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Baptists. South Carolina. Charleston Association, 1792.
Minutes ... at Coosawhatchie, the 3d of November, 1792.
[Charleston, 1792.] 14 pp.
AAS copy.

M I N U T E S

O F T H E

CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION,

Held at COOSAWHATCHIE, the 3d of November, 1792.

1st. **T**H E Saturday and Sabbath were employed in exercises of public devotion.

2d. On Monday, 11 o'clock, A. M. the introductory sermon was delivered by Rev. Edmund Botsford, from Psalm 138th. and 2d. "For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

3d. Letters from twelve churches were read, and the names of the delegates enrolled.

4th. Rev. Edmund Botsford was chosen moderator, and Rev. Henry Holcombe, clerk. The ministering brethren present, who were not delegates, were invited to a seat in the association.

5th. Letters and minutes were received and read, from the Philadelphia, Warren, Bethel and Georgia associations. Rev. Messrs. Silas and Jesse Mercer attended as messengers from the Georgia, and Rev. James Fowler, from the Bethel association.

6th. The church on Little Pedee again applying for admission into this association, and Rev. Messrs. Botsford and Moseley reporting in their favour, in consequence of their appointment last year, to enquire into their state; they were accordingly received. This church was constituted in 1790.

A church on the Upper Three Runs also applied for admission; but some unfavorable reports having circulated respecting their pastor, Rev. Messrs. Scott and Sweat are requested to visit them, and enquire into this subject, previous to their being received.

7th. Mr. Furman was appointed to write to the Philadelphia, Warren and Georgia associations; Mr. Botsford to the General Committee of United Baptist churches in Virginia; Mr. Holcombe to the Kent and Sussex association, and Mr. Moseley, to the Bethel: Mr. Scott was appointed messenger to the Georgia, and Messrs. Botsford and Moseley to the Bethel.

The

The former to meet the third Sabbath in October next; the latter, the second Sabbath in August.

8th. The association beholding with pain, that some of the ministers of the churches in union, rarely attend their meetings; it is resolved: That this association not only conceive it to be the duty of the churches who unite in this body carefully to keep up their representation in our annual meetings; but that it is especially the duty of the ministers to attend; and that a neglect thereof is, and must be considered by this body, as having a direct tendency to destroy the happy union now subsisting, and to prevent or counteract the best concerted measures for promoting the interests of the churches.

Mr. Moderator is requested to write a friendly letter to Rev. Nathaniel Walker on this subject.

9th. The circular letter prepared by Rev. Richard Furman, was read, and with a little alteration, approved. The several letters to corresponding associations were also read and approved.

10th. Mr. Furman as chairman to the general committee for the fund, reported, that the committee had agreed on a system of rules for regulating the business committed to them by the churches, and were ready to ratify them, in which they desired the concurrence of the association. The rules being also presented, were read, and unanimously approved.

11th. Appointed the third Wednesday in March next, as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer to Almighty God, to be observed by all our churches: To deprecate the divine displeasure manifested against our land, in the many adverse dispensations of providence experienced in the course of the present year; and on our churches in their barren and lifeless state: And to implore his mercy for the pardon of our offences, the influence of his gracious spirit, and the revival of the work of grace; and for the various blessings of his kind providence, of which we stand in need.

12th. Requested Rev. Edmund Botsford to write the circular letter for the next year, and that it be an answer to the following query: What conduct should be observed by christians in matters of controversy, wherein they differ from each other, in respect either of principle or practice?

13th. Agreed that our next meeting be at the High Hills of Santee, the Saturday before the 1st Sabbath in November next: The sermon to be delivered by Rev. Evan Pugh, in case of failure by Rev. Richard Furman.

14. Collected the money for printing the minutes, and requested Mr. Furman to superintend this business.

S T A T E

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

Ministers names in capitals; licensed preachers in Italics; churches distinguished with an asterisk (*) we had no account from, their numbers stand as they did last year; ministers and others, to whose names an obelisk (†) is affixed, were absent; a dash (—) denotes a vacancy.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Baptized	K. by L.	Dismissd.	Excom.	Dead.	Number.
Charleston,	{ RICHARD FURMAN John Hart †	19	1	0	1	4	244
Euhaw,	{ HENRY HOLCOMBE, George Moffe, M. D. William Hogg, David D. Stoll	10	1	0	0	4	124
Welch Neck,	{ EDMUND BOTSFORD Thomas Vining	2	2	2	0	1	167
Mount Pleasant,*	EVAN PUGH †						33
Coofawhatchie,	{ JAMES SWEAT, James Smart Zachariah Knight	4	3	0	1	2	68
Pipe Creek,	{ ———, Isaac Gardner William Causey, Robert Tanner	1	0	5	3	0	84
Ebenezer,	BENJAMIN MOSELEY	2	0	0	0	0	59
High Hills of Santee,	—————, Stephen Nixon			4	5	1	98
Lynch's Creek,*	—————						14
Cheraw Hill,*	JOSHUA LEWIS †						82
Beauty Spot,*	HENRY EASTERLING †						66
Bethel, Black River,	SOLOMON THOMSON †	5	2	2	2	1	85
Black Swamp,	{ ALEXANDER SCOTT, Joseph Lawton, John Robert, Thomas Polhill, Abiel Schwieghoffer			1	0	1	76
Turkey Creek, Saluda,	Dismissed to the Bethel Association						
Edisto,*	NATHANIEL WALKER †						142
Little Saltcatcher,*	—————						96
Upper F. Lynch's Creek,*	—————						158
Swift Creek,	LEWIS COLLINS. † T. Wright	1	5	3	1	0	73
Lower F. Lynch's Creek,*	JOSHUA PALMER †						48
Rockey River,*	SAMUEL BONDS †						158
Anson County,*	CHARLES COOK †						41
Great Saltcatcher,	{ ———, Kellis Halford William Carr	20	5	0	1	0	45
Deep Creek,	Jeremiah Lewis					1	49
Little Pedee,	JER. RHEAM, † Bradley Rheam						25
Decrease this year 23.		164	19	17	15	14	1985

**MINUTES of the General Committee for the Charleston Baptist Association
Fund, met at Coosawhatchie, November 6th, 1792.**

1st. The following gentlemen appeared as delegates from the churches to which they respectively belong; Rev. Messrs. Richard Furman, Henry Holcombe, Edmund Botsford, Benjamin Mosely, Alexander Scott, and James Sweat; Messrs. Stephen Nixon Isham Gardner and Bradly Rheam.

2d. Chose Mr Furman chairman, and Mr. Holcombe, clerk.

3d. Gave in the money collected by the several churches, when it appeared, that Charleston had collected 40l Euhaw, 5l. 7s. 9. Welch Neck, 7l. 3s. 6d Ebenezer, 4l. 0. 4d. and Black Swamp, 2l. 6s. 5d. amounting to 57l. 18s. 3d.

4th. Agreed unanimously to assist Rev. Jesse Mercer in his present laudable undertaking, to pursue a regular course of learning, by furnishing him with ten pounds for the present year.

5th. Took the rules under consideration, and agreed to sundry amendments. Agreed also, that a fair copy be made out for signing, and presented by the chairman to the association, for their approbation. Adjourned to to morrow twelve o'clock.

6th. Met according to adjournment. Read the rules wrote out in a fair copy, which had received the approbation of the Association; they were now ratified and signed accordingly.

7th. The chairman read a petition addressed to the legislature of this state, praying for the incorporation of this committee: The same being taken under consideration was approved, signed by all the members, and committed to the chairman to be forwarded to the general assembly.

8th. The constitutional rules being fixed, the committee proceeded to elect officers on the permanent plan thereby established; when the following gentlemen were elected: Rev. Richard Furman, president; Rev. Henry Holcome, secretary; col. Thomas S. reven, treasurer; Mr. Thomas Rivers, senior, and Mr. John Gourlay, assistants.

9th. Received a letter from Mr. John Roberts, expressing his desire of devoting himself to the work of the ministry, and of coming under the patronage of this committee. Requested the president to inform him by letter, in answer, of the friendly intentions entertained by this body respecting him; and to communicate to him the regular method of proceeding on our plan.

10th. Mr. Joseph Cook appeared as a candidate for the churches bounty, underwent an examination, and was approved. Agreed that the expences of his education for the last year, be paid out of the fund. United in prayer and adjourned.

RICHARD FURMAN, President.

HENRY HOLCOMBE, Secretary.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Ministers and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches united in the Charleston Association, met at Coopershatchie, the third, and continued to the seventh of November, 1792, to the Churches they represent send Christian Salutation.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

CONFORMABLY to a resolve of the last year, we are now to address you on an interesting and delicate subject: An enquiry into the relation in which the children of church members stand to the church; and the most adviseable method to be pursued respecting them, for their own spiritual benefit, and the general interests of religion. This subject naturally dividing itself into two parts, we shall consider them separately, in the order in which they stand in the enquiry. The question respecting infant church membership, has long been matter of controversy between the Baptist churches and their brethren who practise the baptism of infants, and will, no doubt, always be considered as a leading point in those disputes respecting baptism. And, perhaps, while the advocates for infant baptism have gone too far in asserting the right of membership, our churches, or the advocates for our principles, have sometimes overlooked their true relation, and been too inattentive to the duties consequent thereon. It may be difficult to find a term every way suitable to express this relation; but we think it is of the nature of wardship.—That the subject may appear in as clear a light as we are capable of placing it, we wish you to consider the following things: 1st. That a right to regular membership in the christian church, is founded by divine appointment in a spiritual state and character, which are only attainable through grace, and pre-suppose the depravity and guilt of human nature: we being all by nature, children of wrath, and even those who have received the grace of God themselves, found unable to communicate it to their offspring. Which last is not only proved

by the general tenor of holy writ, and expressly in the words of Christ, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and of St. John, "As many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God—who were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" but is frequently evinced to our observation, in the children of truly pious parents, who prove notoriously wicked, and finally impenitent; notwithstanding all the care of education, and the solicitude of their parents to impress them with a just sense of religion. 2dly. Without gracious qualifications, a person is unfit for the holy duties and exercises of the church, which consist chiefly in faith, love and obedience: "The carnal man discerneth not the things of the spirit;" "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God;" and the soul that is not influenced by love and zeal, as abiding principles, will not be concerned for the honor of God, and the interests of his kingdom. 3dly. The scriptures expressly require evangelical knowledge, repentance and faith, with a profession of the same, of those who come to baptism and the Lord's supper, the public sacraments of the gospel, whereby persons are received and confirmed in the visible membership of the church. The three first being necessary in order to our obtaining acceptance before God, and the latter for the honor of his cause in the world, and for the satisfaction and fellowship of his people.

Should it be objected, "That infants certainly ~~have~~ been considered, under the former dispensation, as members of the church by God's own appointment, and partook of the sealing ordinances of that

that dispensation; and that as the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace, the same that we are under, therefore the same privilege must be continued to children *now*."—We answer: admitting the dispensation to Abraham was the covenant of grace, it could be so only in a qualified sense, was but an imperfect dispensation of that covenant, and had sundry things included in it, which did not belong to it, strictly considered; some of which were by inspired writers of after ages declared to be statutes that were not good, and carnal ordinances, and God himself is represented as finding fault with them; which are given as reasons for a new and better dispensation. Whatever is essential to the covenant of grace, remains the same invariably from age to age, and may be expected in every dispensation of it; but what God has been pleased at any time to add of a positive nature, and especially of what is declared to be imperfect, may be left out in any new dispensation: In this respect, one dispensation can be no rule or standard for another.—From hence we may see the futility of the argument drawn from Abraham's covenant and circumcision, in favor of infant church membership, and infant baptism. For if we grant the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace, it must also be granted by our opponents, that it was an imperfect dispensation of that covenant to which the gospel has succeeded: And if we should also grant, that baptism, as an ordinance, has come in the room of circumcision, neither of which have been ordinarily granted, yet it must follow that they are so come into the room of the former as to supersede, not to copy after them: as the day succeeds the night, or, perhaps more aptly, as the *triumphant* will succeed the *militant* state of the church. The glorious dispensation of the gospel has for its archetype, or pattern, not the imperfect dispensation to Abraham and the Jewish church; but the covenant itself, as made

with Christ; which is now more fully revealed, and enjoyed in a church state, and with ordinances, much better adapted to its spiritual nature and original grand design. That many children of church members, even of the most pious, are not in the covenant of grace strictly considered, must be granted by all who hold that an interest in that covenant will produce, as its proper effect, the conversion and salvation of the soul; and that what have been frequently called sealing ordinances, are not essential to the covenant, is apparent, since there was a time when it was revealed to men without them. Positive institutions therefore are to be considered as absolutely dependent on the will of God, as revealed in every dispensation to which they are annexed; both as they respect subjects, manner of administration, or any other circumstance. But what appears to us to put the matter beyond dispute, is the account given of the new covenant, by a prophet, recognized by an apostle, and applied in positive terms to the gospel dispensation. It is plain, from that account, which you may see at large in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, that the old and new covenant mean the former and present dispensations, which, according to the hypothesis we have laid down, are dispensations of the same covenant; to wit, the covenant of grace. The one being dark, shadowy, united with carnal ordinances, and administered in general to carnal subjects, is represented as become old and passing away. The other, declared to be not like the former, and established in the gospel church, is particularly distinguished in this, that it should be made with spiritual subjects, and that the evidence of their interest in, and right to this covenant, should be, not the sign of circumcision in their flesh, but the law of God, put and written in their hearts. To these, God is a covenant God, and they are his covenant people.—Some have supposed that the transactions at Sinai are referred

referred to under the description of the old covenant, from the reference had to Israel's being brought out of Egypt, and that it does not affect the covenant made with Abraham; but it should be remembered, that all God's dealings with, and communications to the nation of Israel, 'till the coming of Christ, were in continuation and confirmation of the dispensation given to Abraham. And the words under consideration apply with more force to transactions before their emancipation from Egyptian bondage, than to the following: for they speak of making, or beginning a covenant, when God took them by the hand (a covenanting act) to effect this deliverance for them. Which is very expressive of his foretelling to Abraham the bondage of his posterity in Egypt, and his promising to deliver them out of it, at the very time the covenant with him was made; as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. The covenant made with Abraham and his natural seed, with the ordinances annexed to it, were well calculated to serve as an introduction to the gospel dispensation; and the sign or seal of circumcision, was very properly administered to his children, and all who pertained to him, while it was the design of God to distinguish them as a nation from the rest of mankind: who were to be under the special care of Jehovah; of whom, more immediately, Christ was to come, and among whom he was to perform his personal ministry on earth. And considering Abraham and his posterity as typical of Christ and his gospel church, we shall have no objection, in this point of view, to admit that baptism has come in the room of circumcision with respect to the subjects: For as circumcision was to be administered to all Abraham's children throughout their generations as such, so baptism is to be administered to all the seed of Christ, which are believers: And as the administration is performed by imperfect men, the subjects of the ordinance must appear such by profession. Our

not knowing certainly who are true believers, and the admission of adults into the church, who are found eventually to be unholy, form no sufficient objection against this scheme, since God has not determined to prevent all evil in the present state of things, and has reserved the knowledge of the heart to himself. It is sufficient that he has shewn his displeasure at any one's coming to his sacred gospel feast without a wedding garment, and every where required that faith, repentance, and evangelical knowledge should precede a person's admission to the sealing ordinances of the gospel church, of which description is baptism as much as the Lord's supper. If a church, not paying proper regard to this rule, admits such persons to those holy ordinances, without demanding proper evidence in their profession and conduct, it becomes culpable; but where this care is taken, the presumer alone is answerable for his intrusion. That what we have stated above respecting the new covenant is just, appears by farther considering: That the writing of God's law in the hearts of men, or in other words, regeneration, and the blessings of salvation, afforded at the introduction of the gospel, were not new things to the subjects of grace; but were made sure by Christ's engagements to all his *redeemed*, in every age of the world, and were received and richly enjoyed by ante-diluvian saints, patriarchs and prophets; but in the dispensation to Abraham these were not made the term of being in covenant, or of admission to membership in the national, and in many respects, casual church then established. But in the new covenant regeneration is required in contradistinction to the old. This accounts for John's address to the Scribes and Pharisees, when coming to his baptism, "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, for God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham—bring forth, therefore, fruits meete for repentance;" for the constant requisition of repentance and

and faith, or their equivalent, in admission to that ordinance throughout the new testament, and of self-examination and knowledge of the nature and significance of the ordinance in an approach to the Lord's table. With reference to this, no doubt, Jesus *made and baptized* disciples, commanded his apostles to teach and baptize*; and informed his church that no man could be his disciple without taking up his cross daily and following him; and that except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This view of things furnishes a satisfactory and complete answer to the enquiry often asked with an air of triumph, "If children of believers were once admitted

into the church as such, when were they excluded?"—Even then, when the covenant which admitted them was made old and passed away, and the new covenant, established on better promises, made with believers, exhibiting a juster view of things, and unfolding a more full and glorious discovery of the grace of God took place.

But though we thus contend that infants are not included in the membership of the visible church, as children of church members, and have not a right to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, nor to act in the exercise of discipline, as such, yet we also argue, that they are placed under the guardianship of the church; have a particular claim to their prayers, attention

* Doctor Doddridge in his valuable exposition of the new testament, after observing, in a note, that *Matheteusate* signifies proselyte or disciple, adds: "It is certain that no argument can be drawn from this to the prejudice of infant baptism: For had Christ sent out these missionaries to propagate Judaism in the world, he might have used the same language; "Go, and proselyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the God of Israel, &c."—In this the doctor furnishes a convincing proof of the power and influence of prepossession, even in great and liberal minds, as his certainly was. It would seem natural to conclude that a little calm reflection would have brought the doctor's candor to acknowledge, that *if* what he has stated concerning the proper meaning of the word is just, *yet* the manner of proselyting must in all cases be conducted according to the scheme formed and laid down as the rule of conduct: And if it would be natural to understand that infants might be circumcised in making proselytes to the Jew's religion, where God had positively appointed it, yet it will not follow that they may be also considered as included in the gospel scheme for subjects of baptism, where repentance and faith are invariably required as qualifications for that ordinance; which must therefore exclude them from it. Besides, it is put before baptism, and is interpreted, in a former part of the same note, as designing instruction in the essentials of religion, which adult persons should receive previous to baptism—But many learned men contend that the word in the original strictly means making proselytes by instruction. The learned Dr. Whitby is of the number among the Pædobaptists; and the very learned and ingenious Dr. Gale, among the Anti-Pædobaptists, has proved it by the proper signification of the primitive word, and by its various inflections throughout its derivatives; by its use in the best authors, both Heathen and Christian, and a variety of other arguments—Dr. Doddridge however, it should seem, as well as many other *plain men* who have moved in his sphere, knew nothing of the *learned criticism*, advanced by some itinerant preachers in these states (who often can criticise on grammar, before they well know how to read) on the parallel text in Mark, by which it is shewn, that "he that believeth and is baptized" designs the person who is already baptized when he believes, and of consequence that it is most proper to baptize those who do not believe. Or that the promise of salvation is made to those who are baptized before they believe!

attention and care; and are especially entitled to those ordinances which are designed to be the means of conversion. On the other hand they, in consequence of this relation, owe a duty and respect to the church, which bind them to attend to its worship, regard its admonitions and advice; and when they become properly acquainted with religion, by understanding its doctrines and precepts, and feeling its sacred influence on their hearts, to unite in its membership, and use their best endeavours to promote its interests. These sentiments we think are fairly inducted from the following positions:

The church as a holy society or organized body, for answering its grand design of promoting the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom, appears to be principally appointed to two purposes. First, The preserving an holy union and fellowship among the subjects of grace, and their preservation, comfort and improvement, while they are continued in the state of trial and ripening for the blessedness of Heaven. Secondly, The conversion of those who are yet in a state of nature; and the assistance of such who become concerned about their eternal interests, and enquire what they shall do to be saved. The ordinances of the gospel committed to their charge, are accordingly adapted to these purposes. Baptism, the Lord's supper, the exercise of discipline, or governing power, are proper to those who are subjects of grace or strictly members; prayer, singing the praises of God, preaching the gospel, reading and hearing the scriptures, and such like, though of use, and necessary to the renewed and sanctified, are also designed for the benefit of others, and useful as means of conversion. And though they are to be made use of with respect to all, as far as they can be prevailed on to attend them, yet it is more immediately the duty of the church to pay attention therein to those who voluntarily associate with them for the important purposes of the gospel, or are

placed by divine appointment, or in the course of providence, under their immediate care. The primitive church seems to have viewed things in this light, and pursued a correspondent line of conduct with respect to those who were considered as catechumens or penitents. And that the children of church members are to be considered in this light, 'till they either become members of the church, or prove themselves unworthy of its care by wicked conduct, we conclude: First, from the law of *nature*; secondly, from exhortations and directions given in the gospel of Christ to this import.

Man was originally designed for a religious and social creature, and the law of his nature, placed him, after the first formation of his species, under the protection and guardianship of his parents during his minority: So that by the divine constitution the parent is his guardian and director, in religion, as well as in other concerns, at least during a certain term of life; and as the obligations to religion are mutual, the parent is bound to *give*, and the child to *receive* instruction and make use of the means God has appointed for that end; and also to be of the religion of the parent; unless sufficient evidence is furnished him that such religion is wrong. Nor has the fall of man destroyed these obligations or reversed the order of the divine plan; though it must be confessed it has greatly disqualified men for being instructors, and by its unfavorable influence on the moral powers, unfitted the instructed properly to obey, or improve their advantages. Duties so important and specially connected with one of the most near and universal relations among men, must also involve the general concern of society: And accordingly have ever engaged the most serious attention of wise legislators, and civilized nations. But they must more immediately engage the attention of religious society. To the church of God, therefore, where society is brought to its most refined and noble state on earth; which is particularly

particularly formed to promote the great interests of Religion, and qualified by special grace to answer the important purpose; this duty must apply with peculiar force. Accordingly we find the gospel of Christ particularly inculcating the duty of bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," with particular directions both to parents and children, respecting it. These directions are contained in epistles addressed to churches, and public ministers of the gospel, who appear to be strictly charged with the observance of them; and are greatly recommended to us in the attention shewn to the persons and interests of children by our blessed Lord himself, who received them graciously, when brought to him, and gently rebuked his disciples when they would have prevented them, with this observation, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."—Though these words appear originally to have particularly respected the bringing of children to Christ, personally and in a bodily sense, there appears to be no impropriety in understanding them with respect to all the means of grace proper to their state and character; but if this sense is admitted it *must be* with the limitation proposed: For if the permission to come to him, is understood to include an approach to him by all means indefinitely, the necessity of rational qualifications is laid aside, distinctions clearly made in other passages of scripture are rendered nugatory, and a right for their admission to the Lord's supper, is as firmly established as to baptism, the thing ordinarily contended, or to any other ordinance.

Having thus answered the enquiry as it respects the relation of children to the church, we proceed to consider what is most advisable with respect to the performance of the duties connected with, and dependent on that relation, as comprehended in the second part of the enquiry. These are of two kinds, such as properly

belong to the church, as a body, and what pertain to parents in their private or individual capacity. The guardianship of the church is properly exercised in seeing that the parents attend to their duty individually, as christians; and that the children are properly regarded by the public ministry, and brought to attend public worship; by the members of the church in general, shewing a tender and affectionate regard to them, and taking every proper measure both by word and example to convince them of the reality and excellence of religion; but especially by praying earnestly with and for them. Private and public catechising, in which care is not only taken to teach them a form of sound words, but to lead them into the sense and spirit of the christian doctrine, has been, and probably ever will be, of great use: Especially if united with friendly familiar discourse on the subject of religion both by the members and minister, whenever suitable opportunities offer.—But the principal part of this enquiry respects the instruction and conduct of the parents and immediate instructors themselves, in their personal capacity. The care of the young and tender mind should begin with the first dawn of reason. The first thing, or one of the first, should be to establish parental authority, and to unite with it a becoming mildness and tenderness, which should pervade the whole temper and conduct of the instructor. To govern by consent is the best method of exercising power in all kinds of government, where the consent can be obtained to what is right and laudable; this, therefore, is an important matter, and a great deal depends on the conduct of the parent for obtaining it. Our attention should be seriously fixed on ourselves, and endeavours used to obtain such command of our passions, that our conduct toward the tender offspring of our bodies might be ever under the influence of wisdom, prudence, and the fear of God. To lead them into the knowledge and practice of true religion

gion and virtue, we must enter into the spirit of the great subjects ourselves: this gives consistency and energy to the parent's instructions, and a sacredness to his authority, which makes it respected. Inconsistency is easily discovered, even by the simple; and no mechanical conduct will answer the purpose on this occasion. A stern use of authority, may produce a slavish fear, distant respect, and reluctant submission; an effeminate tenderness and indulgence, may meet with some return of similar affection; but it is only the government we have described, that can gain the heart and influence the life in the pursuits which are truly noble and virtuous.—In the younger years, it may be best to conduct the government of a child without much reasoning; but in a more advanced period, it is certainly necessary, to address the understanding and conscience. It should be a settled point never to indulge a perverse humour; rather than attempt its gratification, it should be positively denied, and the denial persisted in, 'till a subjection is manifested: then forgiveness and tenderness may be shewn. Indulgences are so far from removing the cause of uneasiness in such cases, that they encrease it; however therefore our tender feelings may, through weakness, dictate a different conduct, this is what true and rational love will point out. A parent should not suffer himself to be trifled with by a child, to be contradicted, or spoken to irreverently; such behaviour should be checked in the beginning, by such marks of disapprobation as are sufficient to prevent it; but it will ever be a matter of wisdom to proportion reproof or correction to the nature and degree of the offence: What is purely the effect of weakness and inadvertence, should be viewed with tenderness, and it is better to view some things as though they were not seen. Be particularly careful not to laugh at a fault, especially not in connexion with reproof. Begin, as you have opportunity, early with their education, and let it be a par-

ticular object to furnish their minds with useful knowledge; those parents who have property sufficient should consider themselves bound in duty to give them liberal educations; but the capacity and genius of the child should be consulted; and there should be ever held up to him a view of some useful and industrious course of life, to be pursued. The idea of being fine gentlemen and ladies, in a course of indolence and indulgence, and which is often inculcated in their infancy and youth, has ruined thousands, both as to soul and body, who seemed to be born to stations of eminence and usefulness in the world; many examples of which are to be found all around us.—By giving education to children, they are fitted for usefulness both in church and state, should God be pleased to bless them with the smiles of his grace and providence; and when obtained with such views as we have recommended, there is every reason to hope for the best. However the absurd prejudices against education may influence the minds of some in our denomination, we hope there are none so lost to a true sense of duty and advantage among the churches in this connection; we shall therefore pass over in silence the arguments by which such sentiments are confuted and exposed.—Children should never be threatened to be sent to school as a place of punishment; but whatever relates to their education should be considered, as it is, their privilege and honor. As they advance in life a free and friendly converse with them, where their conduct, in such intercourse, is marked with respect and propriety, becomes proper; nor do we think they should be rigorously restrained from amusements when used for relaxation and on proper occasions: some young minds are frightened from the thoughts of religion and the company of its professors, where an universal gloom appears to be spread over them, and innocent amusements denied. But we are very sensible many amusements pass for innocent among the bulk of mankind, which are not so,
and

and have a very pernicious tendency on the morals and life of those who use them; such should be carefully avoided and their evil nature pointed out with serious attention. These things are comprehended in the general scheme of a religious and useful education; but what respects the salvation of the soul, and the advancement of our Lord's kingdom, more immediately claims our attention. The parent, the church, with all religious friends and instructors, therefore, should insist in the most positive manner on the necessity of conversion, an interest in Christ, and a self-denied holy life, with all the correspondent doctrines of the gospel: These should be seriously and frequently urged, in a manner most likely to captivate and affect the heart; and reading the scriptures, private prayer and meditation, should be earnestly recommended. The importance of christian profession, and submission to the ordinances of the gospel, should also be inculcated, and a child taught betimes to look around and consider what methods are made use of by grace and providence, to advance the interests of religion; together with the obligations we are under to use our best endeavours for accomplishing the important end. As regular worship ought to be supported in every family, so care should be taken that constant and respectful attendance be given by the children; and equal care, that they attend public worship in the church, and carefully observe the sabbath. An attention to the public interests of religion, humanity, and benevolence, may be greatly promoted by setting before them the amiable nature of public spiritedness, generosity and compassion, and then putting it in their power, as far as the parent's ability will permit, to contribute something to the support of the ministry, relief of the poor, or the forwarding of any scheme of benevolence and usefulness. Habits are easily acquired in early life, and such as these must have a happy influence on the temper and conduct.

—To the covetous such directions will no doubt be unwelcome; and such as never contribute any thing of their substance *themselves* to the support of the ministry, or other public and benevolent uses, will hardly encourage it *in their children*; but such should consider, that persons of their character are not fit to be parents, and really unworthy of the christian name, or a place in the church of God.—One of the first lessons which should be insisted on after they arrive at the state when reason gains its empire in the human breast, is the necessity of enquiring after truth, and of subjecting their understanding and conscience to God alone. This will lead them into enquiries concerning the truth and propriety of the religious principles in which they have been educated, as well as to take a view of the sentiments professed by others—and all for this grand design, that their faith may not stand in the counsel of men, but in the word of God. And that they may call no man master on earth, in this sense, but be subject to Christ alone.—Where this important business is properly performed, it may be expected the principles adopted will be permanent, and the profession consequent on them, consistent and becoming.—But as many mistakes and dangers are incident to the undertaking, too much caution cannot be used by the public ministry, parents, and all who are concerned as religious guardians, or assistants to the youthful mind.—They should be warned while they exercise a freedom of thought in enquiry, not to make it a mere matter of speculation, but an honest enquiry after truth and duty. That they guard against infidelity and scepticism, and that no motives to worldly ~~love~~, honor or advantage, influence them in their choice, to the prejudice of the pure principles or practice of religion. That though it becomes their duty to make this enquiry, as rational agents, personally accountable to God, and under sacred obligations to embrace and adhere to truth, when clearly discovered, whatever change it

it may make, with respect either to sentiment or profession, yet they are also under obligations to pay a respectful attention, in the first instance, to the church, which by the course of Providence, has been the guardian of their tender years, and to the principles they have been taught, according to that general law of nature which we have considered, and the direction of holy writ; nor are they at liberty to desert them, but on the clear conviction that their duty to God requires it, on account of error either in sentiment or practice. Among the various considerations which naturally employ the mind on this subject, this claims particular attention: That as the holy religion of Jesus is a self-denied course, it is not only necessary we be determined to take up our cross and follow Christ daily; but we also need the gracious influence of the holy spirit, to enlighten our understandings, to discern divine truth in its proper light, and dispose our hearts cordially to embrace and adhere to it. It should be urged accordingly. Where any religious denomination is less numerous, affluent, or honorable in the common judgement of men, than others they are conversant with, it may be expected, that such as have not virtue or greatness of soul sufficient to adhere to truth and goodness in adversity, will be drawn over to the connection where worldly advantages invite; this has been greatly the case of the Baptist churches in many parts of this country, though it is not confined to them; and many of those who were expected by their pious parents to succeed them in their places in the church, are now found among other denominations, where it is to be feared the purest motives have not carried them. From the knowledge we have of the danger and force of these temptations, we should be the more careful to fortify the unexperienced mind against them. Our youth should be furnished with the means of ample information respecting our essential doctrines and denomi-

nating principle; and the fallacy of those arguments on which the popular prejudices and reproaches are founded, which have been often made use of to injure the cause we are engaged in, and which we have reason to consider as the cause of Christ, should be exposed. The contemptible conduct of those who desert truth and duty for worldly advantages, should be laid open (however we may be tender of their persons) and rendered infamous in their view, as it really is: And the love of disinterested virtue, and generous conduct, excited by every engaging motive.

The importance of marriage to human life makes it a subject of parental concern; and while our children are cautioned to avoid connection, in that intimate union, with the *vitious*, the *profane*, the *indolent* and the *despicable*, it may not be amiss to point out the peculiar advantage of being united with those of the same sentiments in religion. Some trying difficulties are apt to arise where the greatest prudence and liberality are exercised between those of different sentiments when united in that relation; but where these are wanting, the life of a person who has a regard to religion, is rendered miserable. Should such marriages therefore be admitted, the free and unrestrained exercise of religious liberty should ever be secured by previous agreement, and with such whose truth and known liberality may be relied on.—Though we have already mentioned the importance of uniting with the church and submitting to the public ordinances, we cannot forbear adding here, that where there is any just reason to believe religion has exerted its sacred influence on the heart of a child; every encouragement should be given both by the parents and church to its coming to the holy ordinances; and to make a religious profession its first deliberate and public act: That it may truly “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” It has appeared by the best evidence
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the nature of the subject admits, that divine grace has frequently produced the conversion of children when they were very young; and when they are thus brought up under the religious care both of their parents and the church, it may be rationally expected the blessing will be frequently afforded. And it may be justly concluded, that the conversion of such may not appear as visible in its operation, as in one who has grown up in a neglect of religion, and is recovered from the power of scandalous vice. It should, therefore, be fought for as hid treasure, that its reality may appear to the church, and its excellency to the world. Some young minds, as well as others, who have experienced grace, are kept back through diffidence; and others are rendered easy concerning religious profession and submission to ordinances, under the idea, that these things do not become their duty, till they receive a particular impulse to discover or prove it to them; but they should remember it is the appointment of God, and not their feelings which makes the duty, and as long as it is not complied with, they are guilty of disobedience to the divine command.

This view of things may excite the neglectful to a diligent use of the means of grace, that they may be found in the way of their duty; and encouragement should be given to the doubting to embrace the privileges they are entitled to.

Thus, beloved brethren, we have laid before you a plan respecting the relationship and education of children, which appears to us to be consonant to the great law of nature and the gospel of Christ. By pursuing this we shall on the one hand, avoid what appears to us to be an abuse of holy ordinances, and on the other, secure

every blessing and privilege in our power, for the benefit of our children. The spiritual, free and rational nature of the gospel worship will be held up to view in our churches, and generous dignified sentiments inculcated in the minds of our members and their offspring. By a proper attendance to these duties, it is hoped we shall be placed in the way of receiving abundant and substantial blessings, of having some of the most tender feelings of the heart gratified to the highest degree, in the spiritual happiness and true honor of our children; and of having the cause of God and the honor of our Redeemer promoted by them in his church, when we are gone to render our account to the Judge of all the earth. Such a view of things cannot, we hope, fail to excite your most vigorous endeavors to secure the important ends proposed.

We are happy to hear from some of the churches in union, and can but lament we have heard from no more on this occasion; it appears also, from the general purport of your letters, the returns respecting the state of the churches, and the very partial contribution, for the interesting and noble charity so unanimously approved in our former meetings, that spiritual barrenness is too prevalent. For this we ought to be humbled with you, before God, and therefore desire earnestly to implore his mercy and deprecate his displeasure. That his rod is held over our land is evident, and it becomes us to be seriously concerned to obtain a sanctified use of his frowning providences.

Wishing you abundant happiness, and requesting an interest in your prayers, we remain,

Beloved Brethren,

Yours in Gospel Bonds,

EDMUND BOTS FORD, *Moderator.*

HENRY HOLCOMBE, *Clerk.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS for the BAPTIST ANNUAL REGISTER, by Dr. RIPPON, continue to be taken in Charleston by RICHARD FURMAN.