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Baptists. South Carolina. Bethel Association, 1804.

Minutes ... at Bethel ... August 11, 1804.

Augusta, Ga., Randolph, 1804. 14 pp.

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MINUTES

OF THE

BETHEL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

MET AT

BETHEL MEETING-HOUSE,

SPARTANBURGH DISTRICT, (S. C.)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1804; AND CONTINUED UNTIL

THE TUESDAY FOLLOWING.

AUGUSTA, GEORGLA:
PRINTED BY GEORGE R. RANDOLPH.

1804.

MINUTES

OF THE

BETHEL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

SATURDAY, August 11th, 1804.

1 **T**HE introductory sermon was preached agreeably to appointment, by Brother Lewis Rector, from St. John xviii. 36. "My Kingdom is not of this World."

2 Letters from thirty churches were read, and the names of their messengers enrolled.

3 Chose Brother Richard Shackelford, moderator, and Brother Samuel Eccles, clerk.

4 Chose Brethren Shackelford, Rooker, Eccles, Rowland and Eddins, to be a committee to arrange the business of the association. Adjourned 'till Monday 9 o'clock.

5 The Sabbath, as usual, was employed in the exercises of public worship; six sermons were delivered to a very numerous congregation, in two divisions at a convenient distance from each other.

MONDAY, 13th, 9 o'clock, A. M. met according to adjournment.

6 Invited the ministering brethren present, of our own and other denominations, to take a seat with us.

7 Nine churches petitioned for admission into our union; namely, one on Dry creek, Edgefield district, constituted of members from Cloud's creek;—one on Dean swamp, Orangeburgh district, under the pastoral care of Brother Isaac Dubose, constituted of members from the Upper Three Runs church; one called Union, in Union district, under the pastoral care of Brother John Putman, constituted of members principally from Padget's creek, and Fairforest, the 29th of October last; one called Antioch, Edgefield district, constituted the 20th January last, of members from Horn's creek; one called Good-Hope, Edgefield district, constituted the 4th of last February, of members from Redbank, Cambridge, Little Stephen's creek and Bethel churches; one called Holly Spring, Spartanburgh district, constituted of members from Bethlehem church; one called Head Cedar Shoal, constituted of members from Padget's creek; one called Green Pond, Spartanburgh district, and one by the name of Newhope, constituted of members from Padget's creek: All of which upon satisfaction being obtained of their faith and order were cordially received. Also, messengers with a letter presented themselves from a church under the care of Mr. Elias Mitchel, who had dissented sometime back from the Seven-day Baptists, but still retaining part of their ceremonies in the administration of the ordinance of baptism; and their minister having been ordained by ministers of their former persuasion, concluded for the present not to receive them, but advise them to call a presbytery of ministers of our order, to assist in regulating them according to the order of our churches.

8 Received a letter and minutes from the Saluda Association, by their messenger Brother Moses Holland—From the Neuse Association, a letter and minutes—From the Georgia Association, a letter and minutes, by Brother Enoch Braziel, their messenger—From the Broad River Association, a letter and minutes, by their messenger Brother George Bruton—From the Hephzibah Association, a letter and minutes, by Brother Henry Hand, their messenger—From the Sarepta Association, a letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Frederick Crouder. Minutes were received from the Charleston Association, forwarded by Doctor Furman. The letters and minutes above mentioned, were read and gave general satisfaction.

9 Received and read, the Circular Address of the general committee of correspondence appointed by the Philadelphia Baptist Association; requesting information with respect to the origin, growth, &c. of associations and churches of our order, and whatever other information may be deemed worthy of communicating—Therefore, appointed Brethren Putman, Shackelford, Palmer, Lilly, and Joseph Woodruff, and the committee of correspondence, to collect materials in order that we may take a general view of our own history; for our own, and the information of others; to be laid before us at our next association; that we may comply with the request in the above mentioned address.

10 Query from Sandy River church. Are we to observe the duty of washing of feet in connexion with the communion? And from Derbin's Creek church—Whether the washing of feet was instituted as an ordinance to be observed by ministers of the

gospel only, or by christians in general, and whether it is a duty which ought strictly to be observed? Answer. We find in sacred writ, that Jesus Christ, in the same night which he instituted the supper, did wash the Disciples' feet, and told them that he had given them an example, that they should do to one another, as he had done unto them. We find no command as to the particular time of practising this beautiful example of humility, nor penalty annexed to the omission of it. Therefore we recommend the churches to search the scriptures for instruction, and to act discretionally in the case.

11 Query from Cloud's creek church. Is it agreeable to the scriptures for a man appointed by a church as a deacon, to act in that office before he is ordained, or not? Answered in the negative.

12 Query from Enoree church. Does the general tenor of the word of God, hold forth, that preachers of the gospel should be learned men? Answer. We do not conceive that the essence of a minister's qualifications consists in what is generally called human learning; yet, we would recommend the lawful pursuit of it, to all our ministering brethren, according to the direction of St. Paul to Timothy. i. Tim. iv. 13. and ii. Tim. ii. 15.

13. Query from Salem Church. Suppose a member of a church get a letter of dismission, and live for several years in the vicinity of an orderly church of our union, and refuse to join, can such a person be looked upon as an orderly person? Answered in the negative.

14 Query from Philadelphia church. Would it be constitutional or expedient for a church to call a minister, belonging to another association, as a supply, or to take their pastoral care, without first applying to the association to which such a minister belongs? Answer. We think a minister must become a member of a church, in order to become regularly their pastor; yet, we think churches are free to call what ministers they please as supplies.

15 Appointed the following brethren to write to corresponding associations;—Rooker to the N. use, Eddins to the Georgia, and to be our messenger; Rector to the Broad River, Shackelford and Greer the messengers; Samuel Marsh to the Hephzibah, Delaughter to be our messenger; Henry King to the Sarepta, Palmer and Reuben Kelley the messengers; Rowland to the Charleston, Eccles and M'Creary to be our messengers. Adjourned 'till to-morrow morning.

TUESDAY, 14th, met according to adjournment.

16 Query from Hopewell church. What is to be done with a minister or member of our order, who joins himself to and associates with a masonic lodge? Answer. We recommend to the church or churches so aggrieved, gently to admonish such a member to withdraw from such society; if he refuse, then we think the church may deal with him according to the discipline of the gospel; yet, we recommend tenderness and caution.

17 By request from Upper Duncan's creek church, we publish the excommunication of a certain Lewis Hunt, who has been legally expelled from said church, and who is endeavoring to impose upon people in the character of a preacher; therefore we warn our churches and members that they show him no countenance.

18 Appointed as supplies, for Little River, Brethren Arthur Williams and Benjamin Northcutt; for Sandy River, Hosea Holcomb, Robert M'Creary and Jeremiah Burns to attend discretionally.

19 By the request from Philadelphia, we alter the time of our Association to the Saturday before the first Sabbath in October, in every year.

20 The letters to the corresponding associations, were brought forward, read and approved, the circular letter was also read and received.

21 Appointed brother Eccles to write the Circular letter for next year, and agree that he be at liberty to choose his own subject.

22 Agreed that our next meeting of association be at Fellowship Meeting-House near Cambridge, on Saturday before the first Sabbath in October 1805. Brother Henry King to preach the sermon; in case of failure Brother Shackelford.

23 Collected the money for printing the Minutes, and appointed Brother Lilly to superintend the business,

24 Agreed that this association acknowledge with thankfulness the liberality of Mr. George F. Randolph, printer in Augusta, in presenting them with between 2 and 300 copies of the last year's Minutes, neatly executed on good paper.

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

MINISTERS NAMES ARE IN CAPITALS, LICENSED PREACHERS IN SMALL CAPITALS... THOSE MARKED THUS * WERE NOT PRESENT.

CHURCHES. MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.

FAIRFOREST, PADGETT'S CREEK, PACOLET, UPPER DUNCAN'S CREEK, L. DUNCAN'S CREEK, BETHEL, SANDY RIVER, BUSH RIVER, LITTLE RIVER, ENOREE, ROCKEY CREEK, TURKEY CREEK, CLOUD'S CREEK, CATAWBA, SUGAR CREEK, POPLAR SPRING, CAMBRIDGE, MILL CREEK, LITTLE STEPHEN'S CH. PROVIDENCE,	Joshua Wilburn, Willis Walker. { David Floyd, THOMAS GREER, HOSEA HOLCOMB, JERE MIAH BURNS. Robert Elliot, William Smith, RICKETSON LIFSEY.* JOSHUA PALMER, REUBEN KELLEY, Roger Brown. Abner Casey, Jacob Rhodes, John Casey, HENRY ROWLAND.* { RICHARD SHACKELFORD, JOHN ROWLAND, Joseph Woodruff, Robert Page. John Owen, Demsey Winburn. { JOHN COLE,* Charles Griffin, Abner Teague, James Teague, Charles Crowe. Kedar Gant, James Smith. Barber Hancock, John Clark, JACOB KING.* No return—their number stands as last year. Robert Elgin, Michael M. Gehe, BENJ. NORTHCUTT.* Richard Yarbrough, Isaac Crouch, THOMAS DELOACH.* Maddox Dyson, Valentine Horsley, DAVIS COLLINS.* JOHN ROOKER, William M. Kenny, BENNET WOOD.* Benjamin Neighbours, William Williams. ROBERT MARSH, Thomas Stettworth, DAVID LILLY.* CHESLEY DAVIS, JOHN BOLGER.* HENRY KING, WILLIAM EDDINS, Theophilus Goodwin. Micajah Poole, ARTHUR WILLIAMS.*
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	Baptized.	Received by Letter.	Dismissed	Restored.	Excommu- nicated.	Dead.	Total.	Sums Con- tributed.
	5	17	23	2	5	1	192	1 50
	8	17	275	1	11	3	246	3
	6	6	7	1	1	2	49	1 4
	12	12	9	1	9	2	307	1 10
	3	8	8	2	2	4	73	1 10
	36	8	15		4	4	410	6
	6	1	36		4	22	22	1
	2	1	9		5	2	240	4
	2	1	9	1	6	3	71	1 87
	5		1		3	2	75	1
	1		1		28	2	28	1
	1		1		48	2	48	1
	54	6	55		95	2	95	1 25
	6		1		56	1	56	1 25
	6	1			50	4	27	1 50
	2	6	6		1	1	71	2
	31	6	6		1	4	71	2
	2	5	2		53	2	53	1 70
	38	16	5	5	134	1	134	2
	7	10	1		49	2	49	1 50
	231	89	463	12	58	30	2295	36 92

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

(CONTINUED)

CHURCHES. MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.

BATHABARA. STATEMENT BROUGHT FORWARD.
RED BANK. HENRY HITT, John Sadler.
HOPEWELL. Davis Pitts.
BRUSHY CREEK. SAMUEL ECCLES, SAMUEL M'CREARY.
SALEM. LEWIS RECTOR, TYRE GLEN, Solomon Hornbuckle.
SILOAM. James Riley, John Havird.
BETHLEHAM. No return—their number stands as last year.
LITTLE RIVER, (S. R.) AUGUSTINE CLAYTON, John Chapman, James Crook.
HORN & CREEK, David M Gray, John May.
BIG STEPHEN'S CRK. SAMUEL MARSH, Saml. Walker, jun. JOHN LANDRUM.*
PHILADELPHIA. GEO. DELAUGHTER, Willis Wharley, ELISHA PALMORE.*
DERBIN'S CREEK, Thomas Reese, Elisha Smith.
LITTLE Sandy River, THOMAS GOODWIN, SAMUEL BROWN.
NEW HOPE. No return—their number stands as last year.
GREEN POND. SPENCER BOBO, Mordcai Chandler, NATH'N LANGSTON.*
HEAD CEDAR SHOAL. John Westmorland, John Durham.
HOLLY SPRING; Spence Calvert, John Smith.
ANTIOCH. JAMES RIDEINGS, Gowen Clayton.
UNION, Joseph Morris, Abraham Raley.
DEAN SWAMP, Barkley Martin, Benjamin Harry, jun. BENJ. HARRY, sen.*
DRY CREEK, ISAAC DUBOSE, Jonathan Cortney.
 Lev Kirkland, Francis Walker.

Increase this year 424.

	Baptized.	Received by Letter.	Dismissed.	Restored.	Excommunicated.	Dead.	Total.	Sums Contributed.
	231	89	463	12	58	30	2295	3612
	3	3	18	2	2	1	59	1
	8	2	8		2	2	82	2
	10	7	8		2	2	65	2
	19	9	8		2	8	103	2 50
	6	8	4	1	4	8	62	1 93
	25	10	45		3	3	212	3
	10		49		6	2	35	1 50
	9	1	13		7	2	157	2 50
	6	1	1		1		27	1
	1	6	5	4			87	1 25
	15	4					32	
							75	1 50
							50	1
							56	6
							37	1
							25	2
							73	2 10
							83	1 25
							55	1 25
Total	348	140	614	19	87	48	5922	68 76

CIRCULAR LETTER,

Taken from the Northhamptonshire Baptist Association, convened at Oakham, June 2nd, 1801; which we the Ministers and Messengers of the Bethel Baptist Association, assembled at Bethel Meeting-House, August 11th, 1804, take the liberty to borrow.

—*—*—*—*—*—*

BELOVED BRETHREN,

OUR annual interview has been attended with peace and harmony, and our hearts have been made to rejoice to find that the work of the Lord is still going on.—Being desirous of promoting not only your edification more immediately, but also the spiritual improvement of those who form a part of your public assemblies; we this year present you with a few considerations intended as **A PERSUASIVE TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.**

There are in all our congregations a number of individuals, who appear in a judgment of charity, to have received the *Truth in love*, and whose conduct in other respects is such as becometh the Gospel, but who live in the habitual neglect of its positive institutions. For real or avowed unbelievers to do this, would occasion no surprise; but that those, who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ, and who cherish the Hope of eternal life through him, should thus seem to disregard his authority, is not a little surprising, and may well be considered as one of the peculiarities of the present *state of religion* amongst us. Nothing of this kind appeared in the times of the Apostles. Converts to christianity were recognized by an open profession of the name of Christ, and admission to the fellowship of the Church. The zeal and ardor of primitive believers, admitted of no hesitation or delay: They never stopped to enquire how little they might do for Christ, and yet go to Heaven; nor thought of reckoning this or the other ordinance not essential to salvation: But, burning with love to the Redeemer, and zeal for his righteous cause, they made haste, and delayed not to keep his commandments. No sooner was Saul converted, than he assayed to join himself to the disciples. Anticipating the pleasure that would result from an obedience to the divine command, and desirous of being numbered amongst the followers of the lamb. The Eunuch, on believing that Jesus was the son of God, exclaimed with an agreeable surprise, see, here is water! What doth hinder me to be baptized, the Philipian Taylor, believing in God, with all his house, was baptized, he and all his streight way, even the same hour of the night in which Paul had spoken to them the word of the Lord. When the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. In those times, as many as gladly received the word, were baptized, and continued stedfast in the apostles doctrines and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. But how different is all this, from the reluctance and supineness of professors in later times, who seem glad of any plea that may exempt them from obligation, or extenuate their remissness in respect to an open profession of the name of Christ, and a practical submission to the institutions of his Church! For a change so novel in the visible state of christianity, we are led to enquire the cause; and, as a

means of correcting so prevailing an evil, to point out the importance of Gospel fellowship as binding upon the followers of Christ.

First, let us enquire the reasons why those, who profess to believe in Christ for salvation, appear, nevertheless, to live in the neglect of Christian fellowship. It will be readily apprehended, that by fellowship in the gospel, something more is meant than a friendly intercourse with individual Christians, or a stated attendance on the solemnities of the Sabbath; that it relates to that state of union peculiar to Christian society, which includes a public profession of the name of Christ, and a solemn engagement to walk together in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. It is the neglect of these important duties that we complain, and would now attempt to suggest a few hints tending to remove the impediments which may lie in the way. There may be some amongst us, who, while their general conduct is such as entitles them to some respect, are, nevertheless, conscious of living in some known sin, and who may therefore, feel it necessary to decline any immediate connexion with the Church of God. Certainly where this is the case, we do not solicit any society; but would rather exhort such persons to confess and forsake their sins, that they may find mercy. The fellowship of Christians is of a holy nature: It is a fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ: They have intercourse with God as the moral governor of the world, through Jesus Christ the mediator; their object is to carry on the *cause of truth and righteousness, to promote the Redeemer's glory, and mutually to labor after a conformity to his will*; but it will be impossible to enter into these designs, or contribute to their accomplishment, if sin have the dominion over us. There may be much civility, and many expressions of friendship; but where purity of heart, and nearness to God are not carefully maintained, there would be none of that Christian tenderness, oneness of spirit, holy freedom and brotherly affection, in which the communion of saints so much consists.— If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Living in sin therefore, or having sinned and not repented, not only disqualifies us for the fellowship of Christians on earth, but also renders us unmeet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Some, though not living in any known or positive evil, may think, nevertheless, that a relation to the Church of God, would lay them under greater obligations to a strict and holy life, than they wish to take upon them; and hence, prefer a state of freedom from such restraints. It is allowed that such a connexion does indeed imply the most sacred of all engagements: We covenant to be the Lord's; renouncing all other Lords who have had dominion over us, we make mention only of his name. Having named the name of Christ, we are required to depart from all iniquity. Having sworn, we are bound to perform it, that we will keep his righteous judgments. And is it indeed an object of dread to be bound to Christ and his service, by a solemn surrender of ourselves to him? If there be any among us who are of this opinion, we do not immediately invite them to our fellowship; but would rather urge them to enquire, whether their hearts be right in the sight of God? The obligation to universal holiness, though it is directly acknowledged, and in a sense confirmed by an open profession of the name of Christ, yet it does not depend upon any such engagement on our part. Christ's service is not a matter of discretion. Whatever we are, or whatever we profess to be, our obligation is radically the same.

It may be pleaded by others, that Church-fellowship is not essential to salvation, and that, therefore, we may go to Heaven without it. Positive institutions are not, indeed, so essential to salvation, as that it would not in any case be obtained without them; but it does not follow, that therefore, they are in no case necessary to salvation. We are sure that living in known sin would exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven; and, for aught we know, living in the neglect of known duty, may do the same.— And if it be true, that Christ becomes the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey him, a disobedience to his commands may exclude us from an interest in his salvation, as well as a rejection of his truth. But if it were otherwise, and supposing we might go to Heaven without attending to Church-ordinances, yet what a principle of selfishness does it discover! What a disregard for the authority of Jesus; what a want of love to him, and zeal for his glory, to live in the neglect of known duty, on the presumption that our own salvation may not be endangered by it! Is it lovely, is it worthy of a child and servant of God thus to act? It might suit a professor whose religion is nothing but selfishness; but let such remember that, they have not the love of God in them: For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.

It is to be feared that some are kept from a public profession of Christ by more worldly motives. They have some flattering prospects in life, and their temporal interest would suffer by it. They have relations and friends who feel averse to religion, and would be offended at their openly professing it. The fear of being disinherited, or sustaining loss in their worldly circumstances, induces some persons to conceal their principles, in hope that some future opportunity may be more favorable to their avowal, without subjecting them to temporal inconvenience. But this temporising with religion, and treating it as a subordinate concern, is of serious importance; it implies a practical denial of Christ before men, and will, we fear, expose the party, if he dies without repentance for it, to a being denied by Christ before the Father another day. Lord, said one, I will follow thee; but let me first go and bury my father—Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home, says another. Jesus answered, let the dead bury their dead;—follow thou me—No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

The dread of reproach is the occasion of preventing some from following the Lord more fully. A general and loose profession of the Christian name is common enough, and to take up with a worldly religion, attaches no stigma to its professors; but to enter into the spirit of the Gospel, to come out from amongst the common herd of nominal Christians, to be separate, to follow the Lord fully, and to keep his ordinances as they were delivered, will subject us to the charge of singularity, and that not only from the grossly immoral, but also from the devout and honorable. But shall we, therefore, be ashamed of Christ before men, and withhold ourselves from the communion of such as are walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless? If any man be ashamed of me and of my words, saith our Lord, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and his holy Angels. Rather let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach: And if this is to be vile, let us be still more vile. He who would please the world, and accommodate his religion to the prevailing taste, undertakes more than he can perform, if he would be the servant of Christ.

“ * * * * * Faithful found

Amongst the faithless only he:

Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
 Unshaken, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd,
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal:
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought
 To swerve from truth."

MILTON.

Others may be deferring an attendance on divine ordinances 'till they receive some particular impressions, to convince of their duty. They think it right for those who love Christ, to own and follow him; and are willing to be considered as his friends, only they are waiting at the Pool for the moving of the waters, in hopes of receiving some kind of extraordinary intimations of the divine will, respecting their immediate duty.—Many persons appear to be looking for something of this sort, and because they go without it from time to time, conclude it is the mind of God that they should not comply with his ordinances; at least, that they should not comply with them at present. It is allowed, indeed, that impressions are desirable, provided, that it be truth or duty that is impressed; otherwise, they deserve no regard: But let these be as desirable as they may, the want of them can never justify our living in the neglect of known duty. Nor are they at all adapted to shew us what is duty, but merely to excite to the performance of what may be proved to be duty without them. If the want of such impressions, or of such a state of mind, as we are wishing for in a state of inactivity, would excuse us in the neglect of Church-fellowship, they would also excuse us in the neglect of other religious duties. But these pleas are highly delusive, and serve only to discover our want of love and zeal in the cause of Christ. Natural timidity appears to beset some, and keeps them back from the open profession of the name of Christ. They feel it desirable to own Christ before men, and are convinced of their obligation so to do; but are deterred by the publicity of such an engagement, and imagine themselves unable to make a good confession before so many witnesses. The natural diffidence of some persons may, indeed, render this very formidable; but it should be remembered, that to gain some advantage, or avoid some inconvenience in worldly affairs, such objections are generally overcome: And why should they be deemed insuperable in a matter of far greater importance? Our strength is small indeed, if we faint here. What should we do in times of persecution, when called to confess Christ at the peril of our lives? Our blessed Lord openly avowed our cause in the face of danger: He neither failed, nor was discouraged; but endured the cross, despising the shame. Cold, indeed, must our hearts be towards him, if we can suffer a few imaginary difficulties to hinder us from owning his righteous cause!—Finally, some are deterred from a compliance with this duty by a fear lest they should not be proper subjects.—It is not owing to any dislike to the ways of the Lord, nor indifference to the glory of Christ, that some amongst us are living in the omission of his ordinances: They regularly attend on all the other means of grace, manifest good will to the Redeemer's cause, join in social prayer for its prosperity, and are lovers of good men; but fear they are not qualified to fill up a place in the Christian-church. The doubts which they entertain of their own personal religion, the supposition that some eminent endowments and a larger degree of Christian experience are necessary to such a connexion, together with the fear of deceiving others, and being themselves deceived, not only excuse them in their own account from a public profession, but appear to justify and commend them in such a line of conduct. We do not wish to persuade any person to profess that of

which he is not conscious. But if it be, indeed, a matter of doubt whether they be true Christians, we may be allowed to express our surprize that they in general discover so little concern about that all-important question. To be walking in such darkness as not to know whither we are going, is far from being desirable; and, if we have any proper sense of things, it must be very painful. And if it is really a matter of doubt whether you be a believer or an unbeliever; a friend to Christ, or an enemy; whether from your heart you wish well, or ill, to his kingdom in the world; whether your soul unites with those who love him, or with those who love him not? Remember this, that there is no neutrality in this case: He, that is not with me, is against me: And, he, that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad. We are either Christ's friends, or his enemies; believers, or unbelievers. We either embrace the Gospel, or reject it; would choose Christ and Heaven for our portion, if we might have our choice, or the present world: And we have only to decide which. In other cases we are not at a loss in judging who, or what we love, and habitually prefer; nor in determining whose side we are of, or to whose interest we feel attached. If our heart be not with Jesus, by no means let us give him our hand, nor betray him with a kiss: But if it be, even though we may not enjoy the comforts of religion in so great a degree as some other Christians, it becomes us, nevertheless, to express it by an open profession of his name. If, with the heart, we believe unto righteousness, let us make confession with the mouth unto salvation.

Secondly—We proceed to point out the importance of Christian-fellowship, as binding upon the followers of Christ.

If there were no other considerations to induce us to give up ourselves to a Christian-church, the requirements of our Lord and Saviour ought to be deemed sufficient. Those who pay no practical regard to this duty, generally live in the neglect of the ordinance of Baptism, which Jesus declared was becoming him and his followers; and also, of the supper, which he enjoined upon us when taking leave of the world. The tenderness of this his dying request, ought to overwhelm all hesitation, and confound the very idea of delay. That a sinner should ask to be remembered of the Saviour is nothing surprising; for if he forget us, we are entirely undone. But that the Lord of glory should ask to be remembered, and remembered as dying for us, is kind and condescending beyond expression. He who can deny such a request, must surely be at a loss to prove himself the friend of Christ: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

The importance which attaches to individual Christians in uniting with Churches, must bear some proportion to the importance of the existence of those Churches; for, if it be a matter of small account for any one Christian to unite in fellowship, it may be the same for another, and so for all; which is the same thing as supposing it to be a matter of little consequence whether there be any Christian-church in the world. But christian society seems to be no less essential in carrying on the interest of Christ, than human society is for promoting the interest of men, and even for preserving alive a posterity upon the earth. Where do we ordinarily see the work of conversion carried on, but where a Christian-church is established, or where the word and ordinances are administered? When Christ ascended upon high, he gave gifts to men; and wherefore? That the Lord God might dwell among men. It is under a social character that Christians are denominated the house or temple of God, in which he designs to dwell; where his beauty is beheld, and where

we enquire after truth. It is the body of Christ, which being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, maketh increase unto the edifying itself in love—The golden candlesticks, by which the light of truth and holiness is exhibited to the world, among which our great high Priest condescends to walk—And the dwelling places, and assemblies of Mount-Zion, on which JEHOVAH, as our Israel in the wilderness, has created a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; covering their glory with his defence. The natural inference from these representations is, that if we have any regard for the interest of Christ, or any desire for walking in fellowship with him, we should surrender ourselves up to him, and to the fellowship of Saints according to his will. If we would find the shepherd, we must go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

From the first creation of man upon earth, it was judged by his benevolent Creator, not good that he should be alone; and as the state of society advanced, its advantages were felt and acknowledged. Two (saith the wise man) are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. And if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken. These, and many more such considerations, which recommend society in general, apply with peculiar force to religious society. It is this which sweetens duty, aids our recovery when fallen, excites warm and gracious affections, and strengthens our hands to repel the temptations of an evil world. We doubt not but that there are godly individuals scattered up and down in the world, who have little or no opportunity of enjoying the fellowship of saints: but it is seldom known that such persons arrive to any considerable eminence in spirituality or usefulness. The eye or the hand is singularly useful in the body: but if separated, it would be otherwise. The most honorable member cannot say to the least honorable, and still less to the body, I have no need of thee. And those who are lawfully prevented, suffer for the want of Christian-fellowship, what may be expected of those who voluntarily neglect it? If the Lord in his providence call us to walk alone, we may hope that he will, at least in some measure, make up the loss of public means by a greater blessing on private ones: but if the former be slighted, he will assuredly withdraw his blessing from the latter.

The neglect of positive institutions under the Old Testament, was sometimes punished with temporal judgments. The Lord sought even to slay his servant Moses, for having omitted to circumcise his son in Midian. And probably it is an allusion to the infliction of calamities for such neglects, that it is said in prophecy, whoso will not come up to the feast of tabernacles, upon them shall be no rain. Under the gospel dispensation, it is God's usual way to punish, not by temporal, but spiritual judgments; and whether the neglect of his ordinances be not generally accompanied with a suspension of spiritual blessings, let experience determine.

The principle from which Christian-fellowship arises is, love; and this is of so much importance as to be made by the scriptures a test of personal religion. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in

death. But if we love the brethren, we shall desire to be one with them, in the tenderest ties ; to join in ardent and honorable efforts, to pray and praise with them, to sympathize in their sorrows, and rejoice in their joys ; in short, to cast in our lot with them, that whatever good thing the Lord their God may bestow upon them, he may bestow upon us. This is the natural operation of love ; and without such a tendency, at least, it cannot be genuine. The renewed heart beats spontaneously after the closest possible union with God and his people. Its language is, entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and whither thou lodgest I will lodge : Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried : The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me ! David, even in praying for the salvation of his own soul, did not ask for a separate blessing, but for a share in the portion of the people of God. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor which thou bearest to thy people : O visit me with thy salvation : that I may see the good of thy chosen : that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation ; that I may glory with thine inheritance.

The simplicity of gospel ordinances must render an inattention to them inexcusable. Under the former dispensation, the positive institutions of religion, were numerous and complicated. The distance also, which the Israelites, and especially proselytes from among the Gentiles, had to journey at the times of their solemn assemblies was very great, when compared with ours. God required of them great labor and expense, yet the godly amongst them cheerfully complied. And now that he hath brought the bread of life home to us, raining manna, as it were, round our tents ; shall we therefore make light of it ? If the Lord had bid us do some great thing, should we not have done it ? Then, how much rather, when he saith, " Wash, and be clean."

One of the most interesting ideas given us of the celestial world is, that of a state of glorious society. Angels and saints innumerable, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, each vie with the other in love and praise, while every creature in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, unite in ascribing blessings, and honor, and glory, and power, unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And how are we to be fitted for this blessed state, but by associating with the people of God on earth ? It is thus we are prepared for glory. Nay, more : It is thus that we actually partake of it. By cordially uniting with the friends of Jesus in this world, we unite with the whole family of heaven and earth, which is but one. Hence it is that believers in the present life, are represented as already come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the First Born, which are written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.

If these sentiments be properly considered and felt, they will not only stimulate those to prompt obedience who have hitherto neglected the institutions of God, but impress us all with a sense of our great advantages, and cause us to rejoice with trembling. We stand on high ground : we walk as upon the borders of heaven ; let us watch and pray, lest we be found cleaving to the earth, notwithstanding these distinguished privileges. Nay it is not impossible that from these heights some of us may fall, like the inhabitants of Capernaum, into perdition !

Finally, it may not be unprofitable for those of us who are ministers and members of churches, to enquire whether the neglects of which we complain, may not in part, be owing to something in us? If a minister be uninterested, and consequently uninteresting, in his work; if there be but little savor in his spirit, or profit arising from his communations; if the people be haughty, covetous, self-willed, litigious, and conformed to this world; there will be but little encouragement for young christians to cast in their lot with them. Or, if none of those evils be remarkably apparent, yet if there be a want of holy affection and free conversation, it will not be much otherwise. It is by our having fellowship with God, that godly minds will be induced to have fellowship with us. We will go with you, say they, for we have heard that God is with you!!

Beloved Brethren, Farewell!

RICHARD SHACKELFORD, *Moderator,*

SAMUEL ECCLES, *Clerk.*