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Baptists. Maine. Bowdoinham Association, 1797.

Minutes . . . in Thomaston, August 23, and 24, 1797.

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MINUTES

OF THE

BOWDOINHAM ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT THE

BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE

IN

THOMASTON,

AUGUST 23 and 24,

1797.



BOSTON:

Printed by MANNING and LORING.

M, DCC, XCVII.

MINUTES, &c.

WEDNESDAY, August 23.

A SERMON at 10 o'clock in the morning by Brother Williams.
 1. At two o'clock, P. M. Brother Thomas Green preached the introductory Sermon from 1 Pet. ii. 4.

2. Chose Brother Williams, *Moderator*, and Brother Flagg, *Clerk*.

3. Read letters from the several churches, and took the following account 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*. Licensed preachers in *Italic*. Those ministers with this mark * were not present. Churches marked thus † we had no information from this session. Vacant churches distinguished by a dash.

Churches.	Ministers and Messengers.	Added.	Dismissed.	Exclud.	Dead.	Number.
Bowdoinham,	JOB MACOMBER, Samuel Stinson, Seth Hawthorn.		1		1	41
Harpwell,	SAMUEL WOODWARD, John Snow.					37
Thomaston,	ELISHA SNOW, James Weed, John Bridges, Richard Kating.	1		1	1	90
Bowdoin,	* JAMES POTTER, John Wheeler.			2	1	35
Vassalborough,	NEHEMIAH GOULD, Benjamin Lewis.	6	2	1		25
Ballston, Sidney,	JOSEPH BAILEY. * ASA WILBUR, Nathaniel Blake, William Decker.	6				32
	* ASA WILBUR, Nathaniel Blake, William Decker.	1		1		57
Litchfield,	WILLIAM STINSON, John Brown.	2		1		58
Hebron,	_____ William Barrows.	1				39
Buckfield, Paris, Lewiston,	† _____ JAMES HOOPER.					31
	_____ Josiah Mitchel, John Field, Abner Harris.			3	2	57
Readfield,	ISAAC CASE, Joseph Fairbanks.	1	8	1		76
Fayette,	_____ ELIPHALET SMITH, Oliver Billings.	2	1			55

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Add.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Number.</i>	
Miscongus Island,	ANDREW FULLER, William Loud.					31	
Cushing,	EPHRAIM HALL, Benjamin Burton, Isaac Hall.	6		2	2	53	
Nobleborough,	Jesse Flint, Joseph Welman.	1				16	
Livermore,	<i>Elisha Williams.</i>	5		2		69	
Green,	LEMUEL JACKSON, Amaziah Reed, Nester Pendleton.	17		1		69	
New Sandwich,	<i>Thomas Francis.</i>	5				37	
2d. Bowdoin,		1		3		32	
Barretstown,	Joshua Collumore, James Fisher.	2		1		23	
New Gloucester,		3				20	
Clinton,	MEPHIBOSHETH CAIN.	5			1	30	
North Yarmouth,	THOMAS GREEN, John Merril.					14	
Harlem,	JOB CHADWICK.					20	
Total		65	1	24	19	9	1088

N. B. The two last mentioned churches were received the present session. The church called Litchfield, was called 2d. Bowdoin in our last minutes. The church now called 2d. Bowdoin, was called 3d. in Bowdoin in our last.

No letter or messenger from the Warren Association. No letter or minutes from the New-Hampshire Association. One of their messengers, Elder Levi Chadbourn, being present, was invited to take a seat and act with us this session.

4. Voted, That Brother Williams write the Corresponding Letter to the Warren Association, and Brother Flagg to the New-Hampshire Association.

5. Read and adopted the Circular Letter, prepared by Brother Stinson.

Adjourned until eight o'clock to-morrow morning.

Sermon in the evening by Brother Hooper.

THURSDAY, August 24.

Met according to adjournment.

6. Read and adopted the corresponding letters to Sister Associations.

7. Voted, That Brother Williams and Brother Case be our messengers to the Warren Association.

8. Voted,

8. Voted, That Brother Stinson and Brother Case be our messengers to the New-Hampshire Association.

9. Voted, That Brother Harris be Treasurer to the Association.

10. Voted, That Brother Green write the Circular Letter for the next year.

11. Voted, That Brother Williams superintend printing the minutes. Appointed the following supplies :

Woolwich, Branch of Bowdoinham Church	}	Elder Bailey, 3d. Lord's Day in Sept. Elder Stinson, 1st. in Jan. and 1st. in July. Elder Case, 1st. in May.
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Hebron,	}	Elder Jackson, 2d. in September. Elder Smith, 4th. in October. Elder Stinson, 3d. in January. Elder Hooper, 3d. in March. Elder Case, 2d. in June.
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Lewiston,	}	Elder Snow, 1st. in October. Elder Woodward, 1st. in January. Elder Green, 2d. in June. Elder Stinson, 1st. in August. Elder Case, 1st. in March.
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Buckfield,	}	Elder Hooper, last in February.
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Miscongus Island,	}	Elder Snow, 2d. in October. Elder Macomber, 2d. in January. Elder Fuller, 2d. in March. Elder Hall, 2d. in June.
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Nobleborough,	}	Elder Woodward, 1st. in October. Elder Bailey, 1st. in January. Elder Case, 1st. in July. Elder Smith, 1st. in August.
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Livermore,	}	Elder Smith, 3d. in October. Elder Stinson, 4th. in January. Elder Jackson, 4th. in March. Elder Case, 4th. in May. Elder Woodward, 1st. in July.
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New Sandwich,	}	Elder Macomber, 1st. in October. Elder Smith, 1st. in December. Elder Jackson, 1st. in February. Elder Woodward, last in June.
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12. Voted, To hold our Association the next year at the Baptist Meeting-House in Brunswick, the fourth Wednesday of August, at two o'clock, P. M.

Business being finished, the Moderator concluded by prayer. Sermon by Brother Stinson.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

DEAR BRETHREN,

JUSTLY do we style you by this endearing name, who are the called of God according to his purpose. As the revolving seasons steal away, and time will soon be lost in eternity, we are exhorted to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Man was originally formed in love, upright, in the image of God, and made lord of all below; the moral law was given to him, as the rule of his obedience towards God and man, which, while he kept, he was happy in communion with God; and had man continued in this state, he would have continued to love God with all his heart, as his Creator, Preserver, and most bountiful Benefactor, and doubtless never would have felt the need of any other heaven than what he enjoyed within the walls of his earthly paradise. Here he could sing creating goodness, but could not sing redeeming grace. But alas! man has fallen from the rectitude wherein he was created, and thereby has become an enemy to God, both in principle and practice. Adam, where art thou? says God. Man as fallen sees nothing in God to admire, and every thing to dread, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and what the law saith, it saith to such, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them; that is, Cursed is he that loves not God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

To love God and man is a moral duty which is binding on all the fallen race of Adam, and if fallen men think to make an excuse for themselves why they do not love God, then fallen angels may make an excuse; and if the excuse is good, then it will appear that fallen angels and fallen men, who lie in hell under the vengeance of eternal fire, suffer unjustly. But as no other reason can be assigned why fallen angels and fallen men do not love God only because they hate him, how just and righteous doth God appear, and his throne forever guiltless in the damnation of all such as live and die hating Him, who only is good, whose tender mercies are over the works of all his hands. As to the glorious plan of the gospel, spoken against by so many, calling it unequal, there does not appear any bar laid by it to prevent any of the fallen race from being conformed to the moral law, both in principle and practice; and all who die under the law will be judged by the law, by which every mouth shall be stopt, and the whole world appear guilty before God.

But O! dear brethren, as to any worthiness that there was in us naturally, just had it been for us, had we been left to perish in our sins, and been treated as God's rebellious foes. But what hath invincible grace wrought! O the gladness of that day which saw you bow submissively

to the cross of Christ, and rank amongst his dear followers. This was love indeed! not that we loved God, but God first loved us. The church of Christ was in the love of God before time was, and will remain in his love when time shall be lost in eternity; chosen by God the Father in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. She is in the love of God by purchase. I lay down my life for the sheep, says the glorious Shepherd of Israel; and no wonder that saints sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Judge then, dear brethren, of the greatness of your debt that stood charged against you by divine justice, by the price that has been paid in your favour; that you might be spared, God has not spared his dearly beloved Son; that you might be freed from the curses of the law, he hath made him to be a curse for us. Well might our blessed Lord say, *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* She is in the love of God by conquest, made willing in the day of God's power. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Reflect also, dear brethren, on the wonderful change that has been effected on your hearts by conquering grace. You were once the children of disobedience, children of wrath, even as others; but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved. She is also in the love of God through the sanctification of the Divine Spirit, who takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to his people; sheds abroad a Saviour's love in their hearts, which constrains all true believers to obedience. Although believers are kept by God from a final fall, and shall be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, they are so far from saying, Let us live in sin because grace abounds, that with the great apostle Paul they join and say, God forbid! how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? The honour of the glorious cause of Jesus in this world depends much upon the good conduct of those that profess to know him; as no earthly prince can be said to be honoured by his professed subjects only as they shew obedience to his commands, so Jesus is not honoured by those that profess to know him, only as they show obedience to his divine precepts. We are told that obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. True love to God and his cause lies not in word only but in deed and in truth; to love God is a moral duty which is binding upon all the fallen race, but to profess to love God is an institutional duty, binding upon those only who have the love of God in their hearts. As with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. But does the believer's obedience stop here? By no means. We find on the day of Pentecost, they who gladly received the word of God were baptized; we find them added to the church; we find they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers; we also find them honouring God with their worldly substance, by their communicating thereof as every man needed. The duties which are enjoined upon believers are many; they are plainly set down in the holy scriptures,

tures, so that he that runs by the Divina Spirit may read his duty both to God and man. Love to God, and obedience to all his commandments, makes the believer as bold as a lion; Then shall I not be ashamed, says one, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

Dear brethren in the ministry, we wish that the arms of your hands may be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. As Aaron and Hur stayed upon the hands of Moses, the servant of the mighty God, the one on the one side and the other on the other side, so that his hands were kept steady until the going down of the sun, so that Israel prevailed against Amalek; our hearts' desire and prayer to God is, that we your covenant brethren may strive to stay up your hands on both sides, that you may give yourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word, until the going down of the sun of this life, that thereby God's dear Israel may prevail over all their enemies. May we strive on the one side to hold you up in our prayers at the throne of grace, remembering you there as the servants of Christ, praying that God would grant that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, made valiant for the truth upon the earth; and on the other side by freely communicating of the common mercies and blessings of God, as your wants may require; believing that the Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel.

As the days in which we live, are days of trial, error both in principle and in practice is cast out as a flood after the church of Christ, crying, Lo here, and lo there; may you lift up a standard for the people. *Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh.* May you endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; yea, endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. May you strive to imitate your divine Lord, who was meek and lowly, who preached the gospel to the poor, who sought not the praise that came from men, but that which came from God only; as Jesus was faithful unto him that appointed him, may you be faithful unto death.

Dear brethren, let us remember that we are exhorted to keep ourselves in the love of God; in this way we may look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. God requires the improvement of his own gifts. Therefore, as we have professed to have received of Christ's fulness, grace for grace, let us endeavour to prove to all around us, that the grace of God which bringeth salvation does teach us to deny ungodliness and every worldly lust; let us remember that he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. If ye keep my commandments, says our blessed Lord, ye shall abide in my love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. Amen.

By order of the Association,

ELISHA WILLIAMS, Moderator.
SAMUEL FLAGG, Clerk.