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Baptists. South Carolina. Charleston Association,  
1810.

Minutes of the ... Jeffers' Creek ... Nov. 1810.  
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# MINUTES

OF THE

## CHARLESTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

*Convened at the Ebenezer Church, Jeffers' Creek, the 3d of Nov. 1810.*

1. THE two first days were employed in the usual exercises of public devotion.

2. The Association Sermon was delivered on Monday, at 11 o'clock A. M. by the Rev. Davis Collins, from St. Matthew's Gospel, i. 21.—  
*"He shall save his people from their sins."*

3. Read Letters from 27 churches; took an account of the delegates and state of the churches; and elected Rev. Dr. Furman, Moderator, and Rev. William B Johnson, Clerk.

4. Received and read Letters from Corresponding Associations, viz. From the Philadelphia, no accounts. From the Warren, a letter and minutes of the present year. From the Georgia, a letter by their messengers, Rev. Messrs. Jesse Mercer, & T. Rhodes. From the Bethel, a letter and minutes of the present year, by their messenger, Rev. John Rooker. From the Savannah River, a letter by their messenger, Rev. Joseph B. Cook. From the Sandy Creek, the minutes of the last year, by their messenger, Rev. William Brantly. From the Cape Fear, a letter and minutes of the last year, by their messengers, Rev. Messrs. Job Goodman, and William Thames. From the Edgefield, a letter. The messengers of these sister Associations were cordially received.

5. The ministering brethren present, and not delegates nor messengers, were invited to a seat in the Association.

6. Appointed the Brethren Roberts, Cook, and Collins, a Committee to revise the Circular Letter, and such other letters as may be written by the direction of the Association during the session: Also appointed the Moderator, Clerk, and Roberts, to examine the letters and minutes of Corresponding Associations, with a view to this Body's taking into consideration, any articles of general concern to the interests of religion, in which it may be convenient and proper for them to act in concert with their brethren of other churches.

Mr. Goodman prayed, and the Association adjourned until Tuesday 10 o'clock.

Met according to adjournment. Mr. Mercer prayed.

7. The following churches lately constituted, applied for admission into this Association, viz. The Camden, by a letter, and their messengers, Rev. Joseph B. Cook, and Mr. Richard Stratford: The Calvary, by a letter and their messengers, Rev. Bradley Rhame and Jeremiah Rhame: The Piedmont, by a letter and their messengers, Underhill Ellis, and Edward Barret: The Bethel, by a letter and their messengers, Messrs. James Denson, and Joseph Pack: The two first of these churches originated from that of the High Hills Santee, and were constituted in the present year: The third originated from that of Swift Creek, and was constituted on the 30th September, 1810: The fourth is essentially the same with the church formerly known in our connection as the Bethel Church; it had suffered dissolution, but was revived and constituted anew on the 29th April, 1810. Satisfactory information being obtained of their faith and order, they were cordially received.

8. The committee appointed to examine the letters and minutes of Corresponding Associations, Reported, That in their opinion the subjects on which they treated were of so general a nature as not to require the particular notice of this Body, unless it should be thought proper to express their approbation of the Circular Address from the Bethel Association to their churches, on the subject of assisting candidates for the Gospel Ministry with education, which the Committee recommended.

The Report being received was unanimously agreed to.

9. Took up the query from the Columbia Church, which had been laid over for consideration from the last meeting of the Association, and is as follows—“Are those prohibitions contained in the 18th chapter of Leviticus, respecting connexion between the sexes, all in force now; or to be understood as forming regulations for marriage under the Gospel dispensation?” *Answer*—Most of the prohibitions contained in the chapter to which this query refers, must undoubtedly be considered as extending to the state of society under the Gospel dispensation, and as forming negative rules for a Christian in respect of marriage. The only cases in which we conceive there can be any reasonable doubt, from the tenor of Scripture, or even from the light of nature, are those which respect marriage with a brother's widow, & the sister of a deceased wife: The first of these having been expressly permitted to the Jews in a particular case, in another part of their law; and the restraint laid in the other, being qualified by the consideration of the sister the man had already married being still alive, which makes it look like a regulation suited and limited to the time when polygamy (or having more wives than one) was allowed. But as polygamy itself appears to have been one of those things which were allowed to the Jews on account of the hardness of their hearts, and is evidently done away by the Gospel; as the Gospel has introduced more refined principles and manners than those which obtained under the former dispensation; and as all the articles of prohibition in this chapter, taken in the aggregate, are in the 27th verse of this chapter, represented as constituting the guilt of the Canaanites, who were not under the ceremonial law, and for which God's anger came upon them; there appears therefore to be great reason to conclude, that the connexions included in these two cases, as well as the others mentioned in this portion of Scripture, are prohibited to Christians. We do not undertake to decide positively upon them; but we think it our duty to advise members of our churches, and all Christians to avoid them carefully.

10. As the Anson County church is still in an unhappy and unreconciled state, Resolved, That the Brethren, Moseley, White, and Gullage be requested to visit it, and make one more effort towards their reconciliation. Also, requested, the same Brethren to visit the church at Lane's Creek, enquire into their present standing, and ascertain the reasons of their failing to appear by representation among us.

11. Rev. John Rooker, as Missionary to the Catawba Indians, Reported, That they in general continued their attention to the preached word, and expressed their belief in Christianity, and that many of them were considerably reformed in their lives. A letter from the chiefs was also presented by the Missionary, and read. This letter expressed a deep sense of the kindness manifested by this Body towards their Nation; and a desire of having the school and mission continued. Satisfactory specimens of the pupils' writing, also, were produced. Whereupon Resolved, That the school and mission be con-

tinued; that Mr. Collins be requested to prepare an answer to the letter received from the chiefs; that the sum of fifty dollars be added to the salary of the teacher; and that our Brethren, Johnson and Collins, continue to act with the Missionary in the superintendance of the school, and occasional visiting of the Nation.

12. It appearing by answers received from the churches, to be their choice that the confession of faith should be reprinted; and the church in Columbia having suggested the propriety of adding the Church Discipline and Catechism to the publication; and of consulting neighboring Associations, in order to obtain their concurrence in a work of such general concern to the churches;—therefore, on deliberation, agreed—that this Association will patronise the reprinting of the Baptist Confession of Faith, System of Discipline, and Catechism, in one volume; and will take measures to consult the other Baptist Associations in this State on the measure, in order to obtain their concurrence therein. The persons appointed to write to these Bodies were accordingly directed to mention the subject in their letters to them, and to request information concerning the support they may think proper to give to the undertaking.

13. Query from the church at the High Hills of Santee. “Is it not desirable, and expedient, that the Charleston Baptist Association should establish and patronize a Charitable Academy, in some healthy, central part of the state; and would not the High Hills of Santee be the most eligible place for such an institution; and the present the most favorable time for establishing it?” On deliberation, Resolved, That in order to enable the Association to form a satisfactory judgment on this subject, the following Brethren, Roberts, Johnson, and Collins, be a Committee, to digest a plan for such an undertaking, devise ways and means for its execution, estimate its expense, form an opinion of a suitable site, and report thereon at the next meeting of this Body.

14. Query, from the church at Little Pedee—“Is the washing of feet, mentioned in the 13th chapter of John, to be considered an ordinance of the Gospel?” *Answer*—We are induced to think it is not: at least not to be ranked with baptism and the Lord’s supper, as a church ordinance. For a variety of reasons it appears to us, that the thing signified, rather than the bodily act it enjoined by the Redeemer; but should any think it their duty to perform that act as a religious rite, especially in a private manner, among friends, we think it may be done without just cause of offence to any.

15. Query 1st, from the church at Catfish Creek—“Is it consistent with Gospel order for a church to excommunicate a member without the assistance of a minister?” *Answer*—The System of Church Discipline, chapter v. expresses our sense on this head. By that it is stated, that the assistance of a minister should be obtained.

Query 2d---“What line of conduct should a church pursue with respect to a pious member who withdraws from it, and unites himself to a church of another denomination?” *Answer*—We think friendly, affectionate measures should be employed to convince such a person of his error. If however, the reason of his withdrawing be a conscientious persuasion that his duty requires it, and he remain fixed in his sentiment, yet in a spirit of meekness, candour, and humility; and the church he wishes to unite with may be considered as essentially a Christian church, we recommend that a Letter of Dismissal be given him, representing the goodness of his character, and the reason of his

withdrawing. Yet if he will not hearken to friendly admonition, but prove obstinate and refractory, he must be dealt with as a transgressor.

16. Appointed the following Brethren to write to Corresponding Associations; Furman to the Philadelphia; Botsford to the Warren; Johnson to the Georgia; Roberts to the Savannah River; Todd to the Bethel; M. Kellar to the Hephzibah; Nixon to the Edgefield; White to the Neuse; Rooker to the Sandy Creek; Collins to the Cape Fear; Ellis to the Broad River and Saludy.

17. Agreed to request the Ministering Brethren of this Body to visit our destitute Churches as far as they may have it in their power so to do.

Mr. Rooker prayed. Adjourned to 10 o'clock on Wednesday.

Met according to Adjournment. Mr Bennet prayed.

18. Received, and read a Petition from a Body of People in the upper Part of Salem Settlement, requesting Advice and Assistance from this Association. Agreed that the following Brethren, Roberts, Cook and Collins be a Committee to visit these Petitioners and to afford them the requested Assistance.

19. Whereas considerable Irregularity exists in the Accounts which many of our Churches transmit of their number, increase, and decrease; agreed, that it be earnestly recommended to them, to be particularly careful to ascertain their true number, and to keep, and transmit to us a regular account of their state.

20. Appointed the following Brethren, Messengers to corresponding Association; Moseley to the Georgia—Moseley and Johnson to the Bethel—Johnson to the Savaniah River—Johnson and Tucker to the Edgefield—Todd to the Hephzibah—White to the Cape Fear.

21. Agreed, that as the quarterly concert for prayer has now, from its long standing, assumed an ordinary, rather than an extraordinary character, and has not been regularly observed by the Churches—therefore, it seems most proper that it be discontinued; and that it be recommended to the Churches, to appoint such Days as may be most convenient to themselves respectively, for the same important purposes as were contemplated in the concert.

22. The committee of revision reported, that they had examined and approved the letters of correspondence written by direction of the Association: That they had also examined the Circular Letter, and recommend a revision of it by the moderator, in conjunction with the author, previous to its publication. The letters being first read, the report was agreed to, and the Circular Letter committed accordingly.

23. Agreed, that this Association are sensibly affected by the death of the Rev. John Cato, who died in the course of the present year, and had long been as a minister of the gospel, a worthy, respectable, and useful member in our immediate connexion.

24. Agreed that the subject for the next circular address to our Churches be the importance and necessity of a careful, diligent attention to the means of Grace; and particularly in the religious education of children: And that the Moderator be appointed to prepare the letter.

25. Agreed, that our next meeting be held at Columbia, on the Saturday before the 1st Lord's Day in November next. Dr. Furman to preach the Sermon introductory to business; in case of failure Rev. John M. Roberts.

26. Collected money for printing the Minutes, and directed their printing and distribution to be in the usual manner.

Concluded with exhortation and prayer by the Moderator.

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE.**

1. The following Brethren appeared as Delegates: Furman, Botsford, Moseley, Nixon, Roberts, Thomas, Johnson, White, Rhame, and Wooton.
2. Reelected Richard Furman, President; Henry Jones, Treasurer; John M. Roberts, Secretary; David Adams and Henry Inglesby, Assistants.
3. Agreed that the special committee continue to transact the necessary business of the General Committee during the time of its recess.
4. Inquired into the state of the funds, and took an account of the contributions of the present year as exhibited below.

	<i>Education Fund.</i>		<i>Missionary Fund:</i>
Charleston, -	\$220	-	\$82
Welsh Neck, -	21 62	-	15 38
Cheraw Hill, -	5	-	4
Ebenezer, -	4 81	-	3 43
Congaree, -	10 87	-	0
Amelia Township, -	5	-	13 50
Georgetown, -	5	-	5
High Hills Santee,	40	-	35
Columbia, -	82 50	-	60 50
Calvary, -	5	-	0
Beauty-Spot, -	-	-	5
Beulah, -	-	-	11
Gapway, -	-	-	1
Deep Creek, -	-	-	1
Terril's Bay, -	-	-	2
Wateree Creek,	-	-	5 50
Capt. Bostwick,	-	-	5
	\$399 81	or £93 5 9	\$249 32
			Bal. last year, 117 93
Specialties, and Money in hands of Treasurer, as by his exhibit of the 1st instant; exclusive of the Charleston collection.	} 1168 14 7		} 367 25
			} 321 43
	1262 0 4	In Fund	\$ 45 82
Expenditure on the Students,	76 2 10		45 82
	In Fund, £1185 17 6		

## STATE OF THE CHURCH.

The Ordained Ministers' names are in capitals; Licenced Preachers, in italics; Churches distinguished by an asterisk [\*] we have no account from, and their numbers stand as they did last year. Pastors and Messengers, to whose names an obliisk [†] is affixed, were absent; a dash [—] denotes a vacancy.

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS & MESSENGERS.	Baptized.	Rec'd. by Let.	Dismissed	Excommu.	Restored.	Dead.	Number of Members.
Charleston,	RICHARD FURMAN,	29	2	2	4	0	0	432
Welsh Neck,	DANIEL WHITE, Samuel Evans,	2	1	0	1	1	4	96
Ebenezer Jeffers' Creek.	BENJ. MOSELEY, Jacob Morris, James Lec,	0	0	1	3	0	1	83
High Hills Santee,	J. M. ROBERTS, D. COL- LINS, <i>James McKellar,</i>	36	1	67	0	1	2	175
Cheraw Hill,	JOSHUA LEWIS,† Tris- tram Thomas,	8	1	1	1	0	3	120
Beauty Spot,	WM. BENNET, Edmund Brown, Thomas Ammons,	1	0	0	1	1	0	90
Upper F. Lynch's Cr'k,	—, Richard Holly, Wm. Horton,	9	2	6	2	0	2	271
Swift Creek,	JOSEPH KNIGHTEN, Cason Scott, Jesse Peobles,	16	0	41	1	0	2	52
Lower F. Lynch's Cr'k*	—							21
Rocky River,	G WHILTEY,† Demsey Honeycut,	12	0	3	1	0	1	42
Anson County,	CHARLES COOK,	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
Deep Creek,	FRAME WOODS,† JOEL GULLAGE, Rob. Huntly,	2	3	3	0	0	0	70
Little Pedee,	SOLOMON REAVES,† <i>Jam. Singelton, Jno. Gorman</i>	6	1	1	0	0	1	54
Georgetown,	EDMUND BOTSFORD,	0	0	1	0	0	3	44
Gapway,	—, J. Levellin,† M. Harilson,	1	1	0	1	0	1	61
Lancs Creek,*	—							35
Congaree,	STEPHEN NIXON, John Bostick,	25	1	0	2	0	5	65
Black Creek,	JAMES OLEMAN, Elias Norwood, David Mason,	5	0	1	4	0	0	223
Three Creeks,	—, John S. Thomas, John David, William Bezely,	0	0	1	0	0	0	26
Wassamsaw,	MAT. McCULLERS,† Thos. Burbage, Isaac Layton	7	1	0	2	1	0	73
Wateree Creek,	RALPH JONES, <i>Asa Bell,</i> Thomas Meredith,	6	0	4	3	1	0	56
Muddy Creek,	—, Richard Carlisle,	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Catfish,	—, Henry Berry,	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Terrel's Bay,	WILLIAM PALMER,	0	0	7	2	0	0	67
Beulah,	ISAAC TUCKER,† Geo. Scott, Francis Akins,	49	2	0	0	0	1	102
25 mile Creek,	AARON WOOTON,† Elijah Aldridge,	10	4	6	1	0	0	84
Amelia Township	JAS. THIGPEN,† Eliab Wooton, T. Jackson, J. Bair	31	0	4	1	0	2	114
Lynch's Creek,	SAM. TIMMONS, Lemuel Bryan,	1	1	3	1	0	0	43
Columbia,	WM. B. JOHNSON, John Good,†	9	3	1	0	0	1	47
Camden,	JOSEPH B. COOK, Richard Stratford,	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
Calvary,	BRADLEY RHAME, Jeremiah Rhame,	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Piedmont,	—, Underhill Ells, E. Barret	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Bethel.	—, J. Denson, Joseph Pack.	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
		265	24	156	32	5	37	2907

## THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The CHARLESTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, met at Jeffers' Creek, the 3d day of November, 1810.*

To the Churches they represent, send Christian Salutation:

*Beloved Brethren,*

Having stated in the preceding Minutes the business we have transacted at our present meeting, we now call your attention to a solution of the Query which contains the important subject appointed to be discussed in the Circular Letter of this year, viz. "What is the precise meaning of that rule of duty mentioned in Romans xii. 2. respecting conformity to the world?" This passage is as follows:—"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

In the execution of our design, we shall, in the first place, explain the term World; then point out the sense in which it is to be received in the passage under consideration; and finally proceed to ascertain and illustrate the rule of duty contained in that passage.

From the poverty, or figurative use of language, a word is often so used as to express different ideas or things. This observation applies strictly to the scriptural use of the word World. Among its various acceptations we may observe, that sometimes it signifies the Earth, with its diversified productions and inhabitants; as in St. John's Gospel, i. 10. "The World was made by him." Sometimes it signifies Mankind only, as in Rom. iii. 19. "That all the World may become guilty before God." And sometimes, it signifies the wicked, or irreligious part of mankind, with their lusts and pleasures, sinful principles and actions, together with the things of time, as they are objects of their attention and regard, as in 1 John v. 19. "We know that we are of God, and the whole World lieth in wickedness;" and in 1 John ii. 15, 16. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but of the world." This last sense of the word is that which the Apostle appears to intend in the passage under consideration.

From this scriptural sense of the term, taken in connexion with the prohibition, you will readily perceive, that as whatever things come within the description of those lusts the Apostle here describes, belong to the world, so conformity to it in these is forbidden. By this forbidden conformity we understand, a being so influenced by the spirit and example of irreligious men, as to take a part with them in their sinful pursuits and gratifications, of a worldly nature; so as, in proportion, to forsake, injure, or neglect the cause of God and religion: Or else, to bring the maxims, policy, and spirit of the world into our religious profession, exercises and pursuits, may be intended. Of both we are in great danger; both may exist together; and both greatly injure the soul, and dishonor God.

In forming a correct judgment on this subject it is requisite that we make a clear and just distinction between the actions of men which are lawful, and those which are in their nature sinful. Religion does not require that we should differ from our fellow men in things, either natural or civil, nor yet religious, when their conduct is according to the rule of nature, propriety, and scripture. In things which are lawful, and left to the free choice, prudence, and opinion of men, it becomes the christian to avoid singularity. For this must make himself, or his profession ridiculous, and offend others. Even the mistakes and prepossessions of men in things of a neutral kind, or of little importance, may be occasionally conformed to, in perfect consistency with a good conscience, and the honour of God; when our real object in so doing is to avoid offence, and gain men to the knowledge and love of the truth.—Thus the apostle Paul was to the Jews, as a Jew; to those who were without law (the ceremonial law seems to have been intended) as without law; and became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.—A greater than Paul also, even our Lord Jesus Christ, appears to have avoided singularity in such things as we have described: "He came eating and drinking", made himself easy in his manners to persons and companies of various views, and conditions in life; and while he did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street, to occasion tumult, or draw upon him the publick attention, he was accessible and kind to all; where bold impiety, self-righteous singularity, and hypocritical pretension did not provoke his Displeasure.



But there are certain principles, and actions, which never can be right, being contrary to moral principles of truth and goodness, and to the genius of the gospel: To these, the Christian never must conform; however they may be countenanced by the example of the Multitude, or of those who are in the highest stations of honour and power. To such things we wish to direct your attention in the style of caution.

Gross and scandalous sins, the more refined part of mankind, though destitute of true, vital religion, generally censure and avoid; at least such as are accounted dishonorable in civil life. A Christian therefore, must have departed far already from the line of duty and rectitude, before he can come under very strong temptations, from Example, to commit such sins; which are directly contrary to the law of God and only to be found in the practice of men who have given up their claim to decency and respect in civil society. Our chief danger lies in those evils which by the arts of false refinement, delusion and folly, are generally accounted excuseable, if not innocent and honorable. Great danger arises here, from the sympathies of our nature and love of society, as well as from mistakes of judgment, and the vicious inclinations sin has implanted in our hearts. But, should we give way to the spirit of the world, we are in danger, also, after being in the first instance drawn into the practice of sins less obvious and disgraceful, of falling at last into those which are more gross and heinous. Thus many who have been once decent in their manners, of amiable dispositions, and even virtuous principles, by giving way to a fondness for merry, idle company, have become eventually the wretched slaves of Drunkenness, prophanity, and debauchery, and of every pernicious, shameful vice, and crime. Oh! how many amiable youth, of fine talents and promising hopes, have been thus ruined for ever!

Having mentioned the spirit of the world as an important article in this inquiry; let us before we proceed, endeavour to form our judgment correctly on this subject. It is, we conceive, that disposition of the mind which is proper to a state of sin; and opposite to that which is produced by the "renewing of the mind" of which the Apostle speaks in the text under consideration: A spirit of selfishness, by which men are disposed to please and live to themselves; which affects independence on God, and disregards his laws, government, and grace; a disposition which leads the mind to contemplate and regard this world as its chief good; and limits our views, hopes, and expectations, to things which are temporal, to the exclusion of those which are eternal.

But to return to the division of the subject made above, and to the account given by the Apostle John of the things in the world which we must not love, let it be observed, that the *Lust of the Flesh* means the sensual appetites and sordid passions of our nature. These are manifested in the world by correspondent actions, and lives of sin—such as excess in eating, drinking, and sleeping; indulgence in ease, effeminacy, and indolence; vain amusements, idle diversions and follies among the lovers of pleasure—excessive exertion in cares and labors, among the sons of ambition and avarice—envy, anger, resentment, malice, cruelty, and oppression, among those who are of a proud, suspicious, unjust, and ferocious temper—the various species of criminal connection between the sexes, among the licentious, with the words and actions which lead to them—and in a word, in a too great indulgence in any animal pleasure, though of a lawful kind; and in all gratifications of inclination and appetite which have not a real tendency to promote the glory of God.—A few explanatory remarks invite your attention

It is a serious truth, that the men of the world too generally provoke their appetites to excess, while enjoying the bounties of providence, to their shame and injury. Such indulgence in eating and drinking, besides other bad consequences, enervates both body and mind; and not only when carried to the extent which would be deemed gluttony and drunkenness; but to that extent which goes beyond the proper demands of nature.

The calls to indulgence in ease, sleep, effeminate softness, artificial delicacy, and indolence, on persons in affluence, are frequent and pressing; but these steal away our precious time, rise in their demands, and if indulged, fix a habit which becomes the enemy of all improvement, intellectual, moral and religious; and the source of many and sore evils. Non-conformity to the world in these, therefore, is required. You, brethren, are to be diligent in the service of God, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

The idle pleasures, vain amusements, carnal delights and follies of the world, are often represented by their votaries as neither injurious to men, nor dishonorable to God. But we know, that pleasures which are not directed to some rational use, which consume time unprofitably, dissipate the mind and expose it to temptations are not of God; and therefore not to be conformed to. The state of the

heart which these produce, or rather from which they proceed, should be carefully considered: What is the state of the heart in which men who delight in them, as they are generally conducted, attend on theatres, balls, races, frolics, and games of hazard; and what the consequences to which such attendance leads? Do they approach the places where these pleasures are practised with a single eye to the glory of God; with a desire to do his will; with humble prayer for his blessing; and with self-dedication to his service? Do they return from them with spirituality of mind, having their hearts inflamed with love to God, and their holiness promoted? Alas! Brethren, far other principles lead men to such places; and very different consequences follow from their attendance on them.

While the Christian is careful to avoid hurtful pleasures, and to improve his time and strength to the glory of God; it becomes him also, to avoid that excessive care and labour about the things of the world, which are to be found with men who are stimulated by the sting of covetousness or ambition. Some who think their conduct highly commendable, and are much approved by others, are so immersed by their own choice in cares and labours of this kind, that they have neither time, nor attention for any thing but their worldly employments; and gravely make this their excuse for neglecting both public and private worship, the care of their own souls, and the souls of their families. Thus many wear out their own strength, and life, as well as of their servants and dependants, in the strenuous pursuits of wealth and eminence: While others, though the silken sons and daughters of pleasure themselves, yet, by their plans and agents, pursue the same course of interest, and are equally rigorous, even to cruelty, in exacting the utmost exertions in labor from those under their controul, to secure and advance their own luxury, pride and ambition. To these things, however approved by men, the Christian must not be conformed.

The indulgence of envy, resentment, malice and revenge, those fires of hell; and the gratification of sensual, licentious appetites, crimes which are too common in the world, are not only such as you must not be conformed to, in act; but must be opposed to in the first thoughts and temptations which lead to them. All these may be indulged in the corrupt heart, in thought and principle, though concealed from the eyes of men. But as Christians you will recollect, that he who says to his brother "thou fool, is in danger of hell fire;" and that "he who looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart already."—Thus far on the lust of the flesh.—

The lust of the eyes, appears to intend the desires of the carnal mind as exercised on the object of sight; and particularly, on the possessions, decorations and splendors of the world. These are coveted as they are beheld, and especially as hope is entertained of their enjoyment: They include landed estates, servants, rich harvest, store of merchandize and goods; gold, silver, and precious stones; elegant houses, sumptuous clothing, costly furniture and glittering equipages, and to some, crowns, sceptres, and thrones; together with every object of sight, which being inordinately desired, or prized, alienates the heart from God. The things may be in themselves good, and to some lawful; the evil consists principally in the corrupt desires of the heart.

Carnal men have universally fallen into this error of laying up treasures on earth, by setting their hearts upon the enjoyments of time, as though they formed man's chief good. To this fatal error you must not be conformed. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," said our divine Redeemer, "but in heaven." You are pilgrims on earth, and your life of short continuance; but you look for a "City eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God." In this city earthly treasures are of no avail. They will neither raise you to its honors, nor prepare you for its enjoyments.

When Christians become conformed to the world in this pursuit of wealth and ambition, though the covetous principle may not gain an entire ascendancy; yet, the effects are visible and awful. The importance and value of religious duties, Christian privileges, and devout affections, if not forgotten, are lessened in their esteem. The glories of God the Saviour, and the advancement of his cause and kingdom, engage but a small part of their attention—The business, cares and pleasures of the world, gain an increasing ascendancy over their mind, and in it the light of truth is greatly obscured. In proportion as exertions are made toward self-agrandizement, and success attends the pursuit, other views arise; wants multiply, and expenses increase. In the multiplicity of these things, no time is left for serious thoughts, and active exertions in the cause of God. Religious affections decay. A contracted mind is the consequence of this; and if at any time an act of liberality is performed, it is rather from ostentation, or some improper mo-

tive, than from a regard to the glory of God. The result of all is, that the public interests of religion, as well as its spirit, are neglected. In some congregations ministers of the Gospel, though acknowledged to be faithful, are scantily provided for, if at all; whilst many members of their churches live in a costly manner. Houses erected for the worship of God are constructed of the roughest materials, and in some places are ready to fall to the ground; whilst the habitations of the worshippers are, not only comfortable, but in some cases elegantly built and furnished. The pious education of children is neglected; whilst they are either brought up in all the fashionable follies of the age, and decorated with gay clothing, or are permitted to waste their precious time in forming habits for idleness, ignorance, and vice. The religious instruction of servants is intirely neglected, though their labor is exacted in full measure.

We are aware, brethren, of the excuses which are usually made for such neglects, but we know that they are vain, and without just foundation. They originate in an unfeeling, covetous disposition, which is idolatry. The desire to lay up treasures on earth corrupts, as well as contracts the heart; and for excuse in the neglect of duty, which this desire occasions, the pleas just refered to are advanced, only that permission may be obtained from conscience for seeking and retaining uninterruptedly more ample possessions on earth. Such conformity to the world, the rule of duty under consideration forbids.

Various are the modes in which the men of the world use their wealth. Some make a display of it in external pomp; some in debaucheries, excess, and prodigality; wasting, with the greatest extravagance, the bounties of Providence; whilst others with hypocritical humility, content themselves with mean fare. These, clothed in a dress far inferior to their circumstances, and living in a manner unbecoming their sphere in life, indulge reflections on the comparative moderation of their desires, and feast themselves on the exalted opinion which they imagine is entertained by others of their frugality, moderation, and humility. Let none deceive themselves by these considerations into a persuasion that they are not in the indulgence of the lust of the flesh, and of the eyes. They as eagerly pursue wealth as others; they with as much exultation survey their store as others; and they retain with more miserly niggardness what they have acquired than others. They are therefore as much influenced by the true spirit of the world, as the two first mentioned characters, and display in their conduct as much if not more pride and vanity. Our concern should be to avoid the errors into which each of these characters have fallen. Earthly possessions, as they are the gift of providence, are not to be rejected, but may, under the Divine blessing on honest exertions, be acquired and enjoyed. They are however to be sought from higher motives than our enjoyment of them: In addition to the supply of our own reasonable wants, the good of our fellow-creatures, and above all, the glory of God should be regarded. This truth we hope you will never forget. Permit us however to suggest a caution to those who are engaged in the acquirement of property. Be not too confident of the good use you will make of enlarged possessions; and forbear not to do the good that is in your power now, on the supposition that you will do much more in a future day, when your schemes of interest are accomplished. This often proves a deception: For it is a dictate of reason as well as of Scripture, that he who is unjust in that which is least, will be unjust also in much. Which maxim, in its principle, will apply to our obligations to perform acts of beneficence and mercy, as well as to those which respect common justice. Many therefore who have set out with the plausible intention just mentioned, have awfully deviated from their plan in the execution. Instead of having their hearts enlarged with the increase of wealth, they have become more contracted. Contrast the exertions and contributions ordinarily made by men of wealth, with their means—How comparatively trifling! How insignificant! Men who spend on their persons, families, houses and living, vast sums, can afford but small assistance to the public interests of religion, and relief of the poor. Is not this conformity to the world?

In the pride of life men make a display of what they possess, or think they possess; and all for the gratification of the exciting, foolish and impious passion, *pride*. The lust of the eye seeks out and craves the objects, with which, when obtained, the pride of life is wont to manifest its vanity and presumption. Though it delights to shew itself in things great and grand, high stations, power, public authority, sumptuous habitations, dress and equipage; and whatever we have already mentioned as the common objects of covetousness and ambition, yet it is not confined to them; but vaunts in personal accomplishments, beauty, sense, activity, elegance of manners, fine taste, superior understanding, learning and eloquence; or in reputation for virtue—as courage, probity, prudence, zeal, generosity and

public spirit, with things of a like nature; and in pretensions to excellence in all kinds of business and professions. As it seeks to be commended and admired of men, so it tends to promote flattery, pretensions, dissembling and falsehood among those it accounts its friends; and in assuming a dictatorial stile of conversation and conduct toward those who are considered as persons who should submit to its importance, it either produces a servile spirit of compliance, or excites opposition. As it provokes disgust and opposition, which it rarely fails to do, it forms parties, creates contention, intrigue, detraction, reviling, resentment, and all the hateful passions; from whence spring quarrels in families, societies, and neighbourhoods, and war and blood-shed among nations; and by filling men with ideas of their own importance, it produces self-will, and contempt of rightful authority. When gratified, the proud mind rests with momentary complacency in the contemplation of its own supposed excellence and worth; when disappointed, it rages with resentment against men, and too often in its discontent, utters blasphemies against God. Such is the pride of life; originating in the delusive passion of sinful self-love, which may be found in the cottage as well as in the palace. To this the Christian must not be conformed.

On the second general branch of our subject, we have to observe, that Christians conform to the world when they bring a worldly spirit into religion. This has been one of the greatest causes of injury to the church, and a fatal mean of corrupting it. It is done when an attempt is made to bring the doctrines, ordinances and worship of God to the standard of taste which pleases the carnal mind; when human policy and power are relied on for the support and prosperity of the church; and when our views, principles, profession and conduct in religion, are regulated by the maxims or spirit of the world.

The first of these cannot be effected but by perverting the sacred Scriptures, and by changing or abusing the ordinances of God.

We are chargeable with the second, not only when human establishments are resorted to; when the church so united to the state is governed by the civil magistrate; and when the sword and civil authority are relied on for the support and progress of religion; or when pious fraud is introduced, and pretensions, or mechanical operations are used to impose on the judgment, faith and consciences of men; but also, when our reliance for success in religion is placed on the wealth, number and influence of its adherents; on splendid places of worship, and pompous services; and on the learning, popular talents, enterprize, eloquence and address of its ministers; or on the zeal and exertion of its professors—rather than on the spirit and grace of God. That declaration of Holy Writ should never be forgotten, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Correspondent to which are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Without me ye can do nothing.”

Thirdly, we conform to the world in our religious profession, exercises and pursuits, when a regard to worldly advantage and reputation among men, rather than to the interests of the soul and the honor of God, is our governing motive in making religious profession; and when either in ministers, or private Christians, a spirit of pride and confidence in our own knowledge, gifts, graces, popularity and usefulness is indulged, so that our religious services are done more from a secret desire to manifest their excellence, than to perform the duty we owe to God. When our zeal in religion is more to gain adherents to our particular sentiments, and the interests of our party, than to have the interests of Christ and of souls promoted. It is apparent when a spirit of rivalry prevails, and our great concern is to know “Who of us shall be accounted the greatest;” when attempts are made by individuals or churches to restrain Christian liberty, by imposing regulations on opinion and conduct, in things which God has left to the free choice of his people; when individuals aspire to fill places and perform duties for which they are not qualified, or which belong to the province of another; and when a slavish spirit of subjection to the assumed claims of such men induces us to submit to them. The spirit of the world generally operates in the business of controversy and party, especially when angry disputes and contentions arise: Then intrigue, misrepresentation, sophistry and censorious judging take place in the church; and all the violent hateful passions are called into operation; in jealousies, “Whisperings, swellings, tumults,” and too often in revilings and separation; to the injury of religion, and disgrace of its professors. On this subject an apostle says, “For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envy and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”—If the spirit of the world is called into operation in intemperate zeal, and in the prejudices, partialities, and contention of parties; it

is no less so in carnal security; and in a cold, formal, lifeless attention to religion: When by our indifference to its most important truths, neglect of its best interests, duties and ordinances, or by conversing of it with levity, we manifest that we, like the world, consider it as a subject of little importance or worth. Or else when forgetting the great concern it has with the affections, conscience and life, we treat it as a subject of mere speculation, for curious inquiry or entertainment: hence "Itching ears," fondness for novelty, and critical scrutinizing of subjects, to the neglect of devotion and improvement of the heart, in our own case; and of the works of justice, love and mercy among our fellow men.

In these, and similar ways, as Scripture, observation, and experience prove, the religion of Jesus Christ may be abused among its professors, by conformity to the world. Let it be our serious concern to avoid these dangers!—We shall conclude with some general uses of the whole subject.

As it appears from the fullest evidence, that in things lawful and expedient we are not required to differ in our manners and outward actions from other men, with whom we are connected in civil life; therefore, let us in these things avoid unnecessary, offensive singularity; preserving at the same time decency and moderation. Our chief concern in these is to act from right motives; that whether "we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God:" In doing this, we shall in such things differ sufficiently from the world.

As our duty to God, and regard to our soul's interests require, that we should not be conformed to the world in their sins and follies—so let us dare to be singular here.

But especially, let us take care that we do not corrupt the church, disgrace our profession, deceive our own souls, affront the majesty of God, wound our Redeemer in the house of his friends, and grieve the Holy Spirit, by introducing the spirit of the world into our religious profession, exercises, and pursuits.

Let none be vainly confident; all, both ministers and people, are liable to err here. Such is the ensnaring influence of the world; such the corruptions of our hearts; and such the artful temptations of the devil, that if we are not sincerely engaged in self-denial, watchfulness and prayer, and in looking for help by faith, to him who, as the Captain of our Salvation, has overcome the world, this sinful conformity to it, in one form or other, will take place and gain an ascendancy. Perhaps it is actually the case, at this time, with many who are fond to think that they are of a very opposite character.

Those who are in the habit of conforming to the world, either in its actions or spirit, will probably be displeased at a close investigation of the subject; especially in those branches of it which apply to their own case. But their displeasure so excited, ought to be considered by themselves, as it generally will be by others, as a strong indication of contracted guilt; and of a disposition to continue in their wrong course. Perhaps these very persons will in strong terms censure conformity to the world; and be very severe on the conduct of those they consider chargeable with it, while they freely indulge themselves in their own wrong spirit and conduct; as if they meant to justify the sarcastic observation of the satyr, and "Compound for sins they are inclined to; By cursing those they have no mind to;" while, to impartial observers, they may appear to "Strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Dear Brethren, these things ought not so to be. One of the best evidences to his own soul which a man can possess of sincerity, sanctified affections, and devotedness to God, and by which he can manifest the truth and excellency of religion to others, is severity to his own faults, united with tenderness to the failings of others. If he is in the spirit of the gospel, he will listen with humility, candor, and meekness, to the admonitions, and even reproofs of truth, as they apply to himself; and be ready to throw the mantle of mild construction, and forgiveness over the weaknesses of a brother.

If the characteristics exhibited above, of men conformed to the world, are just (and it would be easy to prove them so from Scripture;) then, as reformation is an important use to which this subject should be applied, we would do well, while considering each particular, to ask our consciences in the fear of God, how far it may be applicable to ourselves; and in every case in which it is found so to be, to determine on such reformation as we have reason to believe a holy God approves. The passage before us furnishes most salutary instruction on this head; "Be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind." Under the operations of grace, the pure, meek, humble, generous spirit of the gospel cherished in our hearts, and exercised in our lives, will destroy in us this conformity to the world.

Would any aspire also to the high honor and happiness of being instrumental in the hand of God to reform others; he must be careful to get his own mind truly

enlightened in the knowledge of truth and duty, and divested of partiality and prejudice: he must first pull out the beam from his own eye, drink into the gospel spirit, and get his heart inflamed with love to God and love to men, that he may have a right influence on others. Then may he hope for the blessing of God to crown his endeavors.

It is to be feared, Brethren, that some who wish to promote the general interests of religion, conform too much in a direct manner to the world, in outward things at least, on a mistaken and abused sense of the maxim of becoming "All things to all men". While others who would act as reformers in the very point under consideration, by magnifying trifles, and by an unyielding rigidity in supporting and enforcing peculiarities of their own, in sentiment, speech, dress, and behaviour, do not only fail to obtain their proposed end, in the most important sense; but give pain to their best friends, disgust liberal minds in general, and expose religion with its professors to censure and ridicule. Especially, if, as is frequently the case, the conversation of these persons is filled with accounts of themselves, their sentiments, their faithfulness, their intentions and their performances; or with confident assertions, and bitter censures on others: These being with reason, generally considered as indications of a weak, begotting mind; or of spiritual pride, and an unsanctified heart.

As to avoid mistakes, we have before stated our sentiments respecting the right use of earthly possessions, and the manner and motives with which they should be acquired; so we now as freely declare, respecting stations of civil authority, and public trust, that we who do not consider them as necessarily connected with the pride of life; or as unlawful and improper for the Christian who is qualified for such stations, and called to them in the course of divine providence: but let him not seek them to gratify pride and ambition; and if he should be called to them, let it be his serious concern to fill them in a manner becoming the faithful servant of God. Let not the Christian also, be backward to engage in plans of public utility, and works of beneficence, because in some instances they are patronised and supported by those who appear to be men of the world. Rather let him consider such an undertaking as affording him a favorable opportunity for encouraging his fellow men to turn their attention to the things which are excellent; and for showing them by his example, how to pursue important objects in a proper manner, and from right motives.

Permit us now, in the close of this already long letter, to solicit your serious, diligent attention to the right improvement of the whole subject. We are sensible that human imperfection cleaves to our discussion of it, but the work has been a labour of love. We trust we have your true interests and our Redeemer's cause at heart; earnestly desiring your spiritual welfare. With those of you who rejoice in the divine goodness, we would rejoice; and with such as are in distress we would bear a sympathizing part. Permit us earnestly to call you attention to the state of your souls, and families; and of the Churches, and neighbourhoods with which you are connected. Be exemplary in your lives. And be not conformed to this present, evil world, whose fashion passeth away. If ever there was a time when the friends of God and Religion should put off conformity to a sinful world, arise and shine; a time when they should be steady, firm and persevering in the ways of the Lord—this is the time. What a blow would be given by these means to infidelity and vice, which now boldly stalk among us! And what triumphs might we not expect to witness of the grace of God, over the hearts of those who are now its enemies.

Be intreated therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove, satisfactorily and comfortably to your own souls, and convincingly to the world, what is the good, the acceptable and perfect will of God, our heavenly Father and Redeemer.

Our meeting has been truly friendly and harmonious: We trust, the gracious presence of our God has been with us, and his blessing upon us; and on the numerous, attentive audience which perseveringly attended on the means of grace during our whole session. Wishing you the best of blessings, and requesting an affectionate remembrance in your prayers, we remain.

Beloved Brethren,

Yours in Gospel Bonds.

**RICHARD FURMAN** Moderator.  
**WILLIAM B. JOHNSON**, Clerk.