

Inhabitants of Fauquier County, Petition Regarding the Separation of Church and State, 1785

To the Honourable the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, the Petition of the underwritten, Inhabitants of the said State Assembly Sheweth –

That your petitioners are persuaded that Religion is of the Highest Moment and greatest Importance to Mankind; That its Transendant [sic] superiority in doing good exceeds all Comparison: But they are at the same time persuaded that no Taxes or Confiscations or Compulsions of any Kind, have ever promoted its Glorious Cause: That the Saviour of the World and his Apostles have not directly or indirectly any such method for the Propagation of the Truth, but on the contrary by example as well as Precept have proceeded in a different manner: That it has been universally allowed by Writers on the Subject, that Religion flourished among the primitive Christians more than it has ever since, tho' they received no support from the Civil Powers:

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That the faithfull [sic] Ministers of the different denominations who have a real Zeal for the welfare of Mankind, are contented with the free-will offering of the People; and none but the Ambitious, the lazy, the luxurious Ministers who labour (if it can be called Labour) merely for Gold and not for the Good of their Fellow-creatures, have need of compulsive Measures for their support: That the State will be abundantly happier, and its Members more virtuous, without those Ministers who fleece but watch not over the Flock than with them: That we cannot expect, after the Convulsions the state has experienced by its glorious and successful Struggle for Liberty, everything to be instantaneously in its most perfect State; but in the Course of Providence we doubt not that a sufficient Number of faithful Ministers will be raised, Men who seek not power and Riches, but the welfare of Mankind; That one great Advantage, among many, of the Revolution has been the Expulsion of most of those Hirelings who got into the Priest's Office merely out of Temporal Motives:

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And therefore, that We humbly intreat [sic] and most earnestly pray and beseech the Honourable the Assembly that compulsive Measures may not be used for the Support of a lazy, indolent Clergy, (for We are conscious that faithful Ministers want no Support of the kind) and consequently that no, no assessment on account of Religion may take place:

And your Petitioners, as in Duty bound, shall pray, etc.

Saml Watson

Reuben Bramlet

Wm Kitson

John Martin

W Williams

Charles [Calvin?]

James Routt

Jacob Burger

Daniel Wheatley

Alexdr Williamson

Hezekiah Freeman

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John [Burdit?]	Joseph [illegible]
Augustine Jennings	Samuel Fisher
Wm Bryans	Arthur Gladston
Benjamin Dodd	John Martin
John Mizner	John Wever
Stephen [Leegur?]	Nathan Bramlet
Cornelius Hall	James Wheatley
Josiah Holtzclaw	George Green
John Hitt	William Porter
Charles Utterback	[Nimrod Foster?]
Joseph Wheatley	Ralph Hughs
Wm Duff	James Stevenson
Joseph Duncan	Louis Jennings
Ninnan Wyse	James Dodd
James Duff	Harmon [Prack?]
George Glendening	Moses Tapp
John Stephenson	Jesse Green
John Green	Yellis Johnson
[illegible]	Baylor Jennings

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Nathaniel Dodd	James Kirk
Issachar Pawling	[illegible] Oliver
Richard Fisher	Laven Oliver
George Wheatley	Thomas Graves
Wm Herndon	Wm Powell Jr.
Wm Suttle	Wm Powell Senr
Henry Thornberry	Reuben Strother
James Withers	Thomas Townes
Elias Martin	[Jeremiah?] Williams
Jacob Coons	Jos. Martin
John Woodside	James Collins
John Mcdannal	Benjn Holtzclaw
George Williams	Edward [Morrison?]
Charles [Tyra?]	[?] Wyse
[Pincis?] Tap	George Green
Charles Ficklen	Charles Martin
Tunis Johnson	John Hammer
William Suttle	James [illegible]
John Jett	Robert Turnbull

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Benjamin Arnold	William Harris
George Eastham	Aaron Hitt
Daniel Hitt	Tho. Maddus
William [illegible]	Saml Pepper
Harmon Hitt	John James
Benjamin Garner	Peter Kamper
Wm Gibson	Henry Coons
Martin Hitt	Benjamin [illegible]
Joseph Russell	Samuel Pettit
Reuben Wright	Benjamin Morgan
Nicholas Wyckoff	John Crockett
Jacob Button	Alex. [Longstreet?]
Fielding Turner	[illegible]
William Gibson	Sol. Kemper
Tapley Henson	Martin Edwards
[illegible]	Thomas Pettit
John [illegible]	John Parker
Jesse Hitt	Peter Hitt
Benj. Hitt	Jordan Suttle

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[docketed on reverse:]

Pet[ition] and Aft

Novr 29th 1785

Refd to whole on Co

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