

**Minutes of the Annual
North Carolina
(Bethel) Conference**



1829



**Transcribed for the
Free Will Baptist
Historical Collection
By Robert E. Picirilli**

Minutes of the Annual N.C. (Bethel) Conference, 1829

Editorial Note: in the following, the material in regular typeface appears both in *History of the Free Will Baptists of North Carolina* by Harrison and Barfield and in *The Morning Star* for February 24, 1830. The material in bold italic typeface appears only in *The Morning Star*. The latter source is much fuller and appears to be complete.

It is not clear the name “Bethel Conference” was being used at the time; see the minutes for the following year. In *The Morning Star*, the heading reads simply, “Minutes of the Free-Will Baptist annual Conference of North Carolina, held at Bay River on the 5th, 6th, and 7th, and 8th of November, 1829.” The heading of the circular letter also uses the same name.

Thursday, Nov. 5th, 1829

At 12 o'clock, Elder Elias Hutchins, by request, introduced the services, and delivered the introductory sermon, from Acts 11th Chap. 22d and 23d Verses: “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

After which, the Conference organized, and proceeded to business: Elder Isaac Pipkin, Moderator, and Thomas Hood, Clerk.

On motion, Thomas Moore and Emanuel Jarman were appointed a Committee of Finance, to receive contributions, settle with the Treasurer, and report to Conference.

Voted, to adjourn to Friday morning, 10 o'clock.

Friday, Nov. 6th

Prayer by Elder Hern.

On motion, the letters from the several churches were handed in, and read, and from their contents it appeared that there were belonging to the Conference, 26 churches of 1232 communicants; and that contributions had been made by the several churches to the amount of \$29,60.

Elders Gunter and Hays, messengers from the Christian Baptist Conference in Chatham county, North Carolina, attended this meeting, and were joyfully received.

On motion, Elders Hearn and Heath were appointed messengers to the next Christian Baptist Conference, to be held at Goshen church,¹ Sampson county, to begin on Friday before the first Lord's day in October next.

We will proceed to give the record of this Conference, held at Bay River, Nov. 6th, 7th and 8th, 1829.²

On motion, Eld. Elias Hutchins was desired to prepare a circular letter, on a subject of his own choice, to be attached to these minutes.

The Committee of Finance reported as follows:

<i>The Treasury</i>	<i>Dr.</i>
<i>To balance in the fund last year</i>	<i>\$49.62</i>
<i>Received in contributions this year</i>	<i>29.60</i>
<i>Amount</i>	<i>\$79.22</i>
<i>Contra Cr.</i>	
<i>Paid for printing last year's Minutes</i>	<i>\$12.00</i>
<i>Given to the Meeting-House in Newbern</i>	<i>25.00</i>
<i>Divided between Utley and Murphy.....</i>	<i>5.00</i>
<i>Given to Elder Alfin.....</i>	<i>6.00</i>
	<i>48.00</i>
<i>Balance in the fund</i>	<i>31.22</i>

Thomas Moore,
Emanuel Jarman

¹ Where Harrison and Barfield say "Goshen church," *The Morning Star* has "Goshen M. H." presumably for "Goshen Meeting House."

² This was probably an explanatory statement by Harrison and Barfield rather than a part of the minutes.

On motion by Eld. Heath, the Conference divided ten dollars out of the general fund, between Elders Gunter and Hays.

Resolved, that twenty copies of these minutes be forwarded to Eld. Frederick Fonville.

Ordered, that 500 copies of these minutes be printed and distributed as usual.

On motion, seven dollars, out of the general fund, were presented to Eld. Hutchins.

Elders Dixon, Hearn and Heath were selected to preach on the morrow, commencing at 11 o'clock.

Elders Gunter and Hutchins were appointed to preach on Sunday, beginning at 10 o'clock.

Voted, that the next Annual Conference be held at Grimsley church, in Greene county, near Snow Hill and that it commence at 12 o'clock on Thursday before the 2nd Lord's day in November next.

Eld. Howel Hearn is requested to deliver the Introductory sermon, and on his failure, Elder James Moore.

Voted to adjourn to time and place, of next Conference.

Prayer by Elder Hutchins; and the Conference rose.

Saturday, Nov. 7th

Elder Dixon introduced the services, and preached from Revelation, the 21st Chap. 27th Verse: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Elder Hearn followed, from Ecclesiastes, 11th Chap. 4th Verse: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

Elder Hutchins, by request, concluded, from Jeremiah, the 8th Chap. and 22d verse: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

A large congregation attended, and the word of salvation was dispensed with zeal and faithfulness, and we trust a blessing will ensue.

Lord's Day

Elder Gunter introduced the services, and preached from Revelation, the 20th Chap. 11th and 12th Verses:—"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works."

Elder Hutchins concluded, from 2d Corinthians, 5th Chap. 13th, 19th, and 20th Verses:—"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

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."

In conclusion, it affords us the utmost pleasure to state, that this session was closed in a manner happily calculated to cement its members together in the bonds of brotherly love. A general attendance was given; the weather was very pleasant; and the congregation, for that section, was large and well affected: sinners were solemnly warned of their danger; and we do sincerely pray that the labors of the meeting may be a blessing to the inhabitants of Bay River.

Elders, Ministers, and Preachers, in Fellowship.

<i>Frederick Fonville,</i>	<i>Reading Moore,</i>
<i>Isaac Pipkin,</i>	<i>Jesse Hawaris,</i>
<i>Levi Braxton,</i>	<i>James Moore,</i>
<i>Jesse Heath,</i>	<i>Robert Bond</i>
<i>Jeremiah Heath,</i>	<i>Everet Davis,</i>
<i>Jesse Braxton,</i>	<i>John Gurganous,</i>
<i>James Price,</i>	<i>William Lathum,</i>
<i>Caleb Spivy,</i>	<i>Howel Hern,</i>
<i>John Creekman,</i>	<i>Samuel Modlen,</i>
<i>Briant C. Wood,</i>	<i>Roderick Powel,</i>
<i>Richard Witherington,</i>	<i>Jacob Utley,</i>
<i>Brinson Hollace,</i>	<i>Enoch Cobb,</i>
<i>Mark Andrews,</i>	<i>Jedidiab Dixon,</i>
<i>Jeremiah Rowe,</i>	<i>Thomas Reaves,</i>
<i>Henry Smith,</i>	<i>Daniel Daughety,</i>
<i>Jesse Alfin,</i>	<i>Wilson Daniels,</i>
<i>Nathaniel Lockhart,</i>	
<i>Isaac Pipkin, Moderator,</i>	
<i>Thomas Hood, Clerk.</i>	

A Circular Letter

The following is a circular letter, addressed to the churches composing the Free Will Baptist Annual Conference, N. C., by Elder Elias Hutchins:³

Dear Brethren, We would invite your attention to the all-important question—How shall we live in this world, so as to live in heaven? However indifferent to this subject may be the unbeliever, those who believe in a future state of happiness and misery, must feel deeply interested in it, as it is a subject with which their eternal destiny is immediately connected. A question of such vast importance demands a serious reply. In attempting to answer it, we wish to be directed by a sure guide, the unerring Word of God, which points out the way for us to live on earth, so as to dwell with Christ in heaven.

Reason and philosophy would lead us into wide extremes, far from the true path that leads to endless bliss: but since life and immortality are brought to light, we have, clearly revealed, what God requires of us as rational and intelligent beings; also, what may be obtained, and enjoyed, if we do the will of our Heavenly Father.

It is certain, that if we would dwell at last in heaven, we must obey the commands of God as he has revealed them in his word. Yet, we know the liability of mankind to err, with respect to doing the will of God. Many, at the present day, led by the impulse of their own feelings, vainly suppose that all impressions on their minds, however inconsistent, are made by the Spirit of God, and ought to be obeyed. Hence, such scruple not to lay aside the word of God, as the rule of life, and substitute their own mistaken notions. Such are often led into wild extravagance, and far from the path that leads to life. To avoid such evils, all that would live for heaven, must live as the Scriptures direct and have their experience according to the same. They not only point out the wretched state of man, but also his remedy: and those that obtain the

³ The wording of this introduction to the letter is by Harrison and Barfield.

forgiveness of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are “filled with all the fulness of God,” and live a life of practical holiness, exemplifying the temper of the Gospel, may be said to live on earth so as to be prepared to live in heaven.

It may possibly be the case that many do belong to a christian life, and vainly imagine that they are fit subjects for heaven, when they have not one Scriptural qualification for the kingdom of God. They do not expect a forgiveness of sin in this life, but, presuming on the mercies of their Maker, they dream that they may live and die in sin, and at last dwell in heaven. Such, we must suppose, have not learned the first principles of religions. Others, though they profess to believe in the necessity of pardon to qualify them for heaven, yet, by their lives, practically declare that they are living “without hope, and without God in the world.” Alas! the conduct of such plainly shows that they have no reason to expect a residence in heaven.

Some, also, among those that had been justified by faith, and had found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, have again been brought into bondage, so as to disgrace their profession, or at least to depart in their hearts from the living God. Let all such be assured, that “their latter end is worse than the beginning,” and consequently, they are unqualified for heaven.

The real follower of Christ, who has the knowledge of sins forgiven, and who is pressing towards the kingdom, will delight in the word of God, and meditate thereon day and night. He will search the Scriptures to find out the way to heaven; and the more holy he is, the more he will love the word of God, and desires to be conformed to it. Nor is he above his teachers, or too wise to be taught. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, the language of his heart is: teach me, that I may understand the will of God, and do it. Such will also show, by their tempers and disposition, that they are meek and lowly in heart: and that love to God and man is the ruling principle of their souls.

Their experience affords them a constant support; and through faith, and a well grounded hope, they anticipate the joys of a future world. To be prepared, then, to live in heaven, we must be fit to live on earth; or, in other words, we must be christians in deed and in truth; always living in reference to the eternal world; having, at all times, the glory of God in view; and we must also “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Such may depart in peace, having seen the salvation of the Lord, and they will dwell, at last, in that “house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

The following churches composed the Bethel Conference: North East, Duplin Co., Beaver Creek, Jones Co., Louson Swamp, Wheat Swamp and Bethel, Lenoir Co., Stony Creek, Orange Co; Clay Root, Gum Swamp and Tar River, Pitt Co., Little Creek and Grimesly, Green Co., Stony Branch, Bachelor’s Creek, Spring Creek, Little Swift Creek, Bay River, Brice’s Creek, Beard’s Creek, Newbern and Piney Neck, Craven Co.; Pungo, Beaver Dam and North Creek, Beaufort Co., Long Ridge, Washington Co., Indian Spring, Wayne Co., Sumter District, South Carolina.⁴

From the editor: this composite set of minutes was prepared by Robert E. Picirilli from the two sources indicated:

1 *History of the Free Will Baptists of North Carolina* (1897?), by T. F. Harrison and J. M. Barfield, pp. 197-202;

2 *The Morning Star*, February 24, 1830: a copy can be found in Envelope AW-14 of the Free Will Baptist Historical Collection, with the letters of Elias Hutchins printed in that periodical. I have made few editorial changes in punctuation and correcting typographical errors.

⁴ This paragraph was apparently composed by Harrison and Barfield (and does not appear in *The Morning Star*). It was not part of the original minutes, but there might have been a statistical table of the churches from which they drew the information.

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