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Baptists. Maine. Bowdoinham Association, 1792.

Minutes of ... October 3d & 4th, M, DCC, XCII.

Boston, Edes, 1792. 13 pp.

AAS copy.

MINUTES

OF THE

BOWDOINHAM ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT

BOWDOIN,

OCTOBER 3d & 4th,

M,DCC,XCII.

Boston, Printed by EDDES & SON,

M,DCC,XCII.

1892

MINUTES, &c.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1792.

1. **A**T one o'clock, P. M. Elder Isaac Case preached an introductory Sermon, from Matt. ix. 38. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

2. Chose brother Case, Moderator, and brother Joshua Young, Clerk.

3. Read letters from the Churches, and took an account of the Members that have been added, dismissed, died and excluded the last Year; and the present number belonging to each Church.

N. B. Ordained Ministers Names in SMALL CAPITALS. Licenced Preachers in *Italics*. This mark * denotes Absence. From Churches mark'd thus † we had no Letter. Dashes — denote that they have no ordained Elder.

Churches.	Messengers.	Added.	Dismiss.	Died.	Exclud.	No.
Bowdoinham,	JOE MACOMBER, Joshua Baley, Charles Curtis, <i>Joshua Young,</i>	1	1		1	29
† Harpswell,	* ELISHA SNOW, <i>Samuel Woodward,</i>	3		1	1	52
† Thomastown,	Samuel Sweetland,					122
Bowdoin,	JAMES POTTER, <i>Humphry Purinton,</i> <i>Joseph Dinflow,</i>	21				41
Vassalborough,	Nehemiah Gould, David Webb,	5		1		32
Balltown,	Solomon Potter, Nathan Baley,					19
Sidney,	<i>Lemuel Jackson,</i> <i>Asa Wilbur,</i>	15	5			32

Churches.	Messengers.	Added.	Dismissed.	Died.	Excluded.	No.
2d Bowdoin,	WILLIAM STINSON, James Shurtleff, Thomas Morgridge,	7		1		27
Hebron,	Job Cushman, William Bumpey,	18				31
Bucktown,	Nathan Chase,	4				21
N ^o . Four,	John Willis,					21
Lewistown,	Josiah Mitchel, Samuel Simmons,					55
Winthrop,	ISAAC CASE, William Briggs, John Cummings,					35
Sterling,	ELIPHALET SMITH, Joshua Walton,					30
Miscongus Island,	Barney Fountain,					19
Total,		51	27	3	1	566

N. B. The Church of Sidney, was called in our last minutes, the 2d in Vassalborough; and that of Hebron was called Shepherdsfield.—Note also, the five last mentioned Churches were received into union this Year.

4. Read letter and minutes from the New-Hampshire Association.—Messengers, Elder Simon Lock, and brother *Dudley Young*.

5. Chose brother *Humphry Purinton*, and brother *Samuel Flagg*, to prepare letters to the sister associations.

6. Adjourned till To-morrow Morning 9 o'clock.—Sermons in the Evening in different parts of the Town, by Elder Smith and brother *Cushman*.

Thursday October 4, Met according to Adjournment,

7. Read, revised, and adopted the circular letter prepared by brother *Flagg*.

8. Read, and approved the corresponding letter to the Sister Associations, prepared by Brother *Purinton*, and Brother *Flagg*.

9. Voted

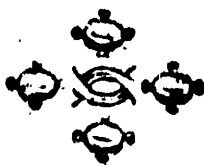
9. Voted, That Elder Potter, Elder Stinson, Elder Case, and brother *Joshua Young*, be our Messengers to the New-Hampshire Association. Chose Elder Isaac Case to prepare a Letter against next Year.

10. Agreed on the following supplies, viz. for Vassalborough, Elder Smith, 3d Lord's Day in December. Elder Macomber, 3d in February. And Elder Snow, 3d in June.—Balltown, Elder Smith, 4th Lord's Day in December. Elder Macomber, 4th in February. And Elder Snow 4th in June.—Sidney, Elder Case, 2d Lord's Day in December. Elder Macomber, 2d in February. Elder Snow 2d in June.—Hebron, Elder Potter 3d Lord's Day in November. Elder Stinson, 3d in March. Elder Macomber, 3d in June.—Bucktown, Elder Potter 2d Lord's Day in November. Elder Stinson 2d in March. Elder Macomber 2d in June.—No. Four, Elder Potter 4th Lord's Day in November. Elder Stinson 4th in March. Elder Macomber, 4th in June.

11. Chose brother *Samuel Woodward* to superintend printing the minutes.

12. Voted, That the Association manuscripts be kept in the care of brother *Humphry Purinton* of Bowdoin.

13. Voted, That this Association be held in Winthrop, the 4th Wednesday in August, at one o'clock, P. M. 1795.—Brother *Woodward* concluded by Prayer.



THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

WE take the liberty to depart from the usual form of a Circular Letter, and make a few observations upon the right reading of the *word of God*, and the evidences of true christian fellowship. Because many professors of religion in this day, wrest the *scriptures*, to the injuring of truth ! and others throw by the WCFD as a dead letter, and follow their vain imaginations as a *rule* of faith and practice.

Now one great reason of so many contrary opinions, and wrong explanations of the *sacred writings* (in the christian world) is, by not paying a careful and prayerful attention to what we read ; and the agreeable connection one part of *divine truth* has with the other, through the whole book of GOD. Therefore, that we may the better understand the voice of scripture when we *read* (in order to see the connection) so as to find the real *truth*, we ought to attend to the following general *Rules* :

1. When we attempt to read God's word, to put up fervent prayer in our hearts, that God would enlighten our understandings to see the truth, and give us a heart to receive it ; and a good judgment to judge, without bias, prejudice or partiality. 2. Then to observe, carefully, who speaks the subject you read. What is spoken of in the chapter, paragraph and verse you read. To whom it is all spoken or directed.

When this general *rule* is attended to, (with a blessing) we shall be led right in the reading of the scriptures, and be the better able to make up a good judgment of every chapter we read in the sacred volume !

Further,

Let it be observed, that as all scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16. what is written and left

left on sacred record, is as much the voice of God to us as it was to them to whom it was given ; and consequently of equal force. Yet there are some professors in the present day, who by way of contempt of the *word of God*, will say, “ Do you think that ink and paper is the word of God ; for our parts, we design to be led to Heaven by the Spirit, and not by ink and paper, or the writings of any set of men whatever ? ” But such persons ought to reflect, That it is by pen, ink and paper, and the use of proper words, that we come to learn in a literal way, that there ever was a Savior provided for fallen man. And a mariner may as well think to navigate a ship with safety, to foreign parts, without a compass, as a christian expect to please God—walk in duty—and arrive in heaven, without observing the written *word of God*. The *word* without the *spirit*, (we acknowledge) will not do, any more than the *spirit* without the *word*, where God in his providence has brought any person to the common means to be instructed in the *word*. Yet where the *word* is not attainable, the *spirit* is sufficient to lead souls to heaven without it : but where it is attainable, and the common means afforded, the *spirit* and the *word* must go together. And professors of religion, who throw by the *word of God*, and profess to be led by the *spirit*, without agreeing with the *written word*, have reason to suspect the *spirit* as not being the good *spirit* of God, as much as a seaman would have reason to suspect his compass not being good, while he endeavoured to steer the ship due *south*, and the badness of his compass varied so much as to run the ship quite a contrary point. Hence great care should be taken in reading our Bibles, that we remember who speaks to us therein. And though the voice of inspiration is handed down by Moses, David, the Prophets (and none will deny the Apostles) who were instrumental of conveying God's truth to us, by the use of pen, ink and paper.

And our pious, judicious, and learned translators, by the use of common, (but) authentic, well-examined, well-

well-approved, and sound words that cannot be condemned, whose meaning is the same as the original language out of which they were translated. And whose word when read and preached, has and does have a powerful effect upon the hearts of sinners by the *agency of the blessed spirit*, who inspired those that wrote the Old and New Testament : consequently the written word is the *rule* of faith and practice to all denominations of christians. The scriptures are canonized for the advantage and instruction of christians, as well to preserve God's mind and will to the end of time. They are a source of knowledge, never old, but always new to a gracious heart ; both in reading and hearing them preached.

Our learned translators, undoubtedly were moved by the spirit of God to translate the bible, from the copies of inspiration ; and to arrange them in order for the better understanding of the reader. Therefore they are put into *chapters* which contain several subjects, in general, somewhat different from each other. The next division is *paragraphs*, which contain perfect subject of itself, and sometimes has little or no connection with any thing that goes before or after it. The next is *verses*, which in general has a dependance one upon another for the truth of the subject. We ought also to attend to the contents of a chapter, for the better understanding of the whole. Then from the beginning of the chapter to the first paragraph, and all within that contains a complete subject, either of God, of saints, of sinners, of the circumstances of the church, or political matters : instance 19th Chap. Lev. and 23rd Matt. that have many divisions, and nearly all a different subject. Hence we see how it highly concerns all who read their bibles, to take notice of the connection that one part of truth has with another, to find the right meaning of the *word of God*. The voice of scripture is to different characters in different circumstances ; and unless we attend to this, we cannot understand aright. When
some

some read the word, they think the voice speaks to all without any kind of distinction, any more than sinners in general ; and this is the reason that so many preachers and professors of religion mix law and gospel, promises and threatnings, all together ; without ever dividing the word, and giving every one his portion in due season.

It is very evident, that there are two sorts of sinners spoken of in the scripture : The careless, carnal, dead sinner, and the sensible sinner who is made so by God's grace ; and among awakened sinners there are those who are made free in Jesus ; and those, who for holy and wise ends, are kept in bondage, without evidence of their adoption. And among sinners (who are dead as to spiritual life,) there are those who are more self-righteous than others ; and those who are openly wicked, vicious and abominable. Likewise in the church, there are those that are great backsliders, and appear like the world in their life and conversation, yet may be the children of God ; so there are christians in good standing, children in grace, young men and fathers ; and many rank hypocrites, who are as so many dead weights in the church of God.

Now to all these characters (and many more that might be mentioned) does the voice of scripture speak, in distinction to each other, which are to be attended to in the reading of the scriptures ; as well as the dedication of all the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude, the Revelations, and the history of the four Evangelists. For it is impossible to gain a right understanding of the sacred writings, unless we attend to these things ; for all scripture must be understood in its connection, to all sorts of characters, things, and circumstances, from the beginning of Genesis, to the end of the Apocalypse, and then we shall read without confusion.

To sinners dead in sin, the scripture speaks in threatening language, as in Job 28. 5—21. and 20. 5—29.

The voice to such characters is awful.————

————— Let it suffice to say, that nothing but threatening can be found to sinners in *Nature*, who are under the law and its curse. But to sensible sinners the voice of God is in all the invitations and promises, as in Isa. 55 chap. Rev. 22. 17. Matt. 5—12. chap. 7. 7—11, and many more that might be mentioned. To the self-righteous God speaks, by way of rejection, Matt. 5. 20. and Paul in all his writings batters down self-righteousness.—To young christians, the voice of God is by way of exhortation and caution ;—to all elder christians, by way of citation to steadfastness ;—and to all backsliders, by way of threatening, and promises of pardon when returned to their duty. Now if these distinctions are observed in reading or preaching the word, we shall read and judge right of eternal truth, and not mix all characters, things and circumstances together, and so confuse the whole.

Hence let every professor of religion attend strictly to their bibles, as the only sure guide, in the path of duty, and to eternal life. Moreover let them always examine the *spirit*, by which they are influenced in religion, by the oracles of eternal truth, (1 John 4. 1. Beloved believe not every spirit ; but try the spirits, whether they are of God, &c.) Some are for trying the spirit by the spirit, without the law or the testimony ; this is to measure and compare themselves by themselves, who, the scripture says ; are not wise, 1 Cor. 10. 12. But how shall any try the spirit, by which they are influenced in religion ? only by the *word of God*, which was *wrote* by that spirit that takes of the things of Jesus, and shews them unto his people, John 16. 14.—It is a natural principle, that all things tend to their own centre ; and also very observable, that every spirit loves its own image ; as for instance, one drunkard loves another, and every swearing spirit its likeness : so also thro' every species of vice. All nations are tenacious of their own religion, and love the company that is most like themselves : hence the old maxim is true,

true, & "Birds of a feather flock together." Now a man may love another, barely because he is of his turn of thinking, and not be actuated by the true spirit of God. A Mehometan may love a Mehometan, because he thinks as he does, yet have spite and malice enough in him, to stone a real christian to death. A Roman may love a Roman, only because he goes to Mass on holy-days; yet can indulge himself in all kinds of debaucheries, lewdness and abomination. A Churchman may love one of his own sect, only because he keeps Christmas, instead of Thanksgiving; yet they can celebrate Christmas eve with dancing, frolicking, and all kinds of ludicrous mirth, so as to make their lives appear more the worshippers of Baal than Christ. One of the National Religion, may love one of the same, barely because he brings up his children to the *christening* altar; yet the next week after (if not the next day) will break the covenant, and help his older children to blaspheme that worthy name by which they were called.

A friend may love a friend, only because he maintains some peculiarities in his dress, & uses the scripture language; yet reject many of the fundamentals of true religion as great absurdities. A Baptist may love a Baptist, only because he is so; and yet be destitute of the true love of God, which is requisite to constitute a real christian.

A Universalist may love one of his turn of thinking, only because he has embraced so benevolent a plan, as to believe that God is all mercy and love; consequently will save all men in spite of their teeth; yet, in general, will live the most abandoned, atrocious, abominable lives, in order to requite the Deity for his benevolence in their salvation.

A freewiller may love a freewiller, only for the reason that he holds, That the conscience of man is the Spirit of God, teaching every man to profit withal; and so at last to work themselves into the image of a christian.

And

And they can put *Law* and *Gospel*, promises and threatenings into one sentence, as belonging to one character; and make a person to be under the law, and without the law; an unbeliever, and yet well taught by the spirit of God,—a saint, and yet a sinner; a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next—sure of heaven, and yet not sure of persevering to it. And what is more strange than all, can sin away the day of grace, and yet have a self-determining power to make the day of grace their own, at what period they please. A Deist may love a Deist, only because he confesses man is so noble a creature as to be able to direct himself to happiness, by the aid of his own reason; yet will abuse his reason by indulging himself in all kinds of sensualities and debaucheries. Hence from these observations we may easily see, that it is not the love of opinions barely, that proves the truth of grace within us: but it must consist in our loving those that bear the image of Christ—take his word for the man of their counsel, and live a holy life in this world. The spirit of delusion always shews itself in puffing up the person with pride & self-admiration, filling him with phrenzy, and leads him away from the *word of God*, to follow a blind zeal without knowledge, just as an *ignis fatuus*, or what we call a jack-o'-lanthorn leads a person out of his way into the swamp. But the Spirit of God will always lead those who are influenced by it, to the written *word*; it will teach them to learn of Jesus, who is meek and lowly of spirit; it will humble souls in the dust, under a sense of their dependance upon God,—their ignorance, blindness & unprofitableness to God—their brethren in the church,—and their fellow-men in general—It teaches us to esteem every one better than ourselves—It teaches to maintain a teachable temper of mind, to learn of the least saint any thing that shall be for God's glory, and the churches good. It keeps us watchful, prayerful, and attentive to duty; to be ready for every good word and work. In a word, the Apostle expresses the influence of the Spirit to the Galatian brethren in these words, "The fruit of it is love,

love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law." Gal. v. 22, 23. Hence let every child of the light, cause his light to shine before men, that others seeing their good works, may glorify God their Father who is in heaven. And as there are many who are always trying to bring discords and confusion upon the churches; let every christian take heed, whom he hears, and what he hears, and how he reads the *word of God*; that he may have boldness to stand in an evil day, with his loins girt about with truth, his feet shod with the gospel of peace; and be like those servants who are waiting for the coming of their master; that when he who is the believer's life shall appear, we may all appear with him in glory; and receive the plaudit, well done good and faithful servant, enter ye into the joy of your LORD; which may God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever, AMEN and AMEN.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

ISAAC CASE, *Moderator.*

JOSHUA YOUNG, *Clerk.*

