clerks of Baptist churches by Zelotes Grenell

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ZELOTES GRENELL

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OF BAPTIST CHURCHES**

The Church Clerk

A HANDBOOK

For Clerks of Baptist Churches

By

Zelotes Grenell

Take thee a great tablet and write upon it with
the pen of a man.—Isaiah 8:1



AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
PHILADELPHIA

BOSTON

CHICAGO

ST. LOUIS

ATLANTA

DALLAS

286.02

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A. J. ROWLAND, Secretary

Published May, 1909

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PREFATORY

THERE are forty-seven thousand four hundred and nine Baptist church clerks in the United States, by the last count. That is to say, there are so many Baptist churches, according to the "American Baptist Year-Book" for 1908. Every one of these churches has a clerk. A church may have no pastor, no deacon, no trustee, no treasurer, no meeting-house, no services, but who ever knew of a Baptist church without a clerk? That is significant.

A church, organized on gospel lines, means life—life of the highest order; life means action, and worthy action is worth recording. Church action is recorded in lives finely influenced, and in cherished memories. The clerk's principal official care is to make a written record of it for preservation. Church business is the most important business done on earth. When it is pervaded by the right spirit its binding and loosing are ratified in heaven, an assurance that is given to no other organization however august and wise. The man who officially and faithfully records it renders no slight service.

The importance of that service becomes more manifest as the years pass. Long after it has been rendered, it is the subject of cordial praise for its

completeness or of expressed lament because it is plainly inexact or carelessly indistinct. There are old church records that are literally worth their weight in gold—nay, could not be bought for any sum that the most eager antiquarian would offer for them—held at so high value because they were well made and have the sanctity of age. They contain revered names and perpetuate the memory of transactions that are of historic value because those transactions reflect the spirit, thought, movement of their times. It is well that church clerks should often remind themselves that they are writing for posterity, and that they are leaving their intellectual and moral portraits on the pages they inscribe.

Another consideration heightens the significance of the work of this officer. He stands in intimate relation to the religious story of his day. The religious life of Americans is, in the main, denominational. Denominational statistics are studied diligently from time to time to ascertain in what direction and with what speed the Christian world is moving. It is important that the published statistics tell the truth. As to the Baptist denomination, the "Year-Book," issued by the American Baptist Publication Society of Philadelphia, is our most reliable source of information. How are its statistics made up? The editor of the "Year-Book" gets his information from the State Convention reports. The compilers of those reports make up their tables from the Association minutes. The clerks of the Associations

draw their figures from the letters of the churches, and the statistical parts of those letters are supplied by the church clerks. Thus the clerks of the churches are the springs whose rills of figures are gathered into the rivulets which in turn make the rivers that fill our statistical sea. Precision at the fountainheads makes for precision all the way through.

The intent of the following pages is twofold: (1) To rescue the office of church clerk from the too slight regard in which it is often held, by showing its large and varied requirements, its importance and worth; and (2) to help those who are trying to discharge its manifold and exacting duties.

DETROIT, January, 1909.

Z. G.

THE CHURCH CLERK

I

THE CHURCH CLERK CHOSEN

WHAT kind of a man should a church look for when a clerk is wanted? It is a serious question, especially when a church is being newly organized.

Too often there is no adequate looking. Some one says, "We ought to have a clerk," and he or some other casts an eye over the assembly, sees a bright-looking brother who is thought to be deserving of some prominence, and nominates him. Whereupon, as it might seem discourteous to propose more deliberation, the nomination is confirmed by vote.

Sometimes one is chosen clerk for his reputation as a penman; sometimes his general popularity elects him; and sometimes his selection is the bestowing of a cheap compliment, which may prove expensive in the end. The result of these haphazard methods is often good, for the office helps to make the officer; oftener the result is—— But there is a better way.

A Nominating Committee

It is well to have a committee of nomination. This committee should have time to study on