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Baptists. South Carolina. Charleston Association, 1799.

Minutes . . . at the Congarie, November 2d, 1799.

[Charleston, 1799]. 12 pp.

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MINUTES

OF THE

CHARLESTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

Met at the Congaree, November 2d, 1799.

1st. **T**HE two first days were employed in the usual attendance on public ordinances: two sermons being delivered on Saturday, and three on the Sabbath; after which the Lord's Supper was administered.

2d. On Monday, the 4th instant, the association sermon was delivered by the Rev. JAMES SWEAT, from I Kings, xviii, 21: "*If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*"

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

4th. Rev. Richard Furman was chosen moderator, and Mr. Joseph B. Cook, clerk.

5th. Letters and minutes were received from the Philadelphia and Warren associations; also from the Georgia and Bethel associations, by their messengers, Rev. Charles Bussey, and Rev. James Fowler. Letters and minutes likewise were received from the Neuse association, N. C.; and a packet of minutes of various associations at the Northward, transmitted by the Rev. Mr. Brame.

6th. Rev. Messrs. Evan Jones, Jesse Mercer, and Edward Pigg, being present, and not messengers, were invited to a seat with us.

7th. Appointed Mr. Furman to write to the Philadelphia and Warren associations; Mr. Sweat to the Bethel; Mr. Fowler to the Neuse; Mr. Roberts to the Hephzibah; and Mr. J. B. Cook to the Georgia association.

8th. Rev. Mr. Holcombe, who was appointed at our last association, to write our circular letter, failing to send it forward, the moderator is requested to prepare one on the following subject, viz What are the probable causes of the present languishing state of religion among us in these southern states? Mr. Holcombe is requested to bring his letter forward for the next year.

9th. A petition was received, by their messengers, Rev. James Coleman and Mr. Charles Williams, from a church on Black Creek, formerly a part of Mount Pleasant church, and lately constituted by Rev. Messrs. David Cooper and Samuel Bonds. Satisfaction respecting their faith and order being obtained, they were admitted.

10th. Received a letter from Rev. Ralph Jones, near Winnborough, signifying, that he considers himself and the people to whom he ministers, members of the church at the Congaree, and that they approved of said church's joining the association.

11th. The committee appointed last year to investigate the causes

of an unhappy division in the church at Bethel, Black River, reported favorably respecting the body of the church.

A motion was made to take into consideration some things which were said to have escaped the notice of the committee, and others which had taken place since in the transactions of said church, which were represented to be of importance in the controversy which had existed among them, and to affect the peace and honor of the union. But on a proposal by another member, to leave enquiries of this kind to persons who might feel themselves concerned on the subject, and would use their private endeavors with the church to restore perfect harmony, the author of the motion withdrew it, and the association concurred in the proposed measure.

12th. Agreeable to request, took into consideration the state of the church at the Congaree, and appointed the following brethren to visit and preach to them occasionally, and to assist them in regulating their church affairs, viz. John M. Roberts, Lewis Collins, John Cato, Solomon Thomson, and Edward Pigg.

13th. The church at Rocky River having failed for a length of time to support their representation in the association, the following brethren, Charles Cook, John Cato, and Frame Woods, were appointed to visit them, and to enquire into their state and conduct.

14th. Read and approved the letters appointed to be written to corresponding associations; also the circular letter to the churches.

15th. Agreed to comply with the request of the Georgia association, to unite with them in solemn humiliation, and prayer for a revival of religion, on the Tuesday after the fourth Sabbath in June next.

16th. Appointed Rev. Messrs. Sweat and Collins messengers to the Bethel association; Roberts and J. Cook to the Hephzibah and Georgia associations.

17th. Agreed that our next meeting be at the Deep Creek church, the Saturday before the first Sunday in November, 1800.

18th. Appointed Rev. John M. Roberts to preach the sermon introductory to business, and in case of failure, Mr. J. B. Cook.

19th. Collected the money for printing the minutes; and requested Mr. Furman to superintend their printing and distribution.

20th. Agreed to continue the quarterly meeting in every church, for extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion, and the spread of the gospel: viz. the first Tuesday in January, April, July, and October.

Concluded with exhortation and prayer by the moderator.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE.

Proceeded to the election of officers. Rev. Richard Furman was re-elected president, Mr. Thomas Screven treasurer, and Mr. Thomas Rivers an assistant; elected Mr. Henry B. Inglesby assistant, and Rev. John M. Roberts secretary.

The following churches have contributed to the fund this year, viz. Charleston, 4*l.*; Mr. Cook, for the Euhaw, 2*l.*; High Hills of Santee, 5*l.* 7*s.*; Welch Neck, 1*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*; Mr. Thomson, for the Bethel, 4*s.* 8*d.*; and Mr. Cato, for the Lanes Creek, 2*s.* 4*d.* Expenditure this year 4*l.* 11*s.* 4*d.* Remains, belonging to the fund, 169*l.* 19*s.* 7*d.* Members of the committee present at this meeting, Richard Furman, John M. Roberts, Joseph B. Cook, Solomon Thomson, John Cato, Evander M'Iver.

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 Messengers, to whose names an obelisk (†) is affixed, were absent; a dash (—) denotes a vacancy.*

Churches.	Messengers.	Baptized.	Rec. by letter.	Dismissed.	Ex. com.	Restored.	Deat.	Total.
Charleston,	RICHARD FURMAN,	9	3	1	1		5	270
Euhaw,	—, Joseph B. Cook,	7		1				142
Welch Neck,	John David, Evander M'Iver,	10		1			8	131
Mount Pleasant,	EVAN PUGH, †							38
Coosawhatchie,	AARON TISON, † Moses Spivey, Arthur Roberts,		1		2		1	52
Pipe Creek,*	—							46
Ebenezer,*	—							63
High Hills Santee,	JOHN M. ROBERTS, Amos Dabose,						1	92
Lynch's Creek,*	—							11
Cheraw Hill,	JOSHUA LEWIS, †	5		1	1	2	3	89
Beauty Spot,*	—							75
Bethel, Bik. River,	SOLOMON THOMPSON, Bellington Taylor,	1		4	6	2	1	77
Black Swamp,*	ALEXANDER SCOTT, †							55
Little Saltcatcher,*	—							96
Upper F. Lynch's Creek,	WM. DENMAN † Charles Ingram, James Rich,	3	6	5	1		1	103
Swift Creek,	LEWIS COLLINS, Tho- mas Elliott,	5	1	6	2	1	3	53
L. F. Lynch's Crk.*	—							68
Rocky River,*	—							134
Ansoncounty, N. C.	CHARLES COOK, Abra- ham Ruthing,	2	5	2				49

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Messengers.</i>	<i>Baptized.</i>	<i>Rec. by letter.</i>	<i>Dismissed.</i>	<i>Excommun.</i>	<i>Returned.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Great Saltcatcher,	————, William Carr,			2			1	26
Deep Creek,	FRAME WOODS,† George Bullard,	1					1	55
Little Peedee,*	————							26
Enon,*	————							16
Georgetown,*	EDMUND BOTSFORD,†							34
Gap Way,*	DAVID OWEN,†							28
Bethesda,	JAMES SWEAT, Michael Swicard,							39
Lane's Creek,	JOHN CATO,		2	1	2		1	24
Congaree,	————, Thomas Jack- son, John Morrow,		22					54
Lower Three Runs,	————, Thomas Mathews,							14
Black Creek,	JAMES COLEMAN, Charles Williams,							22
Total,		41	40	24	15	7	24	1982

By exclusion of the church at Edisto, the decrease of numbers this year is 95 ; otherwise there would have been an increase of 47.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Charleston Association of Baptist Churches, met at the Congaree, the 2nd of November, 1799, and continued to the 5th of the said month, to the Churches they represent, wish grace, mercy, and peace.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

AMID the pleasures of our annual interview we feel regret, that it is not in our power to address you on the interesting subject proposed at our last meeting: Our worthy Brother who was to have prepared the letter having failed to furnish us with it.

In an address too hastily drawn up, considering the importance of the theme, we now present to your view the probable causes of the languishing state of religion in the southern parts of these United States—happily in many parts of the northern we behold, in pleasing contrast, a different state of things, exciting our emulation and encouraging our hope.

The infinite wisdom and righteousness inseparably connected with the divine government, afford us just reason to conclude that it proceeds on established principles or laws, which remain invariably the same through all the periods of time: And consequently, that whatever has been declared in the inspired scriptures to be the cause of divine displeasure against a person or people, or the reason for withholding blessings from them in former ages, will apply to those who are in similar circumstances now. In the application of this truth to the subject before us, assisted by the light of revelation and the evidence of existing facts, we must infer, that the causes of our sorrow are to be found, partly in the churches themselves; and partly among the people who are connected with them in the enjoyment of gospel privileges.

Sin or transgression against God, is, no doubt, the general cause, the odious reason of all our unhappiness; and consequently is so in this case. Not the sin of infirmity, for which the sincere christian is daily humbled before God, and which his merciful, heavenly Father, readily forgives; but sin in some form or other indulged and persisted in. Under this character, as more likely to take place among a professing people than gross immoralities, the following things are included--withholding from God his due—breach of covenant—undervaluing of privileges and mercies—disregard of judgments—neglect of the means of grace—formality—carnal security—love of the world—conformity to its spirit and sinful manners: Pride, selfishness, vain confidence in ourselves, and unbelief. To which may be added, a departure from the pure doctrines of the gospel in sentiment; or from ordinances and discipline in practice: Divisions, jealousies, and contention among individuals, or churches. By these the holy spirit is grieved, and our Redeemer wounded in the house of his friends. To prove that these are procuring causes of divine displeasure, or that any one of them, as

a prevailing evil may be sufficient to obstruct the communication of blessings from God to our souls, is not necessary to the man who seriously reads the scriptures. The humbling truth is there written as with a sun-beam, and he who runs may read. But too often is it found, that while we assent to principles of truth on a general scale, we fail to make particular and suitable application of them to ourselves, so that we do not feel their force—neither receiving the conviction, nor experiencing the reformation they are calculated to produce.

We have great reason to think that many, if not all these evils are in a less or greater degree chargeable on us. To discourse on them at large would require the compass of a volume: Our limits will only admit a very short discussion; yet we desire so to consider the subject as to bring it home to the heart and conscience.—Without attending strictly to the order in which we have noticed those evils, or attempting a minute consideration of them all, let us ask:—Is it not evident God's due is kept back from him in manifold instances, both by ministers and people; either by withholding it altogether, or by rendering such a mutilated, partial offering, or service, that we become liable to the curse pronounced by the prophet Malachi, on the man who had a male in his flock, yet vowed and sacrificed to the Lord a corrupt thing? The case will apply to the required consecration of our mental powers, gifts, and personal services to God; so strictly enjoined in the scriptures, and essential to religion. Also to the grateful surrender of a suitable portion of our property, for the support of his gospel, and promotion of valuable, benevolent, and charitable purposes. When these are left undone, or performed in a partial, indifferent, or niggardly manner, or with ostentatious views to exalt ourselves; do we not rob God?

Are not ministers chargeable with this sin, when they do not use every suitable mean in their power to improve the gift which is in them, for the service of God in his sanctuary: even when by neglect they fail acquiring just knowledge of doctrines, men, and things; and do not study the most serious and suitable addresses to the hearts and consciences of their hearers, to bring them to Christ and salvation?—When they do not exert themselves, according to their best ability, in preaching at all proper seasons, and with a single eye to the glory of God—when they neglect private labors, visiting, conversation on religion, and catechising among the people of their charge—and when they abandon the common interests of religion, by absenting themselves from the general meetings of the churches, held by them to promote acquaintance, union, harmony, and love?—Alas! what neglect in these things do we behold?—And how often, is it to be feared, do the public discourses which are, professedly, delivered in the cause of God and religion, amount to no more in fact, than a display of the preacher's

preacher's abilities, or an attempt to display them! in which, though the gospel doctrines are advanced, and urged with apparent zeal; yet in respect of the motive, he chiefly preaches himself, not Jesus Christ the Lord, and does homage to the idol of his heart. This is to keep from God his due, to rob him of his glory, and offer a daring affront to his heavenly Majesty. On account of such things, the labors of ministers are not blest, either to the conversion of sinners, or edification of saints; and the gifts of some are blasted.

In churches, how often do we behold apparent want of gratitude, generosity, and nobleness of spirit; and the special interests of Christ disregarded! How many do nothing, or comparatively nothing, toward the support of the gospel, even of their own ministers; tho' they must know Christ has appointed "That those who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel?" And as they are so deficient in this case, 'tis no wonder they can content themselves in a total neglect of the poor, and of such benevolent institutions as are formed on an extended plan of usefulness:—That such a neglect does exist among us, respecting an institution intimately connected with the best interests of the churches and of religion, is too glaringly evident to be denied.—Let us ask: Is this honoring God with the best of our substance and services? If the man who neglects to provide according to his ability, for the support of needy relatives, has, in the judgment of an inspired apostle, denied the faith and is worse than an infidel; what shall we say of those who are thus neglectful of the church and cause of God?—Shall these evils exist, indulged, among a professing people, whose obligations exceed all that an angel can conceive, or everlasting returns of gratitude discharge, and yet not be marked with tokens of divine displeasure on the authors of them, by him who has made himself known as a holy God, jealous of his honor?—Certainly not! With penitential hearts we must reform these evils, and bring to our God what has been kept back by fraud; then, may we hope, "He will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, for the reception of which there will not be room sufficient."

In a state of lukewarmness and backsliding, the holy vows made in baptism, at the Lord's table, or on other solemn occasions, are in a greater or less degree broken. In these we engage to become the obedient, faithful subjects of Jehovah's kingdom; to die to sin, and live to him who died for us.—Does the man who becomes a stranger to daily self denial, who neglects a watchful care over his heart, secret prayer, and devout meditation, do this? Is he faithful to his engagements, who can indulge a vicious fancy; in which the images of iniquity are formed and suffered to abide—he who runs carelessly or knowingly into the way of temptation; who makes little or no conscience of improving his time, opportunities, or talents; who knowingly neglects important duties; giving way to every trifling objection, or excuse.

excuse, his careless, slothful heart can ungratefully suggest—who loses his inclination to do good in proportion as he is furnished by a kind Providence with the means of doing it—who, in the enjoyment of manifold blessings, has his chief concern in pleasing and indulging himself in rising to eminence in the world, and gaining the friendship of the fashionable, the honorable, and the great—is he faithful to his vows, and faithful to his God?—Or rather, must he not be charged with an impious and shameful breach of covenant engagements: With affronting the majesty of heaven, and grieving his holy spirit?

Is not our undervaluing gospel privileges and mercies evident in manifold instances, by the indifference and neglect manifested toward public ordinances? The man who will go miles through a summer's sun, the winter's cold, or the falling rain, to secure a little worldly gain, or to obtain his pleasures; yet, when attendance at the house of God is the object, finds insurmountable obstacles in the way, where smaller inconveniencies interpose. In towns and cities there are members of churches, as well as hearers, who cannot, as they allege, attend evening worship, and other extraordinary services in the churches, because of intervening difficulties; who yet can frequently employ the very same, or more inconvenient hours, in visits or attendance on idle diversions.—Such a state of things calls for deep humiliation; apprehensions of divine displeasure should be entertained, and the interposition of mercy earnestly sought.—But let appointments for humiliation and extraordinary prayer be made—many churches pass them over unnoticed; and where they are attended, they prove sacred to the few: The majority are too busy, or too happy to attend.

Private prayer, we have reason to believe, is awfully neglected, and the spirit of it almost lost. Who delights in it, as a blessed mean of converse with the Deity? Who maintains his stated hours for the holy exercise, and carries the spirit of it with him, while employed in the common avocations of life; or knows what it is, experimentally, and feelingly, to plead the promises; and wait with earnest expectation and humble hope for their accomplishment?—Does not formality evidently attend the devotions of the present day, both in the church and family: even in the few families where public devotions are upheld? Alas! Where is that holy fervor, that sweet simplicity, that ardent desire and heavenly mindedness, which once distinguished christians, as the spiritual worshippers of a holy and good God?—But, as has been hinted, family prayer is greatly neglected also. With many very little instruction, of a religious nature, is given to children and servants; and if the Sabbath is not profaned, as it is by others, in making it a day of business or carnal pleasures; yet it is very little improved for the noble purposes of its institution. Serious conversation on the all-
important

important subjects of religion, has nearly fled with the spirit of devotion: polite trading, jesting, censorious observations, conversation on politics, and on the means of wealth and pleasure appear in its room

Pride and selfishness are to be seen among us in various forms, stimulating to ambitious pursuits; in an affectation of grandeur and delicacy among the rich, or those who would be thought so; in whom it produces effeminacy and indolence, haughtiness and contempt of their supposed inferiors; and in most exquisite sensibility and resentment to all that is deemed slight, offence, or censure. Serious reproofs, even from the pulpit, and when originating in the most benevolent intentions are scarcely to be endured, often resented. To support this disposition, in one case, covetousness and cruelty are exercised, to the injury of the poor, and oppression of servants and dependants; to gratify it, in another, prodigality is indulged: And that which should, in justice, be surrendered to the creditor, bestowed on the poor, or dedicated to the Lord, is squandered away on trifles or hurtful pleasures.

In the church this disposition is seen connected with ostentation and formality, with bigotry, or contention; in a conceit of wisdom and superior knowledge; in a spirit of criticism rather than devotion, which produces itching ears, only to be gratified with fine harangues, or curious disquisitions; or in a desire to have the preeminence. -- Hence the distance and coldness, or contention, observable among members of the same church, or community. Hence the contention among churches. From this source may be traced the assumed consequence of those who are leaders in religious connections whose members are numerous, wealthy, and honorable in the world. From hence the artful uncandid policy by which party interest is supported, though often connected with much profession of candor and liberality. From hence the readiness of many to unite in connections where worldly advantages invite, too often to the disregard of important truth and duty; and the backwardness of others, where these advantages are wanting in a church, to make religious professions in it; or, on the slightest occasion, to withdraw their attendance.

The existence of these facts strongly proves a prevailing conformity to the spirit and conduct of the world among the professed friends and adherents to religion, in the present day. — That we are either unconcerned, or discouraged, in such a state of things, evidences on the one hand, our vain confidence, carnal security, and want of zeal; on the other, our unbelief.

Love to God and to the souls of men, our own and others, requires of us exertions in such circumstances: That we are found wanting in them, while all the encouragements afforded by the word of God, and the records of history are before us, must turn to our shame. Surely were

the promises duly regarded ; especially those which assure us of the presence and blessing of God to his faithful people, who use the means of his appointment and seek his aid ; and did we duly consider the manifold instances recorded of his interposition in favor of such, by which their faithful endeavors have been crowned with success ; our hearts would be inspired with faith, and we should be stimulated to exert every power in his sacred cause.

The peculiar privileges we, as citizens of America, enjoy, lay us under peculiar obligations. Here no restraints are laid on the conscience. No fear of fines, imprisonment, or death, for preaching or professing the gospel of Christ, in its purity, can assail us. The smiles of divine providence also, on the wise and prudent measures of our government, have preserved us in safety hitherto, from the calamities of war and their attendant horrors, while half Europe is convulsed ; and millions there, are either seen in arms, deluging the hostile field with blood ; or suffering the complicated misery of rapine, famine, imprisonment, ravishment, and murder.

But do we improve our privileges aright ? Are we truly thankful for our preservation from these dreadful evils : particularly from domestic insurrection ; an awful example of which has been given in a country not far distant from our coasts, and which has been both planned and attempted by our enemies among ourselves ? Or has our zeal abated in proportion as our privileges and opportunities have increased : And have peace and safety excited us to make ample provision for our own ease and indulgence ; rather than to give glory to the preserver of nations, and the author of peace ?

But God has not left us without witnesses of his being the God of judgment also. Let the inhabitants of our principal cities speak : Has not pale death with hasty stride marched through our streets, brandishing his fatal sword, commissioned to destroy ? How many of our youth as well as of those in the prime of manhood have fallen ?—Of those who are yet spared, how many under the influence of the fatal fever, which has visited us from year to year, have groaned on the bed of languishing ; and what fears have been produced in others ?—But have the calls of divine providence been duly regarded ? Have they produced the repentance and reformation for which they were sent ?—Alas ! How soon are our fears dispelled, and our serious thoughts banished. Scarcely has the procession of mourners ended, the bereaved wiped from his face the falling tear for a deceased relative, or the sick man recovered strength to go abroad, before these very persons give themselves up to worldly pursuits, crowd the theatre, resort to the ball, or plunge into various exercises of folly and vice—resolutions and vows, made in affliction, are delivered to the wind !—Even the sober inquirer, confines himself to the investigation of second causes, to find out the reason for the calamity : And the infidel and vicious remain unreformed and hardened.

We are happy in believing that the most important doctrines of the gospel are maintained, and the ordinances administered after the primitive pattern in the churches of our connection. To the discipline of the gospel we hope also there is, in general, religious adherence. But yet, in this time of general languor, there is reason to fear there may exist in the latter, partialities and omissions, displeasing to the great head of the church. The indulgence of vicious practices in members; making church censures instrumental to gratify angry, selfish passions; or enforcing rules and orders which have originated in mere human prudence or fancy, to the restraint of christian liberty; are rocks which the church, in pursuing its holy cause, should ever carefully shun.

In what relates to the general state of our churches, the following things appear to be wrong. First sending out persons, as ministers, who are not well qualified for the work without using proper means for their improvement. Secondly the too general neglect of members, to improve themselves, by reading and other means which are attainable, and which would render them respectable and influential among the people with whom they are connected. Thirdly, inattention to their congregational interests: Which includes neglect of proper plans for uniting their members, and those connected with them as worshippers, in such measures as would enable them to erect decent and convenient houses for public worship, and to support the gospel ministry among them in a permanent manner. Fourthly, that prevailing spirit of moving from place to place, just as fancy, whim, or supposed interest may dictate, without a due regard to the call of providence, or the interest of religion; by which churches are often greatly weakened, or, as it were, wantonly, and sacrilegiously broken up. The establishment of a church is an important event in favor of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the best interest of men: And it should be as great an object with its minister and members, to render it permanent, as to have it first gathered and organized.

Thus, dear brethren, we have candidly set before you, according to our best judgment, some of the most probable causes of the low and languishing state of religion among us, which you have so often lamented; both as they are to be found among professors and others. And we add our earnest request, and exhortation, that you use your individual and united efforts to have these god-offending evils removed. Unite also your fervent petitions at the throne of grace for the influence and aid of the divine spirit, to form your own minds and guide your conduct aright; and to give the gospel effect on the minds of those who have yet remained careless and impenitent. Open your minds to conviction; weigh with seriousness the truths which have been briefly suggested, with penitent hearts confess to God the sins which have grieved his holy spirit, caused his hand to be, as it were, shortened and his face to be hid from you. Use the too long neglected

neglected means of grace, with care, diligence, and perseverance. Indulge the divine ambition of being eminent in religion—faithful to your vows, sensible of your obligations and privileges, like to God, and useful in his cause. Consider the love of Christ, that you may feel its constraining power; meditate on the promises, and the glories of a coming world, till your hearts are fired with faith, zeal, and love, and till they expand with holy hope, pleasing expectation, and divine joy. Wishing you the choicest of Heaven's blessings we remain,

Beloved Brethren,

Yours affectionately in gospel bonds. .

RICHARD FURMAN, *Moderator.*

JOSEPH B. COOK, *Clerk.*