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# MINUTES

OF THE

## DANBURY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT DANBURY,

OCTOBER 5 and 6, A. D. 1803.

TOGETHER WITH THEIR CIRCULAR AND CORRESPONDING LETTERS.

WEDNESDAY, October 5th.

1. ASSOCIATION met according to appointment. Introductory Sermon delivered by Elder Nehemiah Dodge, founded on 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*

2. Proceeded to business. Elder John Sherman, Moderator, and Elder Asahel Morse, Clerk.

3. Letters from the churches in our connection were presented and read, and the following list taken.

N. B. In the list, Ministers' names in capitals; those to which an \* is affixed were not present; dashes — denote no settled Ministers; from Churches marked thus † we received no letters.

Churches.	Messengers.	Added.	Dismiss.	Excom.	Dead.	No.
W. field,	{ JOHN HASTINGS, Daniel Better,	4	2	1	2	139
† W. Wallingford,	—					55
W. Danbury,	{ NATHAN BULKLEY, Joseph Boughton, John Beebe,	1	0	0	0	38
W. Danbury,	{ Deacon Benjamin Shove, Jacob St. John,	0	0	0	0	24
W. Wallingford,	{ * SETH HIGBY,					49
W. Northington & W. Northington,	{ Gideon Williams, Jeremiah Neal, Ebenezer Norton,		6	0	1	90
W. Westfield,	{ Daniel Sherman,	1	1	0	1	29
W. Westfield,	{ ANAHIEL MORSE, Dea. John Staples, David Benedict,	4	3	1	2	112

Character.	W. J. Gray	Added.	Dismiss.	Excom.	Died.	No.
Roxbury,	ISAAC FULLER, Andres E. G.	4	5	0	0	43
+ Westcott & Bridgton,	DANIEL WILDMAN,	5	2	0	0	110
Warren,	Dea. Nathaniel Johnson		2	0	1	52
+ Amenia-Terra,	* ELIJAH WOOD.					25
Colchester,	* RUFUS BABCOCK,					
	BUDGE SMITH,					
	Thomas Miers,					
2d Sandfield,	Daniel Fish,	3	4	1	1	53
2d Paulington,	* BENJAMIN BALDWIN,	5	2	5	1	175
+ East-Hartford,	John Salt,	0	0	0	0	43
+ Simsbury,	* ALAS BRIMSLEY,					40
Newtown,	JOHN SHERMAN,					8
2d Paulington	Richard Benson,		2	0	0	25
	ANANIAS DETHWICK,					
Middletown,	Joseph Ellis,	1	3	0	0	40
	NEHEMIAH DODGE,					
Winchester,	Enoch Green,	22	3	0	0	45
	* ISAAC BELLOWS,					
Hartford,	Nathaniel Smith,			1	1	34
	DAVID BOLLES,					
+ Wilbraham,	Dea. Ebraim Robbins,		3	0	2	87
New-Hartford,	* STEPHEN SHEPHERD,					75
	Dea. Samuel Braden,			2	0	0
Granville,		1	0	0	0	45
Sharon & Cornwall,		5	0	0	0	27

55 59 9 12 1539

4 Elders and Brethren from Corresponding Associations, were desired to take a seat with us.

5 The corresponding letter, prepared by Brother Morse, was submitted to a Committee of Elders Wildman and Nelson and Brother David Benedict and the Author; who were also appointed to prepare a circular letter. Adjourned till to-morrow morning 8 o'clock.

6 *Thursday Oct. 5. 6.* met according to adjournment.

Elder Gray preached a sermon from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians v. 23.

7 The corresponding letter read and approved.

8 From Otsego Association received a letter. From the Shaftsbury Association minutes and their messenger Elder Judah Gray. Received minutes from the Stonington Association, by their messenger Elder George Atwell. From the New-York Association, minutes and their messenger Elder Stephen S. Nelson.

9 Appointed Elders Bulkley and Dethwick, messengers to the Otsego Association:—Elder Nelson and Deacon Ebraim Robbins, to New-York:—Elder Morse, to the Shaftsbury:—Elders Dodge and Morse and Brother Daniel Brier, to Stonington.

10 Appointed Elder Daniel Wildman, to prepare a circular, and Elder Nathan Bulkeley a corresponding letter for the ensuing year.

11 Our next Association is to be held at Middletown, within the Baptist Church in that place, on the first Wednesday in October next, at 10 o'clock A. M. Elder Daniel Wildman to preach the introductory sermon; and in case of absence, Elder Rufus Babcock.

12 The intention of the general committee of Correspondence mentioned in the Philadelphia minutes was taken into consideration, and heartily approved. And we hereby appoint Elders, Nehemiah Dodge of Middletown, Asahel Morse of Stratfield, and Daniel Wildman of Bristol, and Deacon Ephraim Robbins of Hartford, and Daniel Bester of Suffield, to be our Committee, to hold correspondence with the general Committee above-mentioned. We recommend this institution to the ministers and brethren in our connection, adding our fervent prayers for its abundant success.

N. B. We would refer our readers for an explanation of the above, to the circular address of the general Committee of Correspondence, appointed by the Philadelphia Association, which address is now circulating in our Churches.

13 Heard the report of Brother Daniel Bester, who was appointed a Committee by the Baptist Conference at Bristol, to superintend their petition and remonstrance which was carried into the General Assembly at Hartford last May:—and as we could not be heard in said petition, we invest our delegates to the Storington Association, with power to meet any Committee which may be appointed by said Association, to consult what further measures are necessary, and to prosecute the same.—We also appoint our Brother Luther Savage of Hartford, to be our Treasurer to receive such sums of money as may be collected to defray expenses which may arise from farther attendance to our petition and remonstrance.—Also, we appoint the following Brethren to be our Committee to make collection for the above-mentioned purpose, and deliver the same into the hands of our Treasurer:—viz. Daniel Bester of Suffield, Hezekiah West of Bristol, Peter Ammer of Danbury, and Abel Gregory of New-Fairfield.

14 Brother Nelson delivered a sermon from Hebrews ii. 3.

15 Circular Letter read and approved.

16 Appointed Elder Morse to superintend the printing and distributing our minutes.

*Supplies for destitute Churches.*

Litchfield,	{	Brother Babcock,	2d	Lord's-day in December and 2d	[in June]
		Brother Smith,	4th	do.	December.
		Brother Bulkley,	2d	do.	January.
Sharon,	{	Brother Robbins,	2d	do.	November and 12
		Brother Dethwick,	2d	do.	May.
		Brother Babcock,	2d	do.	February.
Danbury,	{	Brother Bulkley,	2d	do.	February.
		Brother Smith,	2d	do.	June.
		Brother Dethwick,	2d	do.	April.

Signed in behalf of the Association.

JOHN SHERMAN, Moderator,  
ASAHEL MORSE, Clerk.

## CIRCULAR LETTER.

The ELDERS and MESSENGERS, of the DANBURY ASSOCIATION,  
to the CHURCHES they represent, send Christian salutations.

Dear Brethren,

**F**AVOURED with another opportunity of publicly addressing you through the medium of our annual epistle; permit us to state to you some of the joys we have recently experienced; and also to express our unfeigned gratitude to the Father of Mercies, for his beneficence and tender compassion hitherto enjoyed.

Our present meeting has been both agreeable and profitable. We are still the joyous beholders of the prosperity of Zion. Happy are we, dear brethren, in hearing that peace and union are prevalent in a good degree throughout the Churches. Though "faint yet pursuing."—"Go on" beloveds in the Lord. "Go on—our souls lay go."—May you strive to "know more of the blessed Jesus, more of the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, that you may be conformed to his death."

Among the various topics of religion which present themselves to our view; we hardly know what one may be most suitably adapted to the present occasion. Presuming, however, it may not be altogether uninteresting, we will present you a few animadversions upon the *Omnipresence of Jehovah*.

How low, how sensual, yea, how debasing are the images which we frequently form to ourselves, of the Being which we compliment as God. We are wont to conceive of Him as a gigantic personage seated "high on a Throne of royal state," swaying with regal scepter his potent realm. Is not this a species of idolatry? Alas! how vain how impotent is man! But the Psalmist has given a satisfactory definition of the all-seeing presence of God, in the following language: *O Lord, thou hast searched me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine up rising: thou understandest my thoughts as I sit. Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darknesses shall cover me: even the night shall be light unto me: yea, the darknesses hide: but not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darknesses and the light are both alike to thee.*

After this quotation from the pious Prophet, an attempt to elucidate the doctrine of Omnipresence, would appear almost superfluous. Permit us however, to observe, we do not discard the idea of a residence of the saints in glory; where the immediate presence and beatific vision of Jehovah are more sensibly enjoyed. Yet here I am not confined; because He is *every where present*. Man is inclined to say to himself, where shall I find my Maker? Where is his dwelling that I may worship Him? But, may he not rather ask, where is not? For where can he look without beholding him?

From the subject thus stated, we infer.

First. The consolation and encouragement which it is exercised afford the serious prayerful Christian. 'Tis because the Lord is every where present, that Churches associate for worship, and Afflictions convene to transact business relative to Churches. And what can be a greater stimulus to Christian duties, than the idea of an all seeing, and omnipresent God? *Present* to reward the faithful labours of his servants. *Present* to relieve their distresses—to deliver from temptation—to give to mourners in Zion beauty for ashes—to cause their hearts to burn within them by the way—and to take up an unexpected residence, with those who mourn an absent Jesus.

What promise is more precious than that of the Redeemer? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Whether in burning or freezing zones; in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America; among all nations, kindred, tongues and people; those who devoutly seek his face, and worship at his throne, shall receive his gracious benediction, and experience his special presence and direction.

Earthly friends may afford their patronage—may administer comfort and relief while present, but when separated by local distance, alas, where are then our helpers! But *the Lord is high unto us: he will not see us: His eyes are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their cry.* Nothing can separate us from Him. Darkness hideth not; for, *darkness and light are both alike unto him.*

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* This we mention dear brethren, for the consolation and support of those of you, who are called to experience grievous afflictions, and manifold trials, as it respects your civil capacity. We do well to remember, that the Church, the unadulterated Church of Christ, has ever had to encounter trials, and wade through scenes of affliction. These it seems are a sort of legacy entailed upon the Church. "Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But shall we therefore complain? Surely no. "These afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory."

The great head of the Church *sits as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi.* How seldom and how rarely is the import of these words realized. The artisan in order to refine his silver must cause it to pass through the heated furnace; otherwise, the dross cannot be extracted. So with the God of grace, affliction is the furnace in which his people are tried. And every part of the process is directed by infinite wisdom and unbounded love. Therefore, to complain after these acknowledgements, is the height of absurdity.

We secondly infer, the habitual fear and reverence which we ought to exercise, towards this omnipresent Jehovah. The eyes of the Lord are upon all things, beholding the evil and the good. Says the Psalmist, *Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my secret, which O Lord thou knowest it altogether. Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* A proper conce-

from this; may we ever adopt the same. How sublime and awful the testimony which it is ever ready to inspire. May the spirit of the presence of the Holy Spirit ever be a comfort, and ever burn against the iniquities of sin. Let us remember that our minds, as well as our bodily affections, are always open to the view of this all-seeing God. We can never close the curtain of the eye. 'Tis he that touch our reins, and fortifies the inward parts of our hearts. How good it becomes to them, even to walk with consolation in the world, and maintain a confidence void of doubt towards God and man.

Was this joyful assembly to end, we profess we should wish the painful beholders of foreign wars and dissensions in the world, Christiana communities and fellowship we trust would be more patient and inactive would be done away.

Who would project fraudulent schemes to enhance his country's treasure? Who would promise to snatch from the orphan's mouth his father's pittance? Who would add affliction to the sorrows of widowhood; and cast deprecations upon the laws of humanity and religion; did they really believe, did they suitably realize the omnipresence of the Lord of Hosts?

And now, dear brethren, accept our earnest desires that we may all conduct with a wise reference to eternity; as in the presence of the God who knoweth all our thoughts and forth all our actions: that we may be prepared to render a joyful account to our Judge, and be received through the opening azure vault, to the realms of bliss; forever to enjoy the full fruition, and beatific vision of God and the Lamb.

*Signed in behalf of*  
*the Association,*

JOHN SHERMAN, *Moderator.*  
ASAHEL MORSE, *Clerk.*

## CORRESPONDING LETTER.

BRETHREN; *beloved in the Lord,*

**T**HROUGH the indulgence of a kind Providence, we have been favoured with another agreeable interview.—The manifestations of God's love to our souls, and the refreshing accounts from Churches in our connections, console our minds, and elate our hearts with joy.

We rejoice in the privilege of corresponding with you, and of maintaining that union and fellowship which are essential to social happiness.

When we reflect upon the goodness of God, manifested to our nation; and the various interpositions of his Providence in favor of the cause and people in this land; we are ready to exclaim with the Psalmist and say, "He hath not dealt so with any other people."

Within two centuries past, this now fertile country, which teems with inhabitants and swarms with domestic animals, was a waste howling wilderness, inhabited by brutes and savages, who were not only ignorant of the arts and sciences, but destitute of the least vestige of religion, except what nature alone teaches.

The rebellion was the product, by kind the Providence, which  
 occurred in the bloody scenes of tyranny and persecution,  
 and (then) insupportable wild, and supported them here, until the  
 rebellion became a fruitful field, and the desert blossomed as the rose.  
 These now powerful and independent States within thirty years  
 were oppressed, feeble, and dependent colonies; which were gov-  
 erned by an assuming tyrant, and a parliament of lords spiritual and tempo-  
 ral, at a distance of three thousand miles. But the scene changed.  
 An eternal arm interposed in behalf of America.

The Lord favored our cause, and crowned us with victory.—Our  
 enemies perished from the midst of us; and our rulers are chosen by  
 the people.

Within three score and ten years past a superstitious gloom covered  
 the land; and a formal darkness the minds of the people.—But is  
 not God to reverse the scene.—Many who sat in darkness saw  
 light; and the day spring from on high visited our land.

Since that period, there has not only been a glorious ingathering of  
 the people, but a great reformation in doctrine and discipline.

In a century has rolled away, since there were not more regular  
 church members of the Baptist order in this State, than there are now  
 in all Churches in the two Affections.

From the great emblemment of oppression and persecution, under  
 which we laboured, God has in some measure delivered us, by a high  
 and out stretched arm.

And notwithstanding the Pharaoh of the present day is yet persua-  
 ded that the fiery pillar is before us;—and if we are found  
 faithful to God, we shall by his mercy obtain deliverance, from the  
 yoke in which Antichrist exercises under the specious pretext of sup-  
 porting religion by the civil law.

As God by his grace has multiplied our numbers, so by his spirit,  
 he has caused our union to spread, and our fellowship to increase.

Notwithstanding we have no earthly king yet we go forth by bands.  
 May we then realize, that “The Lord hath dealt beautifully with  
 us, and already brought to pass things for which we looked not.”

May his goodness excite in us gratitude of heart; and his mercies  
 lead us to repentance.

The world is full of changes. Some are agreeable, and many are  
 disagreeable:—but all open a field for improvement to the observing  
 man.

The impressions we receive from these things, bring us to realize,  
 that our own strength is weakness, and our wisdom folly.—And by the  
 power of God, will enable us to put our trust in Him, and faithfully  
 praise his mercies:—to remember him “From the land of Jor-  
 dan of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizor,” in all places where  
 he has blessed and comforted us.

Thus then look to God for grace, to bear afflictions with patience,  
 and meekly with resignation and prevailing fortitude; that when un-  
 der affliction we may not suddenly say, “God hath forgotten us.” nor  
 say “My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved.”

Not only good actions, only, will form our characters virtuous, and  
 thus exemplary; but an habitual devotion to God, and the con-  
 stant exercise of piety, forbearance, and good will to all men.

Always bearing in mind, that we cannot do too much for God; nor trust too little in what we do.

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.”

Indeed, brethren, all of our profession ought to be like John the Baptist, who was a burning and shining light. That others, by seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father.

The state in which we are, is a state of trials.

Saith the Lord by David, “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous.*” And by Isaiah; “*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*”

The existing circumstances of the world demand our consideration.

The political earthquake which is shaking the powers of the world to their center; the thirst for war, bloodshed and slaughter, among many nations;—the jarring discords of others, and the unhappy divisions in our own, may be viewed as the opening of that *hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

The low state of religion, the lukewarmness of many of our churches, the prevalence of false principles in this land; the rapid progress of vice and immorality, and the opposition manifested against the probable administration of our government; together with the spirit of the times, “which has been like a canker-worm at the root of vital piety,” and the present afflictive visitations of God upon many separate towns, exhibit a preface of awful miseries on our land.

These loudly call us to faithfulness and assiduity in the glorious cause of Christ.

Finally, brethren, let us be engaged to follow the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, who went about doing good.

Let us also rely upon the promise that, “*When the enemy shall be like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.*”

To exercise in this trying day, the spirit of Enoch, and the faith of Abraham—the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job; and to John recline with safety on the bosom of our Lord amidst the convulsions of the earth and militant heavens: to maintain the fortitude of Paul in being determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; such a temper of mind, will transform our thorns to roses and our pains to pleasures.

It will joyfully support us amidst surrounding sorrows; afford peace in affliction, and comfort in tribulation.

Yea, with such a disposition of mind, “Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

May God give us grace to run the race which is set before us with patience; and fill up the measure of our days with usefulness: may our course with joy; and join the general Association where peace and harmony will eternally reign.

Signed by order and in behalf of the Association,

JOHN SHERMAN, Moderator  
ASAHEL MORSE, Clerk.