

Fundamental Agreement or Original Constitution of the Colony of New Haven, June 4, 1639

THE 4th day of the 4th month, called June, 1639, all the free planters assembled together in a general meeting, to consult about settling civil government, according to GOD, and the nomination of persons that might be found, by consent of all, fittest in all respects for the foundation work of a church, which was intended to be gathered in Quinipiack. After solemn invocation of the name of GOD, in prayer for the presence and help of his spirit and grace, in those weighty businesses, they were reminded of the business whereabout they met, (viz.) for the establishment of such civil order as might be most pleasing unto GOD, and for the choosing the fittest men for the foundation work of a church to be gathered. For the better enabling them to discern the mind of GOD, and to agree accordingly concerning the establishment of civil order, Mr. John Davenport propounded divers queries to them publicly, praying them to consider seriously in the presence and fear of GOD, the weight of the business they met about, and not to be rash or slight in giving their votes to things they understood not; but to digest fully and thoroughly what should be propounded to them, and without respect to men, as they should be satisfied and persuaded in their own minds, to give their answers in such sort as they would be willing should stand upon record for posterity.

This being earnestly pressed by Mr. Davenport, Mr. Robert Newman was intreated to write, in characters, and to read distinctly and audibly in the hearing of all the people, what was propounded and accorded on, that it might appear, that all consented to matters propounded, according to words written by him.

Query I. WHETHER the scriptures do hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to GOD and men, as well in families and commonwealth, as in matters of the church ? This was assented unto by all, no man dissenting, as was expressed by holding up of hands. Afterwards it was read over to them, that they might see in what words their vote was expressed. They again expressed their consent by holding up their hands, no man dissenting.

Query II. WHEREAS there was a covenant solemnly made by the whole assembly of free planters of this plantation, the first day of extraordinary humiliation, which we had after we came together, that as in matters that concern the gathering and ordering of a church, so likewise in all public officers which concern civil order, as choice of magistrates and officers, making and repealing laws, dividing allotments of inheritance, and all things of like nature, we would all of us be ordered by those rules which the scripture holds forth to US; this covenant was called a plantation covenant, to distinguish it from a church covenant. which could not at that time be made a church not being then gathered, but was deferred till a church might be gathered, according to GOD. It was demanded whether all the free planters do hold themselves bound by

that covenant, in all businesses of that nature which are expressed in the covenant, to submit themselves to be ordered by the rules held forth in the scripture t

THIS also was assented unto by all, and no man gainsayed it; and they did testify the same by holding up their hands, both when it was first propounded, and confirmed the same by holding up their hands when it was read unto them in public. John Clark being absent, when the covenant was made, doth now manifest his consent to it. Also Richard Beach, Andrew Law, Goodman Banister, Arthur Halbridge, John Potter, Robert Hill, John Brocket, and John Johnson, these persons, being not admitted planters when the covenant was made, do now express their consent to it.

Query III. THOSE who have desired to be received as free planters, and are settled in the plantation, with a purpose, resolution and desire, that they may be admitted into church fellowship, according to CHRIST, as soon as GOD shall fit them "hereunto, were desired to express it by holding up hands. According all did express this to be their desire and purpose by holding up their hands twice (viz.) at the proposal of it, and after when these written words were read unto them.

Query IV. All the free planters were called upon to express, whether they held themselves bound to establish such civil order as might best conduce to the securing of the purity and peace of the ordinance to themselves and their posterity according to GOD In answer hereunto they expressed by holding up their hands twice as before, that they held themselves bound to establish such civil order as might best conduce to the ends aforesaid.

THEN Mr. Davenport declared unto them, by the scripture, what kind of persons might best be trusted with matters of government; and by sundry arguments from scripture proved that such men as were described in Exod. xviii. 2, Dent. 1. 13, with Dent. xvii. A, and 1 Cor. vi. 1, 6, 7, ought to be intrusted by them, seeing they were free to cast themselves into that mould and form of commonwealth which appeared best for them in reference to the securing. the peace and peaceable improvement of all CHRIST his ordinances in the church according to GOD, whereunto they have bound themselves, as hath been acknowledged.

HAVING thus said he sat down praying the company freely to consider, whether they would have it voted at this time or not. After some space of silence, Mr. Theophilus Eaton answered it might be voted, and some others also spake to the same purpose, none at all opposing it. Then it was propounded to vote.

Query V. WHETHER free burgesses shall be chosen out of the church members, they that are in the foundation work of the church being actually free burgesses, and to choose to themselves out of the like estate of church fellowship, and the power of choosing magistrates and officers from

among themselves, and the power of making and repealing laws, according to the word, and the dividing of inheritances, and deciding of differences that may arise, and all the businesses of like nature are to be transacted by those free burgesses. This was put to vote and agreed unto by lifting up of hands twice, as in the former it was done. Then one man stood up and expressed his dissenting from the rest in part; yet granting, 1. That magistrates should be men fearing GOD. 2. That the church is the company where, ordinarily, such men may be expected. 3. That they that choose them ought to be men fearing GOD; only at this he stuck, that free planters ought not to give this power out of their hands. Another stood up and answered, that nothing was done, but with their consent. The former answered, that all the free planters ought to resume this power into their own hands again, if things were not orderly carried. Mr. Theophilus Eaton answered, that in all places they choose committees in like manner. The companies in London choose the liveries by whom the public magistrates are chosen. In this the rest are not wronged, because they expect, in time, to be of the livery themselves, and to have the same power. Some others intreated the former to give his arguments and reasons whereupon he dissented. He refused to do it, and said, they might not rationally demand it, seeing he let the vote pass on freely and did not speak till after it was past, because he would not hinder what they agreed upon. Then Mr. Davenport, after a short relation of some former passages between them two about this question, prayed the company that nothing might be concluded by them on this weighty question, but what themselves were persuaded to be agreeing with the mind of GOD, and they had heard what had been said since the voting; he intreated them again to consider of it, and put it again to vote as before. Again all of them, by holding up their hands, did show their consent as before. And some of them confessed that, whereas they did waver before they came to the assembly, they were now fully convinced, that it is the mind of GOD. One of them said that in the morning before he came reading Deut. xvii. 15, he was convinced at home. Another said, that he came doubting to the assembly, but he blessed GOD, by what had been said, he was now fully satisfied, that the choice of burgesses out of church members and to intrust those with the power before spoken of is according to the mind of GOD revealed in the scriptures. All having spoken their apprehensions it was agreed upon, and Mr. Robert Newman was desired to write it as an order whereunto every one, that hereafter should be admitted here as planters, should submit, and testify the same by subscribing their names to the order: Namely, that church members only shall be free burgesses, and that they only shall choose magistrates and officers among themselves, to have power of transacting all the public civil affairs of this plantation; of making and repealing laws, dividing of inheritances, deciding of differences that may arise, and doing all things and businesses of like nature.

THIS being thus settled, as a fundamental agreement concerning civil government, Mr. Davenport proceeded to propound something to consideration about the gathering of a church' and to prevent the blemishing of the first beginnings of the church work, Mr. Davenport advised, that the names of such as were to be admitted might be publicly propounded, to the end that they who were most approved might be chosen; for the town being cast into several private meetings,

wherein they that lived nearest together gave their accounts one to another of GOD'S gracious world upon them, and prayed together and conferred to their mutual edification, sundry of them had knowledge one of another, and in every meeting some one was more approved of all than any other; for this reason and to prevent scandals, the whole company was intreated to consider whom they found fittest to nominate for this work.

Query VI. WHETHER are you all willing and do agree in this, that twelve men be chosen, that their fitness for the foundation work may be tried; however there may be more named yet it may be in their power who are chosen to reduce them to twelve, and that it be in the power of those twelve to choose out of themselves seven, that shall be most approved of by the major part, to begin the church.

THIS was agreed upon by consent of all, as was expressed by holding up of hands, and that so many as should be thought fit for the foundation work of the church, shall be propounded by the plantation, and written down and pass without exception, unless they had given public scandal or offence. Yet so as in case of public scandal or offense, every one should have liberty to propound their exception, at that time, publicly against any man, that should be nominated, when all their names should be writ down. But if the offence were private, that mens names might be tendered, so many as were offended were intreated to deal with the offender privately, and if he gave not satisfaction to bring the matter to the twelve, that they might consider of it impartially and in the fear of GOD.