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Minutes ... at Bethesda Church ... November 3d, 1798.
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AAS copy.

MINUTES

O F T H E

CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION,

Met at the BETHESDA CHURCH, SAVANNAH RIVER, November 3^d, 1798.

1st. **T**HE two first days were employed in the usual attendance on public ordinances: Two sermons were delivered on Saturday, and three on the sabbath, to an attentive, numerous audience; after which the Lords supper was administered.

2^d. On Monday, the 5th instant, at 11 o'clock A. M. The Rev. Henry Holcombe delivered the sermon introductory to business, from Psalms CXIX 126. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law."

3^d. Letters from 9 churches were read, and the names of the Delegates, with the state of the churches, minuted.

4th. Rev. Richard Furman was chosen Moderator, and Mr. Joseph Bullock Cook, Clerk.

5th. The church at Lane's creek again presented a letter, by their delegates, for admission into this association, together with a written report in their favor, of the committee appointed last year to enquire into the cause of difference between them & the church in Anson county; but as the delegates of the church in Anson signified that said church, as well as themselves, were not satisfied: Agreed, that the following brethren be a committee to investigate the subject, and report before the end of the session: viz. Richard Furman, Henry Holcombe and James Sweat.

6th. Two other churches petitioned for admission: One a church of many years standing, at the Congaree, formerly under the pastoral care of the late eminently pious, excellent and usefull, Rev. Joseph Rees; the other lately constituted, on the lower Three Runs. Very satisfactory accounts respecting their faith and practice being obtained, they were admitted.

7th. The Ministering brethren present, not attending as delegates, were invited to take a seat with the association, as assistants in their deliberations.

8th. Letters and minutes of the year '97, were received from the Philadelphia & Warren associations; likewise from the Bethel, Georgia and Hephzibah, associations,

tions, of the present year. A Letter from the Rev. Lemuel Burket, of N. Carolina, was also received, accompanied by minutes of various associations in N. C. and Virginia, and one from Mr. Needham Whitfield, with minutes of the Neuse association. Rev. James Fowler attended as messenger from the Bethel association, Rev. Jesse Mercer from the Georgia, and Rev. Benjamin Davis from the Hephzibah, who were cordially received.

9th. Mr. Furman, as chairman of the committee appointed last year to investigate the cause of difference between the church at the High Hills of Santee, and Rev. Mr. Gerald, respecting the sabbath, reported the opinion and transactions of said committee, founded on the information they received at a meeting of the parties which they attended: which amounted to this: That some of the proceedings of the church had not been regular: but that they had just cause of dissatisfaction both from the principle and conduct of Mr. Gerald; that a plan for reconciliation had been proposed by the committee on the most liberal principles, which was acceded to by the church, and by Mr. Gerald conditionally; but that he had finally rejected it and determined to proceed on the plan of his new sentiments, according to what he had published from the pulpit and the press. The association are sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Gerald, and that he persisted in the sentiment and conduct referred to.

10th. The Moderator read the circular letter, he had prepared by request of the association, and by his desire it was submitted to the critical examination of a committee. The committee, Mr. Holcombe, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. Sweat.

11th. The following brethren were appointed to write to the corresponding associations, Mr. Furman to the Philadelphia, Mr. Holcombe to the Warren, Mr. Sweat to the Bethel, Mr. Roberts to the Georgia, Mr. Cook to the Hephzibah, Mr. Tison to the Neuse.

12th. The committees, to whom were referred the business respecting the church at Lane's Creek, and the examination of the circular letter, each reported: The first, that they do not think the cause of dispute between the church in Anson county and that at Lane's creek sufficient to prevent the latter from being received into union; but think it incumbent on this church, as well as that on Flat creek, where the dissatisfaction originated, to take candid and friendly measures for giving satisfaction to the church in Anson: the rather, as the Pastor of that church thinks his character injured, and his usefulness impeded, by the representations which have been made by some persons of this business; and that the association recommend, a temper and conduct, of mutual concession and tenderness to said churches.

The other committee recommended the adoption of the circular letter, as it had been presented. Which reports were concurred in.

13th. A letter was presented by two persons, as messengers, from a part of the Bethel church; representing that an unhappy division existed in said church, and that the majority had taken part in measures which appeared to them to be inconsistent with good order, so as to affect the honor of religion, and the interests of the union; and praying, that the friendly assistance of the association might be afforded. Agreed thereon, that our brethren, John M. Roberts, David Cooper, and John Cato, be a committee to visit the said church, to enquire into the state thereof respecting the articles alledged; give their advice, and afford such assistance as may be mutually desired by the parties, or which the interests of the union may require.

14th. Took into consideration the following Query, from the church at Pipe creek. Is it consistent with the principles and conduct of a christian, for a person to join himself to a lodge of free masons? and, if this be answered in the affirmative; is it orderly for him to associate with a lodge of the fraternity who are evidently persons of immoral lives, and whose assembling together proves a mean of encreasing immoral conduct? *Answer.*—First, as an essential part of the masonic constitution is secrecy, the association find themselves greatly disqualified for giving a decided answer to the first part of the Query. The universal benevolence professed by the members of that body, the acts of kindness and liberality actually performed, in many instances, by them, and the existence of persons professing christianity in that connexion, make in favor of it; but on the other hand, the necessity a person is laid under to bind himself by the most solemn engagements to secrecy, before he can receive the information which is necessary to enable him to form a regular and conscientious judgment on the subject, and which should he finally disapprove, must prove of the most embarrassing nature, appears to be so inconsistent, both with reason and religion, that it should seem, at least, adviseable for serious christians to avoid the connexion: especially as we are amply furnished with directions, and aided by the most powerful and sublime motives to the purest benevolence, in the scheme of our holy religion; and as the principles of all the useful branches of science are open to the freest access. Yet we think the subject so intimately connected with the rights of private judgement, that, a person should be left to his own conscientious determination respecting it.

2d. To associate with immoral persons, so as to give countenance to their immoralities, is certainly evil. Subjects of usefulness and duty do at times however, call us to act in connection with such persons, which though it exposes to danger or disgust, may be consistently done; while we carefully distinguish between the lawful transaction, by pursuing only that, and the incidental evil, which we avoid.—But to associate with immoral persons where duty in one form or other does not call, is to take part in their immoralities. The decision on the latter part of this Query therefore, must depend on the judgment which ought to be formed of the

business of a masonic lodge ; Whether it is a matter of duty or not ?

15. Appointed our Brother John M. Roberts, messenger to the Bethel association, Joseph B. Cook, to the Georgia, James Sweat and Aaron Tison, to the Hephzibah.

17th. Mr. Holcombe is requested to write the circular letter for the next year in answer to this question : What obligation are persons who enjoy the dispensation of the Gospel under, to attend public worship ?

16th. Agreed that our next meeting be at the Congaree, the Saturday before the first sabbath in November next ; Rev. James Sweat to preach the Sermon, in case of failure Mr. John M. Roberts.

17th. Collected the money for printing the Minutes : The Moderator is desired to superintend their printing, and distribution.

Concluded with exhortation and prayer by the Moderator.

N. B. The arrangements in the general committee continue as they were last year. Three churches have contributed this year to the fund, viz. Charleston, £.57. 17s. 9d. Euhaw £.18. 11s. 9d. Georgetown £.10. 14s. 6d.

The expenditure has been £.32. 0s 9d. Remains in fund £.112. 16s. 3d.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Charleston Baptist association, assembled at Bethesda, on Savannah River, Three Pines, the third day of November, 1798, and continued to the sixth of said month—To the churches they represent, send christian salutation.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

A GREABLE to a resolve of the last year, we come now to consider the Query : “ What is the proper province and use of reason in religion ? ”

Here, on the usual plan of candid and regular discussion, we shall first explain the terms, and then attempt a solution of the difficulty contained in the interesting and delicate subject of inquiry.

The terms which are of peculiar significancy and importance in this question are, *reason* and *religion* ; and the grand subject of inquiry is, the *proper province*

and *use* of the *one* in respect of the *other*.

The word *reason* has been taken by Metaphysicians, Philosophers, and Divines, in a variety of senses, which have, too often, been left indeterminate ; this has occasioned mistakes, and disputes which might have been avoided, as well as errors of a pernicious tendency. In our explanation we shall consider the term in three acceptations only ; which appear to include all that is useful and essential in this inquiry : some others may be noticed, when we come to correct certain mistakes. Those intended

tended in the definition are: First, the rational faculty of the human soul, or other created intelligence: which includes perception and judgement. Secondly, the exercise of this faculty in its inquiries after, adherence to, and defence of truth; in the great pursuits of knowledge, duty, and happiness: especially when inquiries are made, conclusions formed, and adherence supported on just principles and proper evidence; or by a just and regular scheme of ratiocination. Thirdly, the constitution and order of nature (considering nature in the most sublime and extensive meaning of the word;) or that scheme of arrangement which infinite wisdom, righteousness, & goodness have established, throughout the material, intelligent, and moral systems of the universe; together with the principles on which this scheme is established: Which principles have their origin in the perfections of deity, & are necessary to give perfection to the systems they govern. This sense of the word, though here mentioned last, in its regular order stands the first. It includes the existence, nature, attributes, and properties of all beings that exist, or can exist, in respect of their reality, possibility, relation and dependence. Thus it may be said to pervade the sovereignty, and rights of deity; and the dependence, duty, and obligations, of creatures.— In the same manner it comprehends the nature and laws of cause and effect, subject and adjuant, means and end, agent and patient, time and place, extension and number; wisdom and happiness, truth and knowledge, ignorance and

error, crime and punishment, sin and misery; thought and volition, principle and sentiment, motive and action; In a word of an innumerable multitude of existences, facts, affections, relations, oppositions, changes, and circumstances, which none but an infinite mind can fully comprehend. The nature and order of these being established by effective and invariable laws, become the subject of all our knowledge and foundation of just reasoning: the principles, or facts, being in some instances certainly and clearly known, lead us by the analogy of nature to an acquaintance with their causes, effects, or correlates. Without this established order of principles and things, the rational faculty of creatures would be an ignis fatuus, a light without heat, and which could afford no certain direction. All reasoning would be at an end; or rather, would in the first instance be impossible. This order of nature in conformity to the divine perfections by which it has been adjusted, both in its principles and existence, is excellent—what it ought to be:—right and best.

Though these are senses of the word reason to which we must advert, when a copious and strict view of the subject is intended, yet the sense principally designed in the Query, is the exercise of man's rational powers, with the assistance of such information and evidence as he possesses: being the second particular stated in the foregoing definition.

By religion is intended that faith, service, and adoration, which proceed from pure principles; have the true God
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for their object, and his glory for their end ; being the religion God approve.— This according to our sentiments is the christian religion : some of its principles being partly known by the light of nature : others only by special revelation from Heaven ; and the whole, contained and displayed, in the inspired scriptures of the old and new Testament.

Having defined the principal terms, we proceed to the solution of the Query. But, first it may be necessary to observe, that this inquiry becomes important, not only generally, from its interesting nature ; but particularly, on account of a supposed contrariety, or opposition, between reason and revealed religion, or faith ; which sentiment both the enemies and professed friends of religion have represented in one form or other, by their discourses, or conduct as true. The former professing themselves friends and disciples of Reason, have asserted on every occasion, that important truths and duties of religion are irrational ; and to give the assertion support some of them have laid it down as an invariable maxim, “ That no proposition is to be admitted as true, but what reason can fully comprehend.” Of the latter also, some who have been proud to call themselves *rational christians*, in their scheme of reasoning, setting up reason as their criterion, have explained away, or denied, clear and important doctrines of revelation.— While others who have advocated the truth of these perverted or opposed doctrines, and appeared as zealous friends of revelation in general, have

used expressions which indicated that they considered reason as either unfriendly to revelation ; or rendered useless in the contemplation of its most sublime truths. It is hoped, from the due consideration of the subject, it will appear, that if in these things the enemies of religion have greatly, its advocates have also, measurably erred.

However it may appear to be risking a proposition when advanced on a subject so delicate, and where such diversity of sentiment has prevailed ; yet we shall not hesitate in asserting, that the province of reason in religion, is to contemplate in their nature, evidence, and use, all known truths contained in that important subject ; and to endeavor the application and improvement of them to the great purposes of piety, benevolence, and our own true and final happiness.— To enquire also after unknown truths, whether discoverable by the light of nature or revelation, which are capable of being improved for the same excellent purposes.

It is then a province wider than the earth, broader than the sea : It reaches beyond the sphere of the resplendent sun, and the flaming comets' long extended march : It cannot be contained in the contracted limits of time ; but extends to an unsearchable eternity past, and to an endless duration yet to come !— But still it is a province, an allotment marked out by divine sovereignty and unerring wisdom, for the intellectual exercise, possession and enjoyment, of limited, dependent intelligences : And can extend

no farther than (as we have before hinted) to truths concerning which they are informed, or furnished with the means of information. Into the secrets of the most high, their reason must not presume to look; nor must it, in inconsistency with its character, attempt to grasp (except in their general nature and evidence) subjects which are above the capacity of its possessor.

Reason in religion, must also act within the limits of good, useful, and laudable intentions: in the light of truth, and under the influence of the spirit and grace of God. Idle speculation, vain curiosity, and proud dispute, are therefore excluded.

In inquiries after truth, or attainments of knowledge, it must be conversant with subjects which lie in the bounds of certainty, or probability. The first of which afford positive knowledge, the other matter of opinion. From the first class, correspondent certainties may in many instances be inferred; and from the latter similar probabilities.

The evidence of truth lies also within its province. This comprehends sensation, consciousness, the agreement of rational truths, facts, testimony, inspiration and miracles. Testimony being related to faith or belief; we observe on that subject, that it not only, frequently gives full satisfaction, and becomes the medium of very important knowledge, even when the testimony is human; but is also highly rational, when the mind withholds, or gives its assent, in exact

proportion to the meaning and credibility of the testimony.

If this may be asserted of faith in human testimony; how much more, of that which is founded in divine? In this the subjects are the most interesting and important, and the testimony cannot be erroneous: For God is too wise to be mistaken, and too good to deceive his creatures. Hence revealed truths, however mysterious or wonderful they are, may be assumed as principles of the highest reason, and positive certainty.—But the evidences of the revelation come first under inquiry, and belong to the province of reason.—We proceed,

Secondly, to the use of reason in religion. This part of our subject may be considered in two points of view: First as reason is a mean for accomplishing an end; secondly, as it is rightly employed for such accomplishment.

Many important purposes are answered by it, in its general design, as a mean.

First, it is a mean of bringing us to a just acquaintance with the wonderful works of God, wrought in creation, providence, and grace. Of tracing therein, the footsteps of infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, truth and mercy; and of leading us through nature up to nature's God, to behold his transcendent perfection and glory: to inspire us with that veneration, love & gratitude, which are due to him, thus to dispose & enable us to render him voluntary adoration & honor; & thus to display his glory among his rational creatures. Secondly, its native tendency is to bring
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man to an acquaintance with himself; & in connexion with religion, to enlarge, refine, & every-way improve the human soul; by fitting it for the reception of religious truths, as discovered, and by giving them due weight in the intended heart. In the light of divine truth, and under the influence of grace, it gives authority to the dictates of conscience; drawing arguments from the divine goodness and sovereignty, the righteousness and spirituality of God's law, the greatness of a creature's obligations, the detestable nature of sin, and the terrors of divine anger.

It is equally assidant to repentance, faith, hope, love, patience and all the other christian graces; by enforcing the truths of revelation which furnish arguments to enforce, or motives to produce their exercise in the soul. It enables the mind to form a just estimate of its true interest by comparing earth with heaven, time with eternity; and the fluctuating, unstable, frothy pleasures of sense and sin with the spiritual, sublime and lasting joys of religion and virtue: joys which spring from the presence of God, and by communications of his love flow into the soul.

The force of that pungent question: "what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" it makes him feel: & from a clear conviction of his guilt and depravity evidenced by revelation, facts and the feelings of the heart; it induces him highly to prize the gospel, and that redeemer whose love and grace form the principal subjects of

which the gospel treats.

Under this head we may consider the happy influence it has on the appetites and passions of men: bringing them under due restraint, and regulating them by the rules of wisdom: conformably to the scriptural doctrine of self-denial: by stimulating them, also, to virtuous action, in cases of aptahy and supineness.

Here, and in sundry other cases, it is of no less importance in the use and application it makes of well known truths, which we are to apt too forget or neglect: than in its discovery of those before unknown.

Thirdly, its use is great in ascertaining the evidence of revelation. This it does, by satisfying the mind respecting what is proper evidence of it, in the reason, and nature of things: and by enabling us to judge concerning the genuineness of that which at any time lays claim to our regard as such, and would command our faith. Here, the authenticity of history and of books said to be inspired, faithfulness of translations, purity of principle, excellency of design, prophecy, miracles, and all, both internal and external, evidence of religion are tried.

A fourth use respects language, and consists in fixing the sense and meaning of words, sentences, tropes, figures, and arguments, which are used in sacred books, or other writings and discourses. These it teaches us rightly to understand.

Fifthly, it is of importance in matters of

of prudence, where particular commands do not mark out the line of duty, of safety, or expedience: where a general command, such as that, "let all things be done decently and in order," governs; or where actions are declared lawful, but not required by precept. Here the subject, or circumstances, lying in the bounds of probability or choice; reason determines what is right, or best.

Sixthly, it is of singular importance to the serious friend of truth, in the assistance it affords him to escape, withstand and repel, the influence and attacks of superstition, error, and delusion; and of supporting him with consistency, firmness, and dignity, in his religious principles, profession, and conduct: It also fits the man of virtue and religion, whose mind is highly improved by it, for extensive usefulness among his fellow creatures. These important purposes are accomplished by its discovering to him, on the one hand, the falshood and sophistry on which schemes of error are founded; by leading him up to thier spring in the human mind, whether originating in ignorance, or vicious inclination: and, on the other, by opening to his view the truth, harmony, and stability of religious principles, doctrines, and facts.

Sevently, it is of great advantage to the pious man, in tracing the connexion between the principles of the divine government and the events of providence; so as to enable him to judge of the signs of the times, and the duties they impose. Likewise of the scheme of grace, and

of the effects of grace on the soul: Of the various parts, connexion, and agreement of christian experience; by which he is enabled to form a just estimate of his true state and character; discover and correct his defects, see his right to the privileges and comforts of religion, and indulge the soul reviving expectation of future blessedness.

In short, without the power of reason, which is essential to his being a religious creature, man could have no religion; but must rank with the brutal part of creation; and without reasoning, or the exercise of this faculty, it could be of no use.

The right manner of using our reason in religion, comes next to be considered.

In general, it is to be used with much care, candor, seriousness, and humility, and in humble dependence on the illumination of heavenly wisdom, and gracious influence on the heart.

The contracted state of our capacity, imperfection of our knowledge, the the magnitude and sublimity of many subjects we have to contemplate, the intricacy, delicate nature, and exquisite connexion of others, require this manner of using it; but especially as the subjects referred to respect the honor of God, our obligations to him, and our everlasting hopes. But, perhaps, the strongest reason of all, is the derangement, or perversion, our reasoning powers have suffered by human depravity: From the influence of a strong propensity in our nature to evil, by which the

appetites

appetites and passions, warp and darken the understanding, incline us to assume wrong premises in reasoning, and to draw unjust conclusions from right; and this in favor of our carnal inclinations, and supposed, but mistaken, interests. This article proves the direction concerning gracious influence and divine illumination to be indispensably necessary. A few particular directions follow.

First, be careful to find out & combat, on all occasions, the springs or causes of error; but especially in subjects essential to religion. These, in general, are ignorance, prejudices, perverse passions, selfish interests, and wrong habits in thinking and judging.

Second, open the mind with candor to information, from whatever quarter it may be received, when supported by the evidence of truth: and make use of every mean in your power to gain the knowledge of essential truths; especially of revelation, when you have gained rational satisfaction that what you take to be revelation is such. On judging concerning the reality of revelation, bestow peculiar care. Do not let superstitious traditions assume the authority of facts in your judgment, nor yet the opinion of the multitude; on the other hand, let not the sallies of wit, the scoffs of infidels and scepticks, nor the difficulties which arise from circumstantial parts of the evidence, pass with you for conclusive arguments against revelation, and prevent you from candidly weighing and cordially embracing the clear and important parts of evidence.

While you guard against superstition, take care that you do not reject the evidence God himself has furnished in the cause of truth.

Third, labor to get a just acquaintance with first principles, and leading truths, both in reason and religion, and particularly in all subjects of argumentation you enter upon. Let them be well digested in your mind, and let your inferences drawn from them be fair, rational & conclusive: such as you can answer for with satisfaction before the bar of unerring wisdom and justice.

Fourth, propose some worthy and important end to yourself in all your rational inquiries. So that you may act up to the dignity of your nature: as a rational creature, concerned for your own true happiness; for the honor of God, as his servant; and for the welfare of mankind, as a friend and brother of the great human family.

Fifth, consider the extent of your capacity; and do not waste your rational strength on subjects where an angel's powers might fail. Be more careful to improve well known truths, than to gratify a prying curiosity; in the indulgence of which you might travel over an extensive field and gain nothing, or only trifles: a few variegated leaves or painted flowers. Yet when led to the contemplation of great objects, from worthy motives, on a proper occasion, with an important end in view, and with means of information in your hand; let your application and perseverance be in just proportion, to the means and end.

Approach

Approach the profound mysteries of heaven with reverence, and put off, as it were, your shoes, while you stand on holy ground.

Sixth, when presented in revelation, with some sublime mystery, or stupendous subject, which the human mind cannot grasp; look carefully into the terms, or expressions which declare it, that you may discern what is declared; view the evidence and authority of the revelation, and turn your eyes to the mysteries of nature which are within and all around you. Here rest: your reason has then performed its office.

Lastly, consider your weakness, and liability to err from a variety of causes, and pray earnestly to God, to grant you divine illumination for direction of your inquiries after truth; and to give you firmness, consistency and perseverance in adherence to it when known.

Being desirous of supporting every truth, and system of truth, on proper evidence, we add in confirmation of the foregoing sentiments: that the inspired scriptures shew the importance and necessity of reason in religion, and assign it such a province and use as we have described. The eternal laws of heaven in the constitution and order of nature are there referred to on manifold occasions. The works of God, are represented as incontestable vouchers for his being and perfections. Man is called upon, times without number, to exercise his rational powers on the great subjects of religion in all their diversifications: nay Jehovah invites him to come

and reason with himself: "Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord!"

There, in manifold instances, appeals are made to the senses of men, as ground of reasoning, concerning religious truths; not only with respect to the common order of nature, but in cases of extraordinary providences, miracles, and the events of prophecy. Testimony is given backed by evidence. Exhortations, commands, promises, invitations and threatenings, are enforced by arguments, taken from the perfections and government of the deity; from the obligations of creatures; or the essential interests of men. A chain of argumentation, runs through the whole scheme of christian doctrines, and substantial reasons are given therein for their support. To instance in that distinguished doctrine of the new testament, regeneration: It must be observed that its necessity is urged from the contrariety which exists between the flesh and spirit, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit: marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." For the incarnation, obedience, and sufferings of the son of God; man's depravity and guilt, God's strict justice, on the one hand, and his design of shewing mercy, in a manner consistent with his glorious perfections and righteous government, on the other, are assigned as reasons.

In a matter of prudence and convenience, the apostles say: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and

and serve tables."

Throughout this scriptural argumentation, arguments are taken as well from heaven as from earth; from eternity as from time; from invisible and intellectual, as well as from visible and corporeal objects. We are there taught to exercise our reason, in that humble dependence on the spirit and grace of God, which has been represented: and, which is more, taught to hope and expect such assistance.

We should now close this subject, were it not necessary to take a short view of those positions, we have noticed as erroneous, or tending to mislead. And here, it may be first observed, that the contracted sense in which the word reason has been frequently taken, both by the friends and enemies of religion, has been a principal cause of the wrong, unsatisfying, and perplexing propositions they have advanced on the subject. A dislike of truth, pride, and a desire to embarrass, on the one hand; and a fear to concede too much on the other, have been additional reasons.

The exercise of man's rational faculty, assisted only by the light of nature (and consequently in its depraved state,) or else, a devised scheme of logic, have been in these cases often intended, when reason in the highest sense of the word should have been understood, and appealed to. But those senses exhibit a very partial and mutilated view of the subject.

The enemies of religion were right, when they asserted, that religion should

accord with reason; and that the latter should be used for the trial of religious sentiment; but they were extremely wrong in the contracted erroneous sense they affixed to the word; and in its use, when they meant thereby to exclude the authority and influence of revelation; and when they proceeded to reason by sophisticated arguments, under the influence of base passions and selfish interests, with a fond conceit that they were possessed of the depths of wisdom, when in fact they were wrong in fundamental principles.

The argument, or maxim, that we should believe nothing but what we can understand, at first view, is plausible; and as it applies to the general nature of a subject, or the affirmative meaning of a proposition, may be true: But when applied to the extent of a nature and its manner of being, in certain cases; or to the reason why particular subjects are as asserted to be, in others; the maxim proves false and pernicious. Thus, when it is asserted that there exists a God, of infinite perfection, self-existent, and eternal; the general nature of the subject may be understood, likewise the affirmative sense of the proposition; and a variety of evidence conspires to prove this truth to our minds. Without these, or some of these, our assent would not be rational, it is acknowledged, but with them it is so, though the subject exceeds our comprehension. If therefore it should be asserted, that because we cannot comprehend infinitude, or understand how a being can have existence

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ence of himself, uncaused, and exist without beginning or end, we should not assent to the foregoing proposition; this assertion would be folly, madness, and impiety, in the extreme.

Sooner might we hope to include a numerous host in a small parlour, to take up the ocean in a cup, or place the sun in a lantern, than to comprehend by a finite mind (and especially one so limited as man's) an infinite subject. Reason, as well as revelation, teaches us that such subjects do exist; and observation, as well as reason, proves, there are mysteries all around us, and within us, in the constitution both of body and mind, of which we have the most certain evidence; which, though not infinite, we cannot fully understand. Shall we then deny our assent to propositions stated by unerring wisdom, and asserted by divine veracity, because we cannot comprehend the subjects of which they treat; and yet claim the honor of acting rationally?

If propositions, such as we could fully understand, were, on some subjects, advanced; they could not be true: because incongruous with the nature of those subjects, and the capacity of man. Religion then, yea the christian religion has reason on its side. Its province and use, in respect of these subjects, we have before described.

The objections christians have raised against reason, when contending with infidels and opposers of religion, should have been directed against their false principles and modes of reasoning; against the confined, erroneous sense in which

they used the word, & that supremacy to which they would have advanced their own idolized reasoning powers in religion, to the exclusion of our trust in revelation and divine influence; not against reason itself properly considered.

That judicious maxim which was obtained among the rational advocates for christianity, "Truths of religion may be above reason, not contrary to it" requires, we conceive, to be a little more clearly and fully stated. No subjects can be above reason, in the sense stated in the third step of the definition given above; in respect of man's rational faculty and reasoning, the transcendency of many is obvious and indisputable.— To remove ambiguity, it would seem better to say; They are not contrary to reason; but above man's reasoning capacity.

We shall conclude this subject, with our earnest prayer that you may be so enabled by the influence of the spirit and grace of God, to make a right use of your rational powers in religion, as to obtain an enlarged acquaintance with its most sublime and interesting truths; be firmly established in your belief of them, and feel their vital efficacy on your hearts: That you may support your christian profession, and the sacred cause of our divine Lord and Master with becoming consistency, firmness and dignity: And thus, always abounding in the work of the Lord, may you be prepared for, and finally admitted to his heavenly kingdom and glory. We remain,

Dearly

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Dearlly Beloved Brethren,

Your's affectionateiy in Gospel Bonds,

RICHARD FURMAN, *Moderater*
JOSEPH B. COOK, *Clerk.*



STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

The Ministers names are in capitals; Licenced preachers in italics; from churches distinguished with an asterisk (*) we had no letters, their number stands as they did the last year; Pastors and delegates to whose names an obelisk (†) is affixed, were absent; a dash (—) denotes a vacancy.

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND DELEGATES.	Baptized.	Rec. by L.	Dismissed.	Excommun.	Dead.	Numbers.
Charleston,	RICHARD FURMAN, <i>Joseph B. Cook,</i>	15				1	4 265
Euhaw,	HENRY HOLCOMBE, <i>George Mollie,</i>	5					4 136
Welch Neck,*	DAVID LILLY,†						130
Mount-Pleasant,*	—, EVAN PUGH,†						38
Coofawhatchie,	{ AARON TISON, <i>James Smart, Isham Gardner,</i>					1	1 54
Pipe Creek,	—, <i>William Caufey.</i>						46
Ebenezer.*	DAVID COOPER,†						63
High Hills of Santee,	<i>John M. Roberts,</i>	1	1				93
Lynch's Creek,*	—,						11
Cheraw Hill,*	JOSHUA LEWIS,†						87
Beauty Spot,*	—,						75
Bethel, Black River,*	SOLOMON THOMPSON,†						85
Black Swamp,	ALEXANDER SCOTT, <i>Joseph Lawton,</i>				2		55
Edisto,*	NATHANIEL WALKER,†						142
Little Salt-Catcher,*	—,						90
Upper F. Lynch's Creek,*	WILLIAM DENMAN,†						101
Swift Creek,*	LEWIS COLLINS,†						57
Lower F. Lynch's Creek,*	SAMUEL BONDS,†						68
Rockey River,*	—,						134
Anson County, N. C.	CHARLES COOK, <i>Richard Ford,</i>						44
Great Salt-Catcher,	{ <i>Kellis Halford, Stephen Roberts,</i>						
Deep Creek,*	<i>Richard Creech,</i>			11	2	1	27
Little Peedee,*	FRAME WOODS,†						55
Enon,*	—,						26
Georgetown,*	—,						16
Gapway,*	EDMOND BOTSFORD,†						34
Bethesda,	DAVID OWEN,†						28
Lane's Creek,	{ JAMES SWEAT, <i>John Parkinson, Geo. Swicord,</i>	1	1		3	2	40
Congaree.	JOHN CATO, <i>William Shepherd,</i>						24
Lower Three Runs,	—, <i>John Merrow, Thomas Jackson,</i>						32
	—, <i>J. Giddin, Tho. Mathis Jos. Harley,</i>						14

Increase this year 63.

Rev. Nathaniel Walker's long illness, of which he died about the time of the Association's sitting, has operated as a reason for retaining the Edisto church on the list of churches in union, in hope that illness was the true cause of their not attending, and that they will attend to this duty in future.

(23) 2, 13 | 7, 12, 2077