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Baptists. Connecticut. Stonington Association, 1804.

Minutes ... at Colchester, October 15 & 16, 1804.

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MUTILATED
PAGES

MINUTES

OF THE

STONINGTON

BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT

COLCHESTER,

OCTOBER 15 & 16, 1804.

TOGETHER, WITH THEIR

Circular & Corresponding

LETTERS,

NORWICH:

PRINTED BY STERRY & PORTER.

MINUTES &c.

TUESDAY, October 15, 1804.

THE Elders and Brethren from the several Churches being met, Eld. John Leland delivered an introductory sermon from *Zach. xviii. 12.*

2. Made choice of brother Reuben Palmer, Moderator, and Asa Spalding, Clerk.

3. Letters from the several Churches were then read, and the following account taken of the number added, dismissed, excluded, and that have died the year past, with the present number in each Church.

N. B. The names of the ordained ministers are in *Italic letters*. Those with this mark were not present. From Churches marked thus* we had no letter. Vacant Churches are distinguished by a dash—

Churches.	Ministers & Messengers.	Add.	Dis.	Excl.	Dead.	Num.
1st. Stonington.	<i>Peleg Randal</i>	0	1	0	2	172
	Jabez Gallup					
	Walter Brown					
	Walter Brown, jun.					
	Gershom Palmer.					
2d. Stonington.	<i>Simeon Brown</i>	0	2	9	2	117
	Beriah Lewis					
	Jedediah Randal					
	Thomas Wells					
	Asher Miner					
Groton.	<i>Asa Spalding.</i>					206
	<i>J. G. Whitman</i>	1	0	0	0	
	Benadam Gallup					
	Sands Fish					
Sawbrook.	<i>Jonathan Miner.</i>					12
	<i>George Atwell</i>	16	0	3	1	
	David Douglass					
Exeter.	<i>Solomon Douglass.</i>					1
	_____	1	6	2	0	
	Pardon Tillinghast					
Richmond formerly S. Kingston.	_____					1

West-Greenwich	Jos. Tillinghast	5	1	3	1	1
	Lawton Straight.					
1st. Colchester.	_____	0	0	0	1	1
	Jabez Hough, jun.					

Churches. Ministers & Messengers.	Ad.	Diss.	Decl.	Dead.	Total	
2d. Colchester.	Abiel Starrs Uinah Downer James Lamb.	1	0	0	1	44
	Asa Wilcox Alpheus Rogers James Rogers Ebenezer Rogers.					
Richmond.	Oliver Knight Weden Clark	32	0	1	0	88
Hampton.	† Abel Palmer William Elliot Stephen Utley Asa Bennett.	4	1	0	0	99
Montville.	Reuben Palmer Jehiel Rogers Samuel Bolles Ebenezer Dart.	2	6	0	8	101
Chatham.	Constant Welch George Gates Joseph Arnold Samuel Arnold 2d.	3	10	0	0	113
Waterford.	Leazer Darras John Beckwith Ebenezer Maynard Charles Brown, jun.	4	31	3	8	139
East-Haddam.	Simon Dickenwass Henry Brown Daniel Williams J. Hungerford John Bigelow, jun.	0	2	0	0	57
Plainfield.	Nathaniel Cole John Bennett Samuel Pearce.	2	4	1	0	85
Killingly.	†	0	0	0	0	113
S. Kingston.	Benjamin Watt	0	0	0	0	31
3d. Stonington.		3	0	1	0	50
	E. Cheesborough.					
New-Londor	Samuel West Henry Harris John Lewis Noah Mason.	0	0	0	0	60

Total. 7, add: 84 diss, 22 excl. 14 decl. 2057 number.

4. Received a letter & minutes from the Warren Association, by their messenger Elder Gano from the Dan-

bury a letter and minutes by their messengers Eld's Nehemiah Dodge, Rufus Babcock and brother Daniel Bestor: from the Shafsbury, a letter and minutes by Eld. Leland: from the New-York, a letter by the hand of brother West: From the Lyden, a letter and minutes. Brethren Thomas Goddard and Afa Wilcox present as messengers from the Groton Conference.

5. Voted, that in future, the brethren from our sister associations be entitled to a seat with us without special invitation.

6. Appointed Eld's J. Gano Whitman, George Atwell and Amos Wells, a committee to examine the circular and corresponding letters.

7. Appointed Elders, Leland, Gano, Wells and West a committee to reconcile the difference in our plan, the 9th. article of our last year's minutes and the vote therein contained,

8. Appointed the same brethren a committee to confer with the committee from the Danbury Association.

9. Adjourned till 8 o'clock to-morrow morning.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16.

10. Met according to adjournment, and attended public worship. Eld. Stephen Gano delivered a discourse, from Revelations I. 18.

11. Resolved, that whenever any church fails to represent itself in the Association for 3 years, it shall be the duty of the Association to send to said church, either by messengers or letters, that they may obtain a true state of the church, before said church is dropped from the Association.—Professing to believe that the Association have no power of exercising any discipline over the particular churches

12. Appointed, brethren Reuben Palmer, Amos Wells, George Gates, George Williams and Jedediah Randal, as a committee to unite with the committee of the Danbury Association, to concert measures to obtain the desirable object mentioned in the proposal from the Danbury Association—either to issue a petition to be laid before the Legislature, or pursue other peaceable means to obtain constitutional relief.

13. Read and received the Circular and corresponding letters

14. Appointed brother West to write the Corresponding, and brother Afa Spalding the Circular letter for next year.

15. Appointed, brethren George Atwell and John G.

Whitman, messengers to the Danbury Association; Pardon Tillinghast and Thomas Smith to the Warren; George Atwell and John G. Whitman to the Groton Conference; Samuel West and Henry Harris to the N. York; Abel Palmer and Asa Bennet to the Sturbridge; Beriah Lewis and Asner Miner to the Lyden; Samuel West, Jedediah Randal and Rufus Babcock, to open a correspondence with the Otsego and Ransselaerville Associations; brother West to forward our minutes to the Philadelphia.

16. Voted, the Clerk superintend the printing of the minutes.

17. Voted, that our next Association be held at the meeting-house occupied by the Church in Montville, the third Tuesday in October, 1805. at ten o'clock, A. M.

19. Received from the Association and individuals, the sum of 28 dollars and 72 cents, and paid the same into the hands of brother Daniel Bestor, to defray his and brother Bolles's, expence with our Petition &c.

Circular Letter.

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The Messengers of the Churches that compose the Stonington Association, to the several Churches whom they represent send GREETING:

BELOVED BROTHERN,

A GREEABLE to our common practice, in annual association, we once more address you by letter. In every attempt of this kind, the design, no doubt has been, and ever ought to be, your furtherance in the faith of the Gospel.

As creatures accountable for all our moral conduct, we ought always to act with reference to eternity. And, as we are ever dependant upon God, it becomes us, in all things to know him; for he is that Being, who has a subdubted right, as an independent sovereign, to dispose of all things, creatures, and events; for we are but clay in the hands of the Potter.

While we state to you, God's independency and divine sovereignty; the entire dependency of creatures, and at the same time their accountability to God, as moral agents, we may be ready to enquire "How can these things be?" It at once suggests to our minds, the

important doctrine, of God's eternal purposes, designs, and decrees; and likewise, the liberty of the human will, or free moral agency.

These two doctrines, or if you please two points of doctrine, that appear to us most clearly revealed in the Scriptures, seem to have given rise to abundance of enquiry, argument and altercation among men in our world. On the one hand, free moral agency must be destroyed, in order to establish the doctrine of God's decrees or predestination; and on the other, the doctrine of divine decrees and particular election, must be confuted in order to set up the liberty of the will.

However dark, and beclouded these points of doctrine may appear to us, they must be harmoniously true; and, notwithstanding, the direct lead from one to the other, cannot be so investigated, by short sighted mortals, as to reconcile and reduce to system these important truths, yet our faith may safely embrace them both.

It must be a bold and daring assertion, for any one, to say that God cannot decree, and yet leave the will free; or that he cannot predetermine all our actions, and we act as free as though there was no decree respecting us, or any of our actions.

An unchangeable and infinitely wise God, must have a wise concerted plan, of eternal operation; involved in which there must be, all and every volition, of all and every intelligent creature within his Providence or under his controul: and this operation must be carried on, according to an Eternally decided choice of its Almighty Operator. While at the same time, the free will, or moral agency of Man, in a way perfectly consistent with predestination, is also essential to his nature as Man—to his relation to God as a moral agent—to his accountability for his moral actions—to his knowing his place at the foot of God as a sinner—to his repentance—to his hopes of pardon and acceptance, through grace alone, and to his moral happiness. To strip any man of moral agency, is at once to strip him of every thing essential to his nature as Man, and render him incapable of moral actions.

Can we not as well reconcile divine sovereignty and moral agency, as we can many other points of doctrine, viz. the doctrine of a Triune God; the hypostatic union of the divine and human nature, that constitutes that wonderful being the God-Man, Mediator, or the Lord Jesus Christ; the union of the divine unchangeableness with the efficacy of prayer, &c. &c.

We are not to object to points of doctrine which we cannot harmonize, or comprehend them; but rather to acquiesce in them, as we are bound to do.

quire, that wisdom that is manifested in the glorious plan of Divine government, so abundantly calculated to exalt God, and abase sinful man. When we turn our thoughts on helpless sinners, our own characters are personated; and we find ourselves guilty, poor and ignorant; and if our guilt is ever washed away, it will be because God has opened a fountain for our cleansing and chose us to Salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the Truth; and our being cleansed by the washing of regeneration, is but the effect of his kind design, according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ. That it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy alone he saveth us &c. And if we are ever made truly rich, it will be riches to us, without money and without price; and if we become truly wise, we shall feel ourselves altogether indebted to that beneficent Being, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not; who saves all that are saved, for his Namesake. But if we fail of grace and salvation, where will the blame fall? As guilty rebels our mouths will be shut; nor can we have confidence to say, "that we are necessarily miserable, on the account of divine decrees, or that there never was a possible chance to have bettered our condition." On the other hand, if it should be our happy lot at last to meet the approbation of our Judge, and we are welcomed to the joys of our Lord, none of us will dare or even wish to say, that it is in the least possible degree, for any deserving of ours.

Truly beloved brethren, it becomes us to take our place in the dust; for when we undertake to investigate any of the perfections of God, his attributes, his works of Creation, of Providence, or Grace, we have to confess we cannot comprehend the least of all his works. And yet, this is so far from discouraging us in seeking after God, that it often becomes a powerful stimulus to move us on to action in the blessed cause of Christ. For a Being, that none by searching can find, yet has revealed himself glorious and lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand, most certainly is and will be a proper object of worship, adoration & praise.

Dear brethren, we have nothing to fear from the decrees of a Righteous God; they can never influence us to sin; but, from our own determinations of our own, we have much to fear. We are conscious of possessing or enjoying such freedom of will, as to choose or refuse those objects of our fancy or affection, or disagreeable, to our or resolute will, but really becomes us to adopt the decree of the Lord, that, *let others do as they please*, by the assistance of grace, we will serve

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For the sake of our minds for

state of the Churches we refer you to

Corresponding Letter.

—:10:—

The Elders and Brethren of the Stonington Association, convened at Colchester, October 16 & 17, 1804, to the Associations with whom they correspond, Send Greeting; wishing Grace, Mercy and Peace may be, & abound among you, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

DEAR BRETHREN,

GOD in his providence hath once more favoured us to meet, & address you in a collective capacity. We trust with sincere affection and in some measure sensible of that Union which flows from Jesus Christ, to the members of his mystical body; by which they are united together and grow to an holy Faith in the Lord. The necessity of this Union in order to our Spiritual growth is almost manifested by the law of Nature while we see the Planetary worlds, united to their several systems, roll on in order in the vast expanse of Aether.—The Earth likewise, in the union of its particles, shows its gravitation. The union of earth and elements produce vegetation; the union of the air and food to our natural Body, is necessary to its temporal existence.

If systems and things coming from the same source require union in order to their existence, the Church of God may well discover the necessity of their being united to God and one another, in order to their existence, growth, and increase.

This dear Brethren is what we desire to maintain among ourselves & God's Israel in general; for we believe that we have experienced the salutary effects. Our hearts have been made glad by hearing of your prosperity, that we can say with the Apostle that "we are always bound to give thanks to God for you." We also can inform you, that God is good to our Israel; we have had refreshing news from some of our Churches, and although some of them complain of luke-warmness, & want of zeal and engagement, yet we experience a good degree of harmony and union. Have we not occasion to thank and adore the Glorious Lord, when we think of his former displays of Grace and his present goodness to us; that one of our Faithful Ministers, Elder Valentine Wightman, about a year since, came into this State with his Staff, and now we are surrounded with his bands; this is the Lord's doings & it is marvellous in our eyes. Dear Brethren, let us cultivate the vine about our hearts till we shall all be transplanted from our Garden to the Garden of our God above. We will continue our correspondence with you, for the fruit of the vine and a three fold cord is not quickly broken.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

REUBEN PALMER
ASA SPALDING

1804.