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Baptists. Virginia. General Committee, 1799.

Minutes . . . at Waller's Meeting-House . . . May, 1799.

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MINUTES

Of the

BAPTIST

General Committee

Held at

WALLER'S MEETING-HOUSE,

In

SPOTTSYLVANIA COUNTY.

May 1799.

RICHMOND:--Printed by SAMUEL PLEASANTS, JUNIOR.

MINUTES, &c.

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Saturday, May 11th, 1799.

ABOUT noon, pursuant to appointment, elder John Courtney preached the introductory sermon, from John xiv. 6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

By request, elder Jeremiah Moore followed after, and preached from Num. x. 1. 2. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, make thee two trumpets of silver, of a whole piece shalt thou make them, that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.

After divine worship, proceeded to business.

The letters from the corresponding associations were read, and the associations and delegates are here enrolled.

To those whose names an * is affixed, were not present.

ASSOCIATIONS.

DELEGATES.

Goshen,

} Abialon Waller, John Poindexter,* Andrew Broadus and
} Aaron Bledsoe,

Dover,

} Reuben Ford, William Webber, John Courtney and Ro-
} bert B. Semple.

Attentmarle,

William Basket and Martin Dawson.*

Stocton,

Jeremiah Moore and John Munroe.*

Middle,

Eleazar Clay,* George Smith.

Renoak,

James Watkins.

Strawberry,

Robert Stocton,* John King,* Joseph Pedigo.*

Mayo,

Joseph Anthony.

Culpepper,

Lewis Conner,* Hambleton Goff.

Elder William Webber was chosen moderator, and Reuben Ford clerk.

On motion, agreed to appoint a select committee to arrange the business of the general committee and make report.

Accordingly, elders Jeremiah Moore, Robert B. Semple and James Watkins, together with the moderator and clerk were appointed, and allowed half an hour.

The select committee reported that the following business claims the attention of the general committee.

- 1st. To enquire concerning the fate of our Memorial to the last general assembly.
- 2nd. To appoint commissioners to receive the fund, settle with the treasurer, and make any necessary appropriations.
- 3rd. To call for the circular letter.
- 4th. To appoint ministers to preach on the morrow.
- 5th. *Qyere.* Shall the general committee continue; or shall any other general meeting be appointed in stead thereof?
- 6th. To printing the minutes of the general committee.

Elders George Smith and Aaron Bledsoe, were appointed commissioners to receive the fund, settle with the treasurer, and make any necessary appropriations.
 Elders Robert B. Semple, Jeremiah Moore and Andrew Broadus, were chosen to preach on the morrow, and that divine service begin at 10 o'clock, A. M.
 Then adjourned till 9 o'clock Monday morning.

LORD'S DAY.

The brethren who were appointed met, and preached to a numerous audience, and we hope there were evidences of the divine blessings.

MONDAY, May 13th, 1799.

Met according to adjournment, and after divine worship, proceeded to business.
 Ordered that the names of the delegates be called over.
 Upon report made to the general committee it appears that the prayer of our Memorial to the last general assembly (for the repeal of those laws past since the revolution, vesting the Oglebe lands, &c. in the hands of the Episcopal church) is granted.—
 Resolved therefore, that the report is satisfactory.
 The commissioners appointed to receive the fund, settle with the treasurer, and make any necessary appropriations, report as follows :

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|----|---|--------------|----|----|----|
| That they find in the hands of the treasurer the sum of | - | - | - | - | - | £11. 5s. 5d. | | | |
| Out of which have been paid for printing | } | £3. | s. | d. | } | - | | | |
| the Minutes of the general committee, | | | | | | | 3. | 7. | 6. |
| For advertising our Memorial to the general assembly, | | | | | | | | | |
| - | | | | | | £7. 17. 11. | | | |

Present Contributions are

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|--------------|
| From Ronoak association, - - - - - | £2. | 2. | } £8. 14 .7. |
| From Strawberry do. - - - - - | 1. | 10. | |
| From Culpepper do. - - - - - | 0. | 12. | |
| From Goshen do. - - - - - | 1. | 10. | |
| From Dover do. - - - - - | 3. | | |

£16. 12. 6.

Ordered that the clerk be paid for his services, £2. 8.

The circular letter, upon the observance of the Lord's day, which was prepared by elder Abfalom Waller, being read, the question being put, shall it be received?

Ays—James Watkins, Aaron Bledsoe, Joseph Anthony, Abfalom Waller, William Basket, Robert B. Semple and Reuben Ford.

Nays.—Jeremiah Moore, Hambleton Gofs.

George Smith, John Courtney and Andrew Broadus, who profess to have no objection to the letter; but to the propriety of sending it out from this body.

Quere. Shall the general committee continue any longer than the present session?

Answer. The general committee conceiving that the object that required its existence to be obtained, do not therefore think it expedient to exist any longer than the present session.

Resolved, That the money in the treasurer's hands, (after paying the expenses that have occurred) do remain there, until disposed of by the direction of a majority of the associations in the Union.

The general committee do recommend to the different associations, to take into consideration the expediency of instituting, and continuing a general annual meeting in the state of Virginia; for promoting the cause of Religion, and for preserving union and harmony amongst the churches.

Resolved, That 1000 copies of the minutes of this committee be printed, and that the clerk do superintend the printing thereof, and that they be left in the care of brother Elliott of the city of Richmond, to be delivered to the associations—four for each church.—And the treasurer is desired to pay for printing the same.

Received by the favour of brother William Brame, the minutes of Ronoak, Neuse, Portsmouth, and Flat-river associations.

Signed by Order,
REUBEN FORD, Clerk.

WILLIAM WEBBER, Moderator.

N. B. The meeting appointed for the reviving of the confession of faith, is the second Saturday in May next, at Lyles's meeting-house in Fluvanna county.

Circular Letter, on the Observance of a Christian Sabbath.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WHILE we lament the spreading torrent of infidelity, which is overwhelming thousands of our countrymen, in its tremendous vortex of destruction; we have abundant reason to be thankful for that grace, which enables us to hold fast our profession, amid the vices of an abandoned age.

As your servants, in the gospel of our common Lord, we think it, both our province and duty, to endeavour to instruct you in all the precepts and duties of our holy religion: from a full conviction, that the religion of the blessed Jesus does not consist merely in theory, but in the practice of every good word and work. According, therefore, to a resolve of our last annual meeting, we wish to submit to your serious consideration and improvement, a few hints on the observance of a Christian Sabbath.

We are ready to acknowledge that some difficulties attend the apparent change of a sabbatical institution in the holy scriptures, and conceive that the controverted arguments of polemical divines, have rather tended to darken, than to throw light on the subject. But as it cannot be expected that the circumscribed limits of a circular letter will permit us to enter into the spirit of controversy; we trust our feeble attempt will be attended (at least) with no essential injury to the interest of Zion.

We design first, to take a view of the divine authority of the sabbath and its observance, under the Mosaic economy.

And secondly, its authority, and the moral obligation of Christians to observe it, under the gospel dispensation.

In order to shew the divine authority, and strict observance of the sabbath, under the Mosaic economy; it will be necessary to make some remarks on the institution, in its first rise in the church of God. Moses in describing the order of creation, informs us that God rested the seventh day from all his work, (having been employed six days in the formation of the Heavens and the Earth, from their original chaos) wherefore he blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, Gen. 2. 1—3. From which it appears, that the divine being designed, that one day in seven, should be set apart from the beginning; as a holy sabbath of rest, in commemoration of the work, of a finished creation. But whether the sabbath was observed during the Patriarchal age, is a subject of doubtful determination; from the extreme silence of the sacred oracles. However,

It is probable that Abel and Cain sacrificed, and the sons of God met to present themselves before the Lord, upon that day, Gen. 4. Job. 1. 6. and 2. 1. Especially when we consider that Homer, Hesiod, and others of the ancient writers among the Heathen, have given us hints of a seventh day sabbath, whose observation they had derived from their progenitors. About two thousand five hundred years after the creation of the world; when the Hebrews had departed from Egypt, Moses, their law-giver, cautioned them to observe the sabbath, in a way which intimates it was a thing not unknown to them. "To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.—Exod. 16. 23." And in a few days after this, to mark the perpetual observance of the sabbath throughout their generations; it was solemnly declared in the fourth commandment to be one of their standing institutions; and was significant of the rest of the divine being from the work of creation, and of their deliverance from Egypt: so that when a Jew enquired why he rested on the seventh day from his labour, he might remember the rest of the Creator from the work of a finished creation; and when he enquired why his servant rested, he might remember he himself was once a servant in the land of Egypt. Exod. 20. 8. 12. Deu. 5. 12. 16.

"Injunctions to keep the sabbath, and threatenings for the breach of it, are to be found both in the law and in the Prophets. For gathering some sticks on it, God appointed a man to be stoned to death, Numb. 15. 32—36. For neglect to observe it, the Jewish nation was almost destroyed, and their land lay seventy years desolate, Lev. 26. 34. 35. Neh. 13. 16. 18. Jer. 17. 27. Ezek. 20.

From this concise view of the sabbath, under the law-dispensation, we have seen that it was of divine authority; and the observance of it enjoined with the strictest solemnity. We shall now proceed to consider its authority, and the moral obligation of christians to observe it, under the gospel dispensation.

To honour his own resurrection, Jesus, the Lord of the sabbath, changed the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. To mark the divine authority of this change, he, on that day, made repeated visits to his Disciples, John 20. 16. 26.

And the early observance of the first day of the week by primitive christians, is also a testimony in favour of this change. On the first day of the week, they met for public worship, and to make their collections for the poor. Acts. 20. 7. 1 Cor. 16. 1.

And when John wrote his revelation, he speaks of the Lord's day, in a way which proves it was a day well known to the churches in Asia. Most of the writers, in the two first centuries, inform us, that the Apostles commanded the Lord's day to be kept with all religious solemnity; because upon that day, our Lord arose from the dead. Hence it appears that by the Lord's day, we are to understand the first day of the week, as observed by the church of Christ in commemoration of the work of a finished redemption. Heb. 4. 10. That whereas, the divine being rested from the work of creation on the seventh day; so the incarnate redeemer rested from the work of a complete redemption on the first day of the week. Thus when a christian enquires

why he ceases from labour on the first day of the week, he remembers that it is in commemoration of the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his complete conquest over all his enemies. It is probable there is an allusion to this day in Psalms 118th. 24th. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it." If we enquire what day is here spoken of, we are informed it was the day in which our Lord rode triumphant into Jerusalem, on which he was made the head of the corner; which Peter explains of his resurrection, Acts 4. 10.

Once more, a day of Christian rest, is emblematical of saints complete rest in Heaven; so that while we cease from the labours of life on the sabbath day, and fill the earthly courts of the Lord with songs of praise; we are taught to remember that eternal sabbath of rest, beyond the Jordan of death; where we shall spend a happy eternity in pleasure and praise. Thus we are encouraged to sing:

“ Thine earthly sabbaths Lord we love,
 “ But there’s a nobler rest above;
 “ To that our laboring souls aspire
 “ With ardent pangs of strong desire.”

We are aware of several objections which are raised against the observance of the first day of the week, as a Christian sabbath. But when we consider that it was observed all along by Christians as their sabbath, for almost sixteen hundred years, before any pretenders to that name, that we know of, opposed it; and that many of the objections which are raised, are far-fetched and inconclusive; we shall proceed (without taking notice of them) to shew the manner in which it should be observed, as well as its utility.

While a Christian views in the gospel his glorious liberty and deliverance from all the ancient forms and tedious ceremonies, of the Jewish ceremony: he still feels himself under moral obligation to observe the divine law, as a rule of life. “ Hence says the Apostle, do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Rom. 3. 31.

Now when we consider that strict observance of the sabbath enjoined on the Jews, and compare it, with the mild expressions of our Lord respecting the sabbath, in opposition to the superstition of the Pharisees, respecting it: we conceive Christians, in observing their sabbath, should abstain from all kinds of labour; (except cases of charity and necessity,) spend their time in public, social and private devotion, and particularly in reading God’s holy word. How professors of Christianity, can indulge themselves in the practice of feasting, carnal visiting and idle jelling on the Lord’s day, (we cannot conceive) while they esteem the divine law as a rule of life: we are therefore constrained to think such conduct disgraceful to the Christian name.

Lastly, we may observe, that the resting one day in seven, is conducive to the good of society, and beneficial to the interest of religion. The servant is encouraged to la-

hour in hope of a day of rest, of which his master will not pretend to deprive him ; and among every order, and class of the human family, this anticipated weekly rest, inspires the breast with some lively sensations of comfort. The setting apart a stated weekly rest, is beneficial to the interest of religion, in the establishment of a stated time for public worship, in which all conditions of the people have liberty to tend on the ministration of the divine word, at the house of the Lord.

Permit us therefore to excite you brethren to the religious observance of a day, so necessary to promote the honour of religion, and the happiness of society. Strive to present your bodies on the Lord's day, (and at all times) a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. Finally, may you abound in the work of the Lord, and at least obtain a crown of glory incorruptible in the Heavens that fadeth not away ; is the earnest prayer of us all. Brethren pray for us.

FINIS.