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Minutes ... at New-London, October 17th and 18th,
1797 .

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MINUTES

OF THE

STONINGTON ASSOCIATION,

Held at New-London, October 17th and 18th,
1797.

TUESDAY, October 17th:

THE Elders and Brethren, Messengers of the Churches, met at Elder Zadock Darrow's Meeting-House, and

1. Brother Thomas Baldwin delivered an introductory Sermon; from Psal. cii. 13.

2. After public worship, the Association proceeded to business, and chose brother Amos Wells, Moderator, and brother Valentine W. Rathbun, Clerk.

3. Letters from the Churches were read, and the following account taken of the members added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died the past year; also, the present number in each church:

N.B. The names of ordained Ministers are in small capitals. From churches marked thus *, we had no letters. Vacant churches distinguished by a dash.

Churches.	Ministers and Messengers.	Added.	Dismiss.	Exclud.	Dead.	Numb.
1st. Stonington,	PELEG RANDAL, Walter Brown, Paul Main,	4			1	142
2d. Stonington,	SIMEON BROWN,	1			4	200
3d. Stonington,	VALENTINE W. RATHBUN, John Hudson,					43
Groton,	_____ Benadam Gallup, jun. John G. Wightman, Samuel Smith,	38			1	215
Saybrook,	ELIPHALET LESTER, Israel Douglass, Samuel Church,		1	1		37
Exeter,	_____ William Hammond,	2			2	224

		Added.	Disf.	Exclud.	Dead.	Numb.
* Church formerly of South Kingston, now of Richmond,	_____					67
* West-Greenwich, 1st. Colchester,	_____	2				49 62
2d. Colchester,	CHRISTOPHER PALMER, Abiel Stark, _____, Ebenezer Rogers, Alpheus Rogers, James Rogers, Lemuel Miner,	3	3	3		84
Richmond,	_____, Sands Perkins,		1			33
Hampton,	ABEL PALMER, Stephen Utley, Thomas Grow,	4	4	4	1	62
Montville,	REUBEN PALMER, Jabez Stebbens, John Lyon, Norman Lester, Elihu Lester, Robert Fargo,	60	1			109
1st. Chatham,	_____, Ebenezer Harris,		1			58
2d. Woodstock,	AMOS WELLS, Jesse Bolles, John Parrett,	1		2	1	67
2d. Chatham,	_____, Constant Welch, George Gates,	5	3		1	66
New-London,	ZADOCK DARROW, Lemuel Darrow, Nehemiah Dodge,	10		4	3	274
2d. Ashford, 3d. Ashford,	JOHN RATHBUN, _____, David Bolles,	10	3 1		3	56 31
East-Haddam,	SIMEON DICKINSON, Afa Harvey, Josiah Hungerford, John Bigelow,	4		2		49
Plainfield,	NATHANIEL COLE, Thomas Smith, Ezekiel Gary,	3	11		1	73
Killingly,	PETER ROGERS, Ebenezer Leach, Nicholas Aldridge,	3				65
		148	31	16	18	2065

N. B. The second Church in Stonington were requested to omit taking a seat at this meeting, in hopes that before another annual association their difficulties will be settled.

4. Received and read letters from the following Associations, viz. From the Shaftsbury, a letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Abiel Brown. From the Warren, letter and minutes, by their messengers, Brethren Isaac Backus, Thomas Baldwin and Stephen S. Nelson. From the Danbury, a letter, but no minutes, by their messenger, Brother Stephen Shepard. And from the New-York, a letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Stephen S. Nelson.

5. The circular letter, prepared by Brother Dickinson; and the corresponding letter, drawn by Brother P. Rogers; were read, and referred to the inspection of Brethren Backus, Baldwin, V. W. Rathbun, Dickinson, and P. Rogers.

Adjourned until nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Sermon in the evening at the meeting-house, by Brother Stephen S. Nelson, from 11. Cor. iii. 9. Also, Public worship at sundry other places in the vicinity.

WEDNESDAY, *October*, 18th.

Met according to adjournment, and

1. Sermon by Brother Isaac Backus, from Zech. iv. 6, 7.

2. Received, by the hand of Brother William Brame, minutes of the following Associations, viz. The Portsmouth, Dover, Roanoke-District, Kotocton, Goshen, Neuse, and Kehukee; also, of the Baptist General Committee in Virginia.

3. The corresponding letter, as revised by our committee, was read and accepted. Voted that it be printed with our minutes.

4. The circular letter was again read, and the sentiments thereof approved; but on account of the length of it, it was thought proper to refer it to the Clerk, to be abridged so far, as to reduce it to the usual size.

5. Appointed Brother Reuben Palmer to write the circular letter for next year, and Brother V. W. Rathbun to prepare the corresponding letter.

6. Chose the following brethren to visit our sister Associations, viz. John Rathbun and Ebenezer Harris, to the Danbury. To the Shaftsbury, Amos Wells, and Peleg Randal. To the New-York, V. W. Rathbun, and Stephen S. Nelson. To the Warren, Pardon Tillinghast, and William Hammond.

7. The Clerk is requested to forward our minutes to the Philadelphia Association.

8. Agreed upon the following supplies:—

GROTON.

Brother John Rathbun, fourth Lord's Day in October.

——— Reuben Palmer, first in November, and first in December.

——— Nathaniel Cole, second in December.

——— Valentine W. Rathbun, second in Jan. and third in Feb.

——— Peter Rogers, first in April.

——— Peleg Randal, 1st in May.

——— Christopher Palmer, first in June.

EXETER.

Brother Nathaniel Cole, second in November.

——— Peter Rogers, third in November.

2d. COLCHESLER.

Brother Reuben Palmer, first in May.

— Simeon Dickinson, first in June.

1st. CHATHAM.

Brother Zadock Darrow, first in December.

— Simeon Dickinson, first in August.

— RICHMOND.

Brother Nathaniel Cole, fourth in May.

— Zadock Darrow, fourth in June.

— Peleg Randal, fourth in September.

9. Resumed the consideration of the last year's query from the Church at Hampton, viz. "Whether, a person immersed in water, in the name of the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, by a man that hath not been ordained by laying on of hands in apostolic order, neither giveth evidence of a dispensation of the gospel being committed unto him, ought to be received as a baptized person?" and, Voted, That we recommend to the Churches, to act in such cases, according to the clearest light, as circumstances occur.

10. Brother Valentine W. Rathbun is requested to superintend the printing of the minutes.

11. Voted to hold our next Association at the meeting-house occupied by the Church at Richmond, the third Tuesday in October, 1798.

Business being finished, Brother Isaac Backus concluded by prayer.

N. B. After the brethren were dismissed, the minutes of the Philadelphia Association, of October, 1796, came to the hands of the Clerk.

C I R C U L A R L E T T E R.

The Elders and Messengers of the several Churches met in Association at New-London, October 17th and 18th, 1797,

To the Churches whom they represent, send Christian Salutation.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WHILE disease and death, with terrific sway, has spread desolation in some of the cities and towns of this republic the present year; the kind interposition of *divine providence*, and the distinguishing favour of *Almighty God*, in permitting us to enjoy another annual interview, claim our particular acknowledgment. The joyful sound of the gospel—The welcome tidings of a considerable addition to some of our churches—The pleasing communications from our sister associations—And the good degree of harmony attending our deliberations, crowned with the divine blessing, rendered the present interview delightful.

While we lament the devastation of a long desolating war in Europe; we rejoice that we are permitted to sit under our vines and fig trees. And while we pray for a continuance of national peace and prosperity; we would remind you, brethren, of the sacred injunction of our spiritual lawgiver, Mark ix. 50. "Have peace one with another." "The kingdom of God is *peace*." Rom. xiv. 17. Man, in his original state, was at *peace* with his maker; but by submitting to the temptation of satan, he was found guilty of a violation of God's law—lost the divine image—and became an enemy to God! As all the posterity of Adam are alike fallen with him, they are "by nature the children of wrath"—full of enmity against God—and heirs of his just wrath and vengeance. "There is no *peace*, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isa. xlviii. 22. Altho' wicked men may speak *peace* to themselves, it is abundantly evident, both

from scripture testimony and sad experience, that they are not at *peace* with God—that they are their own enemies—and at variance with their fellow beings. As they are enemies to God, so they are opposed to his righteous government. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. viii. 7. In this situation, “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked,” we were beheld by him, “who is able to save, and to destroy;” and, “his arm brought salvation.” “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The prince of *peace*. Of the increase of his government and *peace* there shall be no end.” Isa. ix. 6. The birth of this prince of *peace* was proclaimed by “a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good-will towards men.” Luke ii. 13, 14. While we meditate on the variety of important events, that took place at the nativity of this glorious person, who is called Wonderful,—While we read the history of his holy life,—and contemplate his doctrine—his perfect conformity to the divine law—The many miracles wrought by him—his patience, and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father—his “obedience unto death, even the death of the cross”—and the wonders of his death, resurrection, and ascension; we readily adopt the words of the centurion, “Truly, this man was the son of God.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Thus, “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And, “having made *peace* through the blood of his cross:” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “But he that believeth not is condemned already.” “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” It is obvious that there are two distinct characters among mankind: This was early made manifest in the contrast between Cain and Abel: And this difference of character, will undoubtedly continue, ’till the arrival of that auspicious æra; when, “they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Heb. viii. 11.

We would not presume to invalidate, or doubt the sufficiency of “the atonement:” “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But it is evident, notwithstanding what Christ hath done and suffered, that until mankind are “partakers of the divine nature,” they remain opposed to the government of God; and while they continue unreconciled to God, they are unfit for that heavenly state, where there is uninterrupted rest and felicity, and where there is the most perfect friendship between God, Angels and Men: Christ said therefore “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3. The Apostle also asserts, that “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” He is in Christ, by internal vital union to him, and personal interest in him: There is (in a moral and spiritual sense) a thorough change

in his understanding, will and affections, and manner of life : A new divine light is diffused in his mind, so that his discoveries are new : he is formed anew in his principles, temper and designs, and is in an exercise of that "faith which worketh by love." "And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" "And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh, by the blood of Christ. For he is our *peace*." "Then said he, Lo ! I come to do thy will, O God." And being furnished with authority and answerable gifts to do the work of mediator, he was chosen and consecrated to the offices of prophet, priest, and king. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts iii. 22, 23. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke iv. 18, 19. "And came, and preached *peace* to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." Eph. ii. 17. This preacher of righteousness—This "teacher come from God"—This resplendent luminary, hath appeared, to illumine them that "walk in darkness," and to "shew unto us the way of salvation." As a priest, "he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. ix. 26. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Heb. vii. 25, 26.

This matchless incomparable Redeemer was by his Father anointed King ; "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Psal. ii. 6. "Unto the son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom : Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Heb. i. 8, 9, and Psal. xlv. 6, 7. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy king cometh unto thee : he is just and having salvation." Zech. ix. 9.—Matt. xxi. 5, and John xii. 15. "And the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : *peace* in heaven, and glory in the highest." Luke xix. 37, 38. "Just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints." Rev. xv. 3. "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Rev. xix. 16.—1. Tim. vi. 15, "and Rev. xvii. 14. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." 1. Cor. xv. 25. "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord

is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." Isa xxxiii. 22.

This glorious high priest intercedes, and the Holy Ghost descends to Earth; "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." John xiv. 16, 17, 26. This holy prophet, having himself taught mankind, "the way of salvation;" "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. and 1. Cor. xii. 28. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 11. Cor. v. 20.

The necessity of faith and repentance is urged, both by Christ and his apostles. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "Without faith it is impossible to please him." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

As we profess to be the subjects of the King of glory, we should submit to his commands. There is in every true believer, a conformity of heart and life to the will of God—"His delight is in the law of the Lord"—He is married to Jesus as "the end of the law for righteousness"—He considers the moral precepts as the law of Christ, or a rule of duty in the hand of Jesus Christ as mediator—He has given his heart to God, and a principle of love influences him to obedience—He is disposed to do to others as he would reasonably wish they would do unto him.

The commandment of loving one another, was contained in the moral law ever since the creation; and it is enjoined afresh by our Saviour, as exemplified in his life, and enforced with the additional motive of his dying love. John xv. 12. Therefore, "By love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Walk in the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." Gal. v. 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "To be spiritually minded is life and *peace*." "*Peace* I leave with you, my *peace* I give unto you." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are *peace*." "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then *peaceable*, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in *peace* of them that make *peace*." Jam. iii. 16, 17, 18. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, speaketh evil of the law." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

As members of civil society, we should "render honour to whom honour is due." "And Jesus said, render to Cesar the things that are Cessars'."

As members of the Church of Christ, "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." "Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder:

yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another. "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." "Being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Finally, brethren, "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

The Stonington Association, met in New-London, October 17th and 18th, 1797,

To the Corresponding Associations, sendeth—greeting.

DEARLY BELOVED,

LOVE, which is an attribute of the divine nature, and the noblest image of God in man; is that, which, through the rich grace of God in Jesus Christ, enables us to exercise every christian grace to all our brethren, not excepting even the most remote; for by this heavenly cord we are freely drawn to obey the laws of Christ. Whilst this love has a perfect union with God, the source from whence it flows, it sheds its Godlike rays around, and knows no other bounds in all the vast domain of created intelligence, than the objects of affection. Well might the beloved disciple of our Lord declare, that "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;" because that "God is love." Whilst we feel the glow of this celestial flame operating within us, our hearts with ardent longings burn to embrace you in the realms of everlasting day.

Through the medium of this our correspondence, we hope to mutually strengthen each other, while passing the dreary wilderness of a trying world; through which, none but those who have the spirit of faith, like that of Caleb and Joshua, shall ever be able to travel to the heavenly Canaan. The present day produces many characters, who in a scornful tone enquire, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But let us remember that even this language of theirs is a fulfilment of divine prediction; and as they fill up the measure of their iniquity, and ripen for destruction, they add one to the cloud of witnesses, which prove the validity of the sacred Oracles. Truth is a perfect chain united link with link, without a possibility of a separation to eternity. With what confidence then may we rely on the revealed word of God, when we view not only the perfect harmony which runs through all its various parts, but also its entire connection and coincidence with natural religion. Wherefore let every one stand firm, having his "loins girt about with truth," and determinately stem the tide of opposition, and not only fight as a good soldier, but as a faithful sentinel guard against the various snares and devices of the adversary: for the Son of God, amidst many open and avowed enemies, was at last betrayed with a kiss.

Dear brethren, although persecution, bonds and affliction, await us in the present world, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

The Lord "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." And the time is coming, when we shall look back with holy joy and pleasure, on all the scenes of affliction through which we have passed. Brethren, we wish you peace and prosperity in the Lord, and that you may more and more abound in the image of the blessed Immanuel, and in his knowledge, till you come to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Now to the only wise God, we would recommend you with ourselves, to whom be rendered and ascribed, with adoration and praise, the complete and perfect fulness of every attribute which is worthy of a God. Amen.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

AMOS WELLS, *Moderator.*

VALENTINE W. RATHBUN, *Clerk.*