

30184

Baptists. South Carolina. Charleston Association, 1796.
Minutes ... at Black Swamp, the 29th of October, 1796.
[Charleston, S.C., 1796?] 9 pp.

AAS copy.

M I N U T E S

O F T H E

CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION,

Met at BLACK SWAMP, the 29th of October, 1796.

1st. **T**HE two first days were spent in public worship; which concluded with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

2d. On Monday, the 31st, 11 o'clock, A. M. an introductory discourse was delivered by the Rev. John Goldwire, from 1st John, 1st and 3d—*That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

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

4th. Rev. Mr. Furman was chosen moderator, and Rev. Mr. Holcombe, clerk.

5th. A letter, and messenger, Rev. Mr. Cone, were received from the Hephzibah Association; a letter, minutes and messenger, Rev. Mr. Fowler, from the Bethel Association; and letters and minutes of the year 1795, from the Warren, and Philadelphia Associations.

6th. The ministers present, not delegated to the Association, were invited to a seat.

7th. Mr. Furman was appointed to write to the Philadelphia Association, Mr. Holcombe to the Warren, Mr. Mosse to the Bethel, and Mr. Nixon to the Hephzibah.

8th. Two queries from the church at Bethel, Black River, were read and considered.

1st Query. Can the testimony of a person of good moral character, though not a strict professor of religion, be admitted against a church member? Answered in the affirmative.

2d Query. May a minister of the gospel marry a person to another, whose wife, or husband, has violated the marriage covenant, and is living in a state
of

of seperation from the innocent person? Answer: We think an innocent person, in such circumstances, is not forbidden, by the scriptures, to marry; but, where no legal divorce is obtained, we are of opinion that a minister had better decline performing the ceremony.

9th. Appointed Messrs. Holcombe, Furman, and Mosse, a committee, to answer the letter from the church at the High Hills of Santee.

10th. The several letters appointed to be written, were read and approved. The circular letter which was expected last year, was presented by Mr. Holcombe, read, and with a little alteration, adopted.

11th. Appointed Mr. Furman to write the circular letter for the next year, on the following subject. Are the churches of Christ under obligation to make provision for the instruction and improvement of the persons they call to the gospel ministry, previous to their entering on the work?

12th. Appointed our brethren Alexander Scott and James Sweat, our messengers to the Georgia, and Hephzibah Associations; David Cooper and Frame Woods, to the Bethel.

13th. Agreed to hold our next meeting at the High Hills of Santee, the Saturday before the first Lord's day in November next. Rev. Mr. Botsford to preach the sermon; in case of failure, Mr. Holcombe.

14th. Collected for printing the minutes, and requested Mr. Furman to superintend the business. Concluded with prayer and exhortation by the moderator.


 MINUTES of the GENERAL COMMITTEE for the CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION FUND, met at Black Swamp, Nov. 1st, 1796.

1st. Rev. Messrs. Richard Furman, H. Holcombe, Stephen Nixon, and David Cooper, appeared as delegates from the churches to which they respectively belong.

2d. Rev. Mr. Furman was chosen President, Col. Thomas Screven, Treasurer, Mr. Holcombe, Secretary, and Mr. Thomas Rivers and Capt. John Hart, Assistants.

3d. It appeared that the Charleston church had paid to the Treasurer 57l. 3s. 4d. and that of Georgetown, 20l. from the Eulhaw church we received 19l. 10s. 9d. from the Welch Neck, 2l. 1s. 2d. and from the Ebenezer, 2l. 11s. 3½d. The collections were committed to the care of the President, to be delivered to the Treasurer.

4th. The Treasurer's accounts were inspected, by which it appeared that the expenditures last year were 123l. 7s. 7d. The sum now in the fund is 106l. 2s. 10½d. Adjourned.

R. FURMAN, *President.*
H. HOLCOMBE, *Clerk.*

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

The Ministers Names are in Capitals; Licensed Preachers in Italics; Churches distinguished with an asterisk (*) we had no account from, their numbers stand as they did last year; Pastors and Delegates to whose names an obelisk (†) is affixed, were absent; a dash (—) denotes a vacancy.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Baptized.	Recd. by Let.	Dismissed.	Excommun.	Dead.	Numbers.
Charleston,	RICHARD FURMAN,	15	1	1		9	248
Euhaw,	{ H. HOLCOMBE, David D. Stoll, George Mosse, John Rose,	6			1	6	129
Welch Neck,	—, EVAN PUGH,†						168
Mount Pleasant,*	{ AARON TISON, James Smart, Itham Gardner,			9			38
Coofawhatchie,	{ —, Robert Tanner, Jesse DeLoatch, William Causey,†						55
Pipe Creek,	DAVID COOPER,	4	2	27	4	1	48
Ebenezer,	—, STEPHEN NIXON,	6	2	1	6	2	64
High Hills of Santee,	—,						95
Lynch's Creek,*	JOSHUA LEWIS,†						11
Cheraw Hill,*	—,						86
Beauty Spot,*	SOLOMON THOMSON,†	3	5	3	5		75
Bethel, Black River,	{ ALEXANDER SCOTT, Joseph Lawton, John Robert, Howel Wall,	2		1			87
Black Swamp,	NATHANIEL WALKER,†						57
Edisto,*	—,						142
Little Saltcatcher,*	WILLIAM DENMAN,†						96
Upper F. Lynch's Creek,*	LEWIS COLLINS,†						87
Swift Creek,*	SAMUEL BONDS,†						62
Lower F. Lynch's Creek,*	—,						49
Rockey River,*	CHARLES COOK,†						138
Anson County,*	—,						48
Great Saltcatcher,*	FRAME WOODS,†						41
Deep Creek,*	JEREMIAH RHEAM,						57
Little Peedee,*	—, David Melvin,†		1			1	26
Enon,	ED. BOTSFORD,† John Waldo,†			1			16
Georgetown,	DAVID OWEN,†						32
Gapway, Little Peedee,*	{ JAMES SWEAT, George Swicord, William Coker,†						28
Bethesda,							42
Increase this year, 11.		36	11	43	16	19	1025

The CIRCULAR LETTER.

The CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION, held at Black Swamp, from the 29th of October, to the 1st of November, 1796, to the Churches they represent, send greeting.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

A GREEABLY to a former engagement, we shall now endeavour to furnish an answer to the following query, viz.

What attention to the civil and political interests of our country, does the law of God require of us as christians?

That our country has civil and political interests; and that the law of God requires attention to them, are propositions founded in fact, and implied in this enquiry.

These interests are comprehended in our title to a vote, mediately or immediately, in all governmental affairs; our eligibility, with some exceptions, to any office to which our virtues, talents, and pecuniary qualifications may entitle us, and the protection of our persons, reputation, liberties and property. By the law, in the question before us, it is plain we are to understand the word of God. And we may safely affirm, that whatever the scriptures require of us in any character or relation, is incumbent on us christians. Men may discharge some of their duties, without acting consistently with the christian religion in other respects; but we can by no means adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, unless we perform the duties of every station, in a manner consistent with the relations in which we stand to God and man. The true and eminent christian unites all the virtues, and discharges all the duties which dignify and adorn private and public, civil and religious life. So that we have simply to shew what attention to the duties and interests connected with civil government, the scriptures require. And this we shall endeavour briefly to do, on the most general and liberal principles.

Indeed, it would be impossible for us to write on principles of any other description, without a manifest disregard of the

sacred writings which we have embraced as our only rule of faith and practice. However attached to the soil that gave us birth, and with all our partiality for the government under which we live, we consider that the followers of Christ in all countries, under every form of government, and in every condition, are concerned in our subject. We shall endeavour, therefore, to guard against the influence of local considerations, and keep in mind that we are not at liberty to admit unscriptural discriminations, nor to justify that in ourselves which we condemn in others. And should the rules of modern policy happen, in any instance, to differ from the law and the testimony, we need not tell you to which, without the least hesitation, we shall give the preference. We begin with what regards the foundation of all civil, political, and in short, all our interests: **OUR NATURAL AND UNALIENABLE RIGHTS AS MEN.** These, it is universally granted, are "LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS." As we regard the dignity of our nature, the good of our species, and the honor of our common Father, the adorable Author of our being, we should view as inestimable, these our fundamental rights. When our most valuable privileges were endangered by the encroachments of arbitrary power, reverence to original and undeniable principles, led the brave and patriotic Americans to make, and abundantly justified them in making, a spirited declaration of their independence. In this they say, "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." And this

is saying no more than what is re-echoed by the whole candid world, from the joint voice of what is called natural, and what we know to be revealed religion. Our origin, end, and natural equality, in point of rights, as well as our mutual obligations to promote each other's happiness, are set before us with a beautiful and striking simplicity in the oracles of God. They inform us, that "He hath made of one blood all nations of men." So that, as we are told in the same chapter, "We are the offspring of God." And from this view of the dignity of our common nature, nothing appears more reasonable than obedience to the divine precept which says, "Honor all men." But equally reasonable, all must own, is that which says, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for," whatever system and practice may be opposed to it, "this is the law and the prophets." Impressed with a just sense of our natural rights as the foundation, our wants make us feel, and the scripture enables us to see, the necessity of civil government. Of this, at least of punitive justice, there could have been no need had man continued as he was created, in the image, and subject to the laws of God. And when the happy time, predicted by the prophets, shall come, when all will know the Lord, and obey his righteous precepts, there can be no use for coercive power. But in the present state of mens morals, coercion is essentially necessary to the good, perhaps to the existence of society. Some of us remember with pain, the distressing scene exhibited in our own country, where blessings in a pleasing variety now smile, when the operation of law suffered only a momentary suspension. When the Israelites were for a short time without magistrates, an inspired historian represents them as in a most alarming state. And this was written to shew us the necessity of imposing a restraint on the selfishness of individuals, by the arm of the community. The same

lesson is inculcated with resistless energy and in characters awfully legible, in the page of universal experience. In short, it is very demonstrable that the worst form of government, and the most unrighteously administered, is preferable to entire anarchy.

From the foundation and necessity, the scriptures invite our attention to the nature and importance of civil government. Without giving any explicit directions as to a particular form of government, God has left men to the exercise of their own reason, under the influence of their natural desire of happiness, to enter into such compacts, and to adopt such regulations as may be most agreeable to their various tempers and circumstances. But he has made it our duty to consider and view him as the foundation of all subordinate authority. His words are, "By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." This, we are informed by Ezra, was acknowledged, even by an illustrious heathen. "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth." And Daniel said to Belshazzar, "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father, a kingdom, and majesty, and glory and honor." And Paul says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God" And he immediately adds, "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." But it should always be understood and remembered, that human laws should never be made inconsistent with the laws of God, and, that if they are, we must obey God rather than man. When the Hebrew children were spared, contrary to the Egyptian king's command, the thing pleased God. Shadrack, Meshack,

Jeck and Abednigo, were miraculously owned and honored of God in refusing, though by a king commanded, to worship a golden image. Daniel's perseverance in prayer, contrary to a royal decree, is another case in point; to which may be added, that of the apostles, who boldly preached the gospel, though forbidden by their rulers. But in all cases where laws and government are not evidently contrary to the laws of God, or subversive of essential rights, ministers are directed to teach their hearers to be subject for conscience sake. Some in this sacred office, it must be owned, have gone very unwarrantable lengths in their attention to politics; and the most destructive errors have been committed by producing the unnatural union of church and state, and enforcing uniformity in religious worship; but it by no means follows that other christians and ministers should fall into the opposite extreme, by inattention to their real and important duties as men and citizens. Though the oracles of truth treat principally of the great subjects of salvation, they are far from being silent on civil duties and privileges; and their comparatively unimportant contents, are worthy of the strictest attention. Our Lord, by a reserve and delicacy highly worthy of our imitation on political subjects, carefully guarded against offending, and cheerfully contributed towards supporting the Roman government. And his eminent apostle Paul, had not only studied, but frequently plead his privileges as a Roman citizen. In a just and spirited manner he reprehended the officer who professed to be judging him according to law, but commanded him to be smitten contrary to the law. He employed his inspired pen in explaining the cause and necessity of tribute, or taxation; and enforced subjection to civil authority, tho' at the time, Nero, that monster of every species of wickedness, filled the imperial throne. For often, in the present imperfect state of things, wicked men are placed in the state of legislators and magistrates;

and when exercising the constituted authority of the state, are to be submitted to as well as the righteous. And when the essential rights of men are not violated by their government, and lesser abuses are acquiesced in by the body of the nation, it is our duty to submit, in respect of the public sentiment; the power of government being originally lodged by the divine constitution, in the majority of the nation; unless, by special revelation, men are otherwise directed. In free governments indeed, provision is made in their constitutions for rectifying all abuses, whether in law or administration. This is a power which should be highly prized, but used with caution. Human imperfection prevents the hope that in the present state of the world, the laws and administration of a state will, in every respect, accord with strict justice and equity, as applied to individuals; and the peaceable and generous spirit of christianity will teach us to bear many inconveniencies, rather than disturb the peace of a government, obstruct its operation, or endanger its security, on the principle of private interest or convenience. That power is frequently abused, is, indeed too obvious; and governments may, and do become tyrannical and oppressive: so that to effect a reform in a bad, or even a revolution, in an intollerable government, is sometimes a desirable and important object; but it should always be done by mild, peaceable and constitutional means. This may be thought in some cases impracticable; but it would seldom, if ever, prove so, if a general and persevering attention were paid to the use of proper means. "Let there be light" diffused among all ranks of people. Encourage a free enquiry into mens rights and circumstances. Shew them their true interest, from time to time, and in various points of view. Petition; remonstrate. Never let the subject sleep. And, from the force of truth, and the native love of liberty which glows in all human hearts, a nation will at last rise up
and

and assert, and to assert will be to obtain their rights. And those who possess, as we do in a very high degree, civil and religious liberties, with their various happy concomitants and results, should feel and express great gratitude to the God of nations.

We shall be criminally deficient in the attention to our civil and political interests which the word of God requires, if we are found unthankful for them, from a stupid insensibility as to their value and importance. Both Jews and Christians were repeatedly reminded of their peculiar privileges and blessings, that with grateful hearts they might duly prize and improve them. Those who have read, with attention the history of nations, know with what extreme difficulty good, or even tolerable governments are formed, and how easily the most valuable blessings they secure, are lost. Few of the human race have yet enjoyed the inestimable privileges of a free government. After all the reiterated discussions of political subjects, and the rivers of blood which have been shed in establishing governments, millions born as free as we were, and as much entitled, by justice and equity, to liberty, groan under the galling yoke of bondage. Ignorant of the judicious distribution of legislative, judicial, and executive powers, among distinct departments, which distinguishes our representative republic, and renders it permanent and free; and strangers to the unbiassed decisions of a jury composed of their own peers, they ignobly cringe to a hampered despot, who unites in himself all these important powers, and rules them with unrestrained and relentless rigor. And in the same proportion that such a state of extreme degradation and wretchedness is to be deprecated, our civil and political interests are to be prized. And as it is our unquestionable duty to promote our own happiness, and that of all other men, to the utmost of our ability, we should use care and industry, not only that we may want nothing ourselves—be

able to supply the needy, and encourage any public and liberal design, but that we may serve our generation, with the greater advantage, in the glorious cause of liberty. It is not without sufficient reason, that pecuniary qualifications are required in our own, and other free states, as necessary in the first instance to entitle to a vote in public affairs, and afterwards to more important trusts. For though it sometimes happens that worthy men of great talents are poor, and consequently their country may sustain a great loss by their ineligibility to office, we are to consider, that the generality of men, to their shame be it spoken, are not influenced in their conduct by a sense of right and wrong, but, as some of them without a blush can avow, *solely* by *interest*; their own individual and private interest; to which every dictate of conscience, and every public consideration must be sacrificed.

And if these men are not interested in supporting a government for their own emolument, they are not to be trusted. They must, therefore, be interested in the country in proportion to the trust reposed in them. In this State, a man not worth a farthing, with a reasonable share of health and strength, may easily in the course of one year, entitle himself to the great privilege of choosing the citizens who are to enact the laws by which he is to be governed. And where it is practicable in the moderate use of lawful means, we think it an incumbent duty and very laudable, for men of virtue and talents to acquire the pecuniary qualifications which will render them eligible to a seat in the legislature, or to any office in the state. And when possessed of these advantages, it is certainly criminal, and in a much higher degree than is generally supposed, to neglect attending elections, or to refuse to serve the public in any manner, from an ignoble love of ease, or an ill-judged attention to our private concerns. Should the government, by inattention of the citizens, indolence, impatience of salutary restraint, or any other

er means lose its energy, laws sink into contempt, and the turbulent and guilty passions of men get loose; we shrink with horror, from the probable, or rather the inevitable consequences. Even those who from their remissness in all kinds of public duty, seem to consider themselves but as passengers in the state vessel, might be among the first who would be overwhelmed with the waves of anarchical turbulence and fury. In every thing that respects our laws, from the qualifications of their enactors, to their execution, we should act with the greatest attention, rectitude, and judgment. The laws of our country are the barrier by which our persons, reputations and property are secured from the cruel depredations of the robber, the slanderer, and the assassin. And while we ourselves regard these laws as sacred, we should mark those who do not. Whatever their services may have been, or whatever their merits, in other respects, may be, in wantonly or contemptuously violating a public law, their conduct has a most dangerous tendency, even to subvert the government itself, and should meet with distinguished marks of our most pointed disapprobation. If one law may be violated, why not another, why not all, enacted by the same authority? A disregarding, or trampling on a public law of the land, extremely criminal in any man, is much more so in legislators and magistrates. Their oaths of office should operate as an effectual restraint from so licentious and dangerous a procedure, or their perjury should for ever disqualify them for a similar trust. And where no constitutional provision exists for a case of this extraordinary nature, the defect should be supplied by the refusal of the suffrages of an enlightened and virtuous people, whenever such triflers with their interests, appear as candidates for any place, or office in their gift. To break a law of the state, is to insult the majesty of the people.

In the further exercise of the attention due to our civil and political interests, we

must honestly, and without any kind of equivocation, contribute our respective quotas to the support of government. Rulers are called God's ministers, for good to those who do well and as revengers to execute wrath on evil doers; and waiting continually on the execution of the duties of their offices, they are entitled to a liberal support. We are charged to honor them according to the powers with which they are clothed; as well as to remember them in our addresses to God, that the government being righteously administered, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. But finding this letter swell under our hands to a greater degree than we could wish, we refer you with great pleasure to the invaluable address of our illustrious and beloved President, to the people of the United States, as a piece which renders this, and every thing else on the subject, in a good measure unnecessary, and deserves not merely to be inscribed in characters of gold, and exhibited in the dwelling of every citizen of the United States; but to be engraved on every American heart. From this excellent performance, which is just published, we shall take the liberty to quote a passage to adorn, and conclude the explicative part of this letter.

“ Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can

can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles. 'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

“Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.”

Thus, brethren, we have shewn you, in general, the importance of the civil and political interests of our country; that their foundation is our natural rights as men; the necessity, in the present state of things, of civil government; its nature and importance as an ordinance of God; that the scriptures require attention to the support of government, which should be manifested by subjection to civil authority in all things, consistent with a good conscience, by guarding against slackening the reins, or destroying the energy of government and laws, supporting, honoring and praying for our rulers, and cheerfully discharging every public duty of which we are capable: but what those duties are, and how they are to be performed, in circumstances which may occur, is difficult, from their number and variety, to ascer-

tain. And it is not easy to shew the safe point to which our attention should be directed in politics. But surely, being free citizens, possessed of the objects of taxation, and personally, or, at least, mediately concerned in all that regards war, which is its prelude, concomitant and result, the greatest of temporal calamities, should interest ourselves in these matters, so far as will consist with our other and more important duties, and with the delicacy of the christian character. But our expectations should not be sanguine, whatever appearances may take place. Civil government, in its most perfect form, is not capable of rectifying all the evils which exist in our world: and, in one view, is itself a consequence, demonstration, and a punishment of sin. The law, in its restraints, is not for a righteous man, but for the disobedient. And, as no government can be supported but by the sword, so, while there is a necessity for the exercise of coercive power, we must have occasional, as, without government, there would be perpetual war. Of two evils, therefore, we should choose the least, when, as in the present case, a choice is necessary. This is evidently civil government, with all the expences and consequences which it involves. And using our best endeavours to destroy local prejudices, bigotry, and invidious, discriminating epithets, among our fellow citizens, let us be examples of moderation, peace, and love; and hasten to the utmost of our ability, the blessed period, when reason, religion, and morality, shall commence their universal, glorious, and eternal reign.

We remain,

Beloved Brethren,

Yours in Gospel Bonds,

RICHARD FURMAN, *Moderator.*

HENRY HOLCOMBE, *Clerk.*