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# ADDRESS

FROM THE

BAPTIST CHURCH,

IN

PHILADELPHIA,

TO THEIR

SISTER CHURCHES

OF THE SAME DENOMINATION,

THROUGHOUT THE

CONFEDERATED STATES

OF

NORTH AMERICA.

DRAWN UP BY A COMMITTEE OF THE CHURCH,  
APPOINTED FOR SAID PURPOSE.

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PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY ROBERT AITKEN, AT POPE'S HEAD,  
THREE DOORS ABOVE THE COFFEE HOUSE, IN MARKET STREET.  
M.DCC.LXXXI.

ADVERTISEMENT.

OF Reverend *William Rogers* in Second Street, Two Doors above Vine-Street, may be had the *History of the Baptists in New-England*, 1st. Vol: by the Reverend Mr. *Bac- kus*; and a Pamphlet by the same Au- thor, shewing, that “policy as well “ as honesty forbids the use of secu- “ lar force in religious affairs” Like- wise may be had of Mr. *Rogers*, and Mr. *Robert Aitken*, Bookseller in Mar- ket-Street, Three Doors above the Coffee-House, the *Baptist Confession of Faith and Church Discipline*. Also of Mr. *Aitken* may be had, Dr. *Croxall’s* Fables, Art of Speaking, the Bap- tist and other *Catechisms*, *Watt’s* Psalms and Hymns, New-Testament, *Dilworth’s* Spelling Books, New- England Primers, &c. &c.

Miss Hilditch  
nc Kesson

Early Pam. No. 8

# AN ADDRESS, &c.

FRIENDS and BRETHREN!

**T**HAT we are under the necessity of presenting to you and the world the following Narrative, gives us pain. As a Church we have been the subject of much conversation, and are fully convinced, that it is a duty which we owe *ourselves* as well as *others*, to lay before you a short detail of those proceedings, which, we have reason to believe, will receive the approbation of ALL, who profess to know the truth, as it is in Jesus.

We mention with real sorrow, that, for several years past, we have been destitute of a fixed ministry among us. Our dependance for supplying the pulpit has chiefly been on those, who are settled in the adjacent churches, and such as occasionally, in the course of their travels, visit this city. Of the latter number is Mr. *Elbanan Winchester*, a native of Massachusetts Bay, New England; who, the beginning of October last, came as a Messenger from the *Warren Association* to *our's*, which was then nigh at hand. Many of our members having, previous to this, repeatedly heard him preach, not the least suspicion existed but that he continued an advocate for that *faith*, which we look upon as the *faith once delivered to the Saints*. Accordingly, at a meeting for business the 9th of said month, it was agreed to use our best endeavours to prevail on him to stay, and preach for us a limited time. In two or three days after this, the Reverend *Oliver Hart* arrived in town from South Carolina;

we were therefore, from many considerations, prevented doing any thing decisive, until the 23d; when, at an assembly both of the church and congregation, it was, by the majority then present, deemed most consistent with the resolution of the 9th, (a deviation therefrom carrying with it the appearance of injustice) to give Mr. Winchester an invitation to tarry with us, during the space of one year: Being waited upon, and made acquainted with the circumstances attending the choice, he answered, <sup>16</sup> That he was sorry we were not entirely unanimous therein; but, nevertheless, consented to supply our pulpit for six months at least, and longer; if *every thing* should prove agreeable.\* and so forth. Thus having, as we had good reason to expect, a person of sound principles to go in and out before us, what felicity, what comfort did we not promise ourselves? emerging, as it were, from a state of long stupidity into activity and becoming zeal! --- But alas! how we have been disappointed, how imposed upon, the sequel will show.

*Popular applause*, the idol which too many worship, was soon discovered to be an object zealously sought for, and courted by Mr. Winchester: To accomplish this, persons were every week *hastily* admitted to baptism, upon the slightest examination; though we really believe, that among the number are several sincere Christians, who, during this season of trial, have not been ashamed openly to discountenance *his* errors. Various *innovations* (contrary to our established discipline) were introduced through *his* means; the church undertook a *reform*; in some respects, success attended us;

\* It becometh all the churches, as they would avoid trouble, seriously to enquire of every itinerant preacher, previous to their admission into the sacred desk, whether or not they have proper credentials, letters of dismission, recommendation, &c. 2 Cor. iii. 1.

us; in others, an obstinate adherence marked *his* character.

The principal foundation of the greatest uneasiness we shall now proceed to consider.---Early in the winter it was whispered to a few, that Mr. Winchester (notwithstanding his artful endeavours to conceal the same in his public discourses\*) held the doctrine of a final restoration of bad men and angels from hell; that the whole of Adam's progeny, yea the devils themselves, at certain different periods, would be delivered from their torment, and made completely happy; in other words, that he peremptorily denied the endless duration or perpetuity of future punishment. The method taken by him, at first, to propagate this wicked tenet, was by "creeping into houses, and leading captive persons of weak capacities," wherein he met with too much encouragement: Alarmed at this authenticated report, he was, at different times, privately conversed with on the subject, by several of the members;---he did not presume to contradict it fully, and yet his confession was, by no means, satisfactory: Upon these occasions he would frequently intimate his intention of *going away*, provided the smallest division took place on his account; while at the same juncture, as opportunity served, he failed not to use arguments in order to gain proselytes. Such conduct gave an early disgust to several, who, leaving their seats among us, went elsewhere to worship God.---Ruin began to stare us in the face! Hereupon many of the brethren, in a church capacity, called upon Mr. Winchester; and, with affectionate concern, intreated him, in case he held so dangerous

\* His sermons being generally on the *universal* plan, though couched in *particular* phrases, soon created, in the penetrating hearer, a jealousy that the preacher was somehow wrong, and not sufficiently *honest* to declare his real meaning.

dangerous a sentiment, by no means to promulgate it as it was totally repugnant to our principles: He acknowledged his holding the sentiment, but promised he would not advance it in public, without the church's approbation.\* Contrary to *their* expectation, and *his* verbal engagement, he not long after, at different times and sundry places, spake openly and explicitly thereupon, to the grief of some and injury of others, as numbers can testify. Matters began now to wear a serious appearance; we were reduced to the sad dilemma of either declaring as a people, against Mr. Winchester and his principles, or, by remaining silent, give the whole christian world sufficient reason to deem us an *apostate* church. The glory of God, and the good of Zion, speedily determined our choice. Pursuant therefore to our resolution, the whole affair was introduced on March the 5th, (our monthly meeting day.) Much debating ensued, the church got divided; when, finding nothing satisfactory could be done, the following protest was suddenly drawn up, and entered in our church register for those to sign, who were anxious to preserve their ancient system---

“ *Whereas*, the doctrine of the universal restoration of bad men and angels, in the fullest extent, has, for a considerable time, privately, and of late more publicly, been introduced among us, and is now openly avowed by some of the members, to the great disorder and confusion of our church, and wounding the hearts of many of the brethren, contrary to our Confession of Faith.---WE, whose names are under written, do, in the most solemn manner, from real conviction of duty, seriously

\* Immediately upon this acknowledgment, had we reflected on our own discipline, we *should* have forbid his preaching any more among us, notwithstanding *his* promises; but, without suitable consideration, he was *still* permitted to occupy our pulpit.

seriously protest against the same, as a most dangerous heresy." (Signed by sixty-seven, and others daily expected.)

Mr. Winchester's adherents being *rather* the most numerous, out-voted us on a motion now made, viz. that of appointing a committee to wait on and inform *him*, that he could not, with any propriety, be admitted to preach any more for *us*, on account of his departure from our adopted Confession of Faith. The *protesters*, conscious of having truth and justice on their side, viewed themselves as authorized to *act* independent of this *new* made party. Consequently, after the church was dismissed, two of our brethren were nominated to call upon Mr. Winchester, make him acquainted with our protest, assign the reasons, and request him to desist preaching any longer in our pulpit. Two days having elapsed, they reported, that they had failed seeing Mr. Winchester, though they had, for that purpose, been at his lodgings twice, and, after the first time, left word for *him* to be at home against the second. They then wrote and transmitted him the following letter.

“ SIR, Philadelphia, March 7th, 1781.

“ THE doctrine of the universal restoration of bad men and angels from hell, was considered and protested against, at our meeting for business, on Monday last, by a large number of members---We have it in charge from them to inform you, that it is their request, that you decline preaching any more in our meeting house, on account of your holding and publishing the said doctrine---We waited on you both last evening and this evening, for this purpose, but did not meet with you.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

“ N. B. We will wait on you in a few days, }  
and pay you what may be coming to you, on }  
behalf of the church.”

Thomas Shields.  
John M<sup>r</sup> Kim.”

Desirous

Desirous undoubtedly of manifesting a singular slight and contempt towards the aggrieved part of the church, he returned this letter *unopened*. The keys of the meeting house being, through a special instance of *Providence*, in our custody, were demanded from us by our opponents, but we refused to deliver them up; hereupon they *broke open*, and took *forcible* possession of our place of worship. This happened on Thursday, March the 8th. Regardless of the *confusion*, Mr. Winchester preached that evening; and the ensuing Sabbath, had the presumption to administer the Lord's supper. An alteration of the original lock, and procuring a *new key*, has hitherto enabled them to maintain their *illegal tenure*, which, from a variety of circumstances, we are sensible, can be but of short duration.

Such harsh proceedings, on *their* side, did not obstruct *our* intended proposals for reconciliation on *just* principles; a committee of five were chosen, to be ready upon the shortest notice, "To explain our conduct, obviate difficulties, and to take whatever measures might be deemed expedient for reclaiming *those who had gone out of the way*, and compromising the difference." On these heads nothing was done, as they discovered no disposition to meet us.

The *prospect* of peace and harmony still getting removed to a greater distance, and our situation becoming more and more disagreeable, it was judged best to invite some of our neighbouring ministers to pay us a visit, that we might obtain the benefit of their counsel. Pursuant to request, the following gentlemen gratified us with their presence, at our general church meeting, on Monday, April the 2d, viz. Revd. Messrs. Oliver Hart, Samuel Jones, Joseph Powell, David Jones, William



William Van Horne and John Boggs.---But, in consequence of an unbecoming opposition made to their continuing with us, by John Drinker, (then a member) they thought it prudent to withdraw for a little while, and leave us by ourselves.

After much time was spent, to no purpose, in needless debating, Mr. Wincheſter's party finally conſented, that the miniſters be called in, on condition, that one of them was willing to undertake a *diſpute* with Mr. Wincheſter, on his *favourite* tenet. The perſon nominated to diſcuſs or argue the point, waved the matter, upon the ground of it's being *totally* improper and unprecedented; that it could answer no valuable purpoſe, and would be *injurious* to us, as a body of Chriſtians, to allow ſuch a deviation from our *eſtabliſhed* diſcipline, as to admit, in a *church* capacity, any thing to be ſaid in favour of a ſentiment, which *our articles* knew nothing about; in ſo *juſt* an opinion he was immediately ſupported by the other miniſters, and all the proteſters.\*

Mr. Wincheſter was now asked, whether he did fully hold the doctrine of *the univerſal reſtoration of bad men and angels from hell*, as it had been reported; to which, after ſome heſitation, he replied in the affirmative, "and that he was ready, at all times, to declare it, whenever called upon for that purpoſe."

A little

\* Ungenerous to the laſt degree, Mr. Wincheſter's followers have reſented to the *credulous*, that none of the *miniſters*, who favoured us with their company, durſt venture to attack *him*. Their own conſciences muſt diſtate, that ſuch inſinuations are deſtitute of *truth*; a crime which, probably *they* imagine, will require but a very ſhort period in *purgatory*, to atone for.

Mr. Wincheſter and his friends are hereby informed, that, excluſive of thoſe who are more publickly *ſet for a defence of the goſpel*, there is not a ſingle perſon *now* in union with us, who is in the leaſt afraid to evidence *his or her* zeal, againſt every *error*, particularly ſo obnoxious a one as that *preached* by Satan to the Mother of us all. Gen. iii. 4. "And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, ye ſhall not ſurely die."

A little while after this, pursuant to recommendation, all those, who denied so *dangerous an heresy*, withdrew to the gallery of the meeting house; the others remained below stairs; the division was nearly equal. The protesters having now a favourable opportunity, asked advice of the ministers present, *who*, after consulting together, concluded it best for us to *motion*, that a committee should be chosen by each party, to meet in conjunction with *them* at nine o'clock the next morning, with a view of devising such measures, as might prove adequate towards settling the difference. The proposal being made, was unanimously adopted. The committee chosen on behalf of the protesters, were Samuel Miles, Esq; Rev. William Rogers, Thomas Shields, John M'Kim and David Bowen; by the opposite party, Messrs. John Drinker, Edward Middleton, Ezekiel Merriam, Griffith Levering and John Conneley---who were instructed to report their proceedings to the church the next evening.

The respective committees having met with the *ministers*, at the appointed hour, fell instantly into their *usual* mode of debating; they then, without a *dissenting* voice, agreed to leave the *ministers* by themselves, in order for their advising with each other, and giving their opinion on the subject of *difference* in writing. The committees being called in, the following was read, and delivered them, viz.

“ *Philadelphia, 3d April, 1781.*

“ WE, the subscribers, being called upon by the Baptist church in this place, to give our advice and counsel to a committee, chosen by the contending parties in said church, respecting what may be best to be done in their present unhappy situation, *are of opinion*, that the Confession of Faith *adopted* by the Baptist

Baptist Churches of the Association, usually meeting annually at Philadelphia, contains a summary of gospel truths *received by us*, as a denomination of Christians: That the doctrine of the *universal restoration of bad men and angels from hell*, is a *fundamental* deviation from the above articles of Faith: That *those* of the said church, who have adopted the said *error*, have departed from the *foundation principles* of the Baptist society; and, That *those* of the said church, who have *PROTESTED* against the above erroneous doctrine, ARE THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN THIS PLACE.

“ And whereas, Mr. *Elhanan Winchester* did yesterday, before the church, and in our presence, *acknowledge* his holding the above mentioned error; HE OUGHT, therefore, to be *DISMISSED* from farther services in *this church*; and we also recommend to them, to seek other supplies without delay, as the most probable means of restoring peace and order in the church.

Signed, *Oliver Hart.*  
*Samuel Jones.*  
*David Jones.*  
*William Van Horne.*  
*John Boggs.”\**

The committee, on behalf of the protesters, were for adopting this advice, and recommending it to the church for that purpose, as the only plan of union. The committee, for the opposite party, objected thereunto: However, in the evening, at our adjourned *general meeting*, the *whole* was read; when, to our no small surprize, Mr. *Winchester's* adherents *affected* to

\* The Rev. Mr. Powell's name not appearing here, was owing to his *necessary* absence on public business. Previous to his leaving town, he sent us a letter, testifying his hearty approbation of what had been done, and concluding with a declaration of *his* being determined to “ countenance, encourage and support us, to the utmost of his power as the regular Baptist Church of Philadelphia.”

to treat this short but salutary counsel, with *seeming disdain*, and *laboured* to talk largely on the independence of churches, &c. Several proposals, on this disagreeable occasion, were made by us, having respectively *peace and good order* for their object; all of which were rejected, without their assigning any *substantial* reason.

Willing to "let our moderation be known unto all men," we met them once more as BROTHERS, on the afternoon of April the 9th; when it was moved and seconded, "That the whole matter in dispute be referred to any number of members, belonging to our associated sister churches, each party choosing equally the persons---or, provided it was most agreeable to them, to leave it to any number of our associated ministers, they might choose the whole."

They did not see fit to comply with either. They were then affectionately and earnestly exhorted to consent, that Mr. Winchester should be dismissed, and to join in the election of an impartial, orthodox pastor, with whom ALL might unite.---This request (though enforced with the most pressing solicitation, as the *only* likely mode that could be adopted to prevent an *open separation*) was immediately opposed with much warmth and *assumed* importance, asserting, "That if we meant to make *their* keeping Mr. Winchester, the *cause* of separation, that SEPARATE WE MUST; for to keep him they were fully determined, AT ALL EVENTS."

Hereupon a worthy member arose and said, "That inasmuch as Mr. Winchester's adherents had refused paying any due attention to our repeated, reasonable propositions, and appearing resolutely bent to counteract our good intentions,---that, as an individual, he could

could not think it right to meet *them* again, as members in communion with *us*, since they had imbibed a doctrine so contrary to the plainest texts of Scripture, and *totally* repugnant to *our* Confession of Faith." It was further added; "That he looked upon the PROTESTERS, as the Baptist Church in this city; and, provided *they* were *all* of his opinion, *they* would, in *every* respect, act accordingly; making known, at the same time, *our* readiness to receive again into christian fellowship all those who returned unto *us* with penitent dispositions." This declaration, however *solemn*, was absolutely necessary---Sensible of it's propriety, it was (after being enlarged upon by another solid member) motioned to the protesters, to signify their approbation or disapprobation thereof.-----The FORMER they UNANIMOUSLY testified by RISING.

Every judicious person, from a review of our whole conduct, must confess, that we were on our side, reluctantly compelled to pronounce an *open and full separation*. We could not, in conscience, consider the favourers and supporters of so dangerous a principle, as any longer belonging to our body. The foregoing publication of our ministers, the express injunctions in our Treatise on Discipline, an absolute conviction of duty, the writings of *all* good men on subjects of the like nature, but, above all, the ORACLES OF HEAVEN justify our proceedings in this particular. Vide 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 2 Theff. iii. 6. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. Chap. vi. 3---5. Titus iii. 10.

Thus, dear brethren, have we given you a brief detail of matters of fact, as they occurred from the commencement of our trouble, until the day of an entire *separation*.---From which period, we view ourselves to be the TRUE Baptist Church in this city; and have

have already, in that capacity, transacted such business as came before us, and mean, through divine assistance, to persevere therein. We do not indulge the least doubt, but that all of you, without exception, will, after perusing this authentic relation, readily acquiesce in what we have done, and accordingly determine to *countenance and encourage us*, as much as in you lies. As a testimony that you do really sympathize with us, in our distressed and much injured situation, we earnestly entreat for an interest in your prayers, at the throne of grace,

That there should be any occasion for our addressing you in this public manner, on so melancholy a subject, is cause of much sorrow; but a regard for your and our future happiness forbids our silence.---Hereby,

1st. Our sister churches, throughout the United States, will find sufficient inducement to be upon their guard, lest they may be *deceived*, as we have been, by encouraging a MAN, whose design has invariably been to subvert the souls of our people, under the external appearance and profession of *superabounding meekness and love*. Eph. iv. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

2dly. All other christian societies of every denomination will, in consequence of this necessary publication, be fully convinced, that, as BAPTISTS, we, by no means, acknowledge *Elhanan Winchester* as a preacher of our order; but hold *him* forth, as a notorious deviator from the leading doctrines of the Gospel--otherwise we might, with too much reason, be liable to continual reflection, and have *no body* to blame but *ourselves*.

Throughout this performance, we have carefully avoided saying any thing argumentatively against the doctrine of *universal restoration* itself: As a Church,

we are established in our faith, and do unfeignedly reject it, as contrary to the tenour of the Gospel in general, and introductive of every species of licentiousness, by striking at the very root of all religion. Other *crude* notions have been, and continue to be broached by Mr. Winchester, from time to time, contrary to the common opinions of the professors of christianity in general; but as they have not been considered by us as a church, we mean not to enumerate them: A sufficient acquaintance with *mystical* enthusiasm will unfold the whole.

We shall likewise, in this place, omit commenting upon Mr. Winchester's repeatedly intimating his intention of leaving the church, upon the *first* discovery of *any* even the *smallest* uneasiness about *him*, and *his* curious and singular behaviour *since*: The whole viewed together, carries with it *at least* an apparent contradiction. The Church, notwithstanding the torrent of opposition she had to stem, confiding in her just and righteous undertaking, sent, without delay, for a person of sound faith, to supply our pulpit.--- On the 3d instant he arrived, and has preached among us the two last Lord's days, to general acceptation.--- And, though Mr. Winchester's party still *presume* to defend their *usurped* claim, our fixed determination is, in case of any interruption, to sue for that protection, which the laws of this state are bound to yield us.

However disgusting this narrative may prove to some, we choose, nevertheless, to discharge our duty, in giving suitable warning; or else, in all probability, "The blood of many that perish, may be required at our hands."

We shall conclude with a quotation from an excellent sermon preached at New York, by the Reverend Gilbert Tennent, in the year 1742.

" Seeing

“ Seeing the truths of Christ are a most valuable and sacred depositum, transmitted to us through much expence of labour and of blood, it would be base, ignoble and ungrateful in us, to lose them, through sordid negligence and indifferency; or to suffer them, through cowardice, to be betrayed and undermined by *impostors*, without signifying our sorrow for the injury, and attempting to make some defence.

“ Forasmuch as the church of Christ is begirt with numerous enemies of *various* forms; enemies *open* and *secret*, who labour almost incessantly, either by force or *fraud*, to *corrupt* her in her principles; it is of the last necessity to be constantly upon our guard, and especially in a time of public and *epidemical infection*, lest we be *betrayed* into the labyrinths of error and mistake, BY THE PLAUSIBLE PRETENCES OF SEDUCERS.”

That the supreme JEHOVAH, the God of all truth, may direct us all into the paths of *truth* and *holiness*, and through his grace preserve us therein, while we tabernacle here below; and finally translate us into his own eternal kingdom of joy and rest, where *nothing* shall be admitted to disturb the *Church triumphant*; is, dear Brethren, the sincere prayer of Your's in the best of bonds.

Signed on behalf of the whole,

SAMUEL MILES,

WILLIAM ROGERS,

THOMAS SHIELDS,

JOHN M'KIM,

} Committee.

Philadelphia, May 14, 1781.

P. S. Since the foregoing Narrative went to the press, we think it our duty to inform you, that the *Church* are *again* in possession of their *meeting house*, and mean to make use of every *prudent* method to secure the same against the *illegal* pretences of the *Universalists*.