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Warren Association of Baptists, 1777.

**Minutes . . . in their Meeting at Middleborough Sept. 9, &
10, 1777.**

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AAS copy.

MINUTES

OF THE

WARREN - ASSOCIATION,

In their Meeting at Middleborough Sept. 9, & 10, 1777.

THE Elders and Brethren from our respective Churches being met, at elder Backus's Meeting-house in Middleborough, September 9, elder Stillman preached a suitable Sermon from Eph. ii. 20, 21. Then a Moderator and Clerk were chosen, and the letters from the churches, were read, and the following list was taken. Those names that are in capitals denotes ordained ministers. Such as have this mark, † were not present, churches with this mark, * we had no account from, but their number of members remains as they were last year.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Rec'd.	dis.	suf.	No.	
1 Boston,	SAMUEL STILLMAN, Ralph Abrahams.	10	3	2	5	37
* 2 Boston, †	ISAAC SKILLMAN,					42
Bellingham,	NOAH ALDEN, John Alby,	1				40
* Haverhill, †	HEZEKIAH SMITH,					140
Warren, †	CHARLES THOMPSON Ebenezer Cole, Esq;	1				84
1 Middleboro'	ISAAC BACKUS, Theo. Crocker,					63
* 2 Middleboro'	EBENEZER HINDS,					75
3 Middleboro'	ASA HUNT, Abishai Tinkham, Nathaniel Atwood,	1				90
* Charlton,	† NATH. GREEN,					53
* Wilbraham,	† SETH CLARK,					39
* Enfield	† JOSEPH MECHAM,					30
* Weare,						35
* Ashfield,	† EBENEZER, SMITH,					60
* Montague,						29
* Sutton,						45

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	rec.	di.	dis.	ful.	No.
* Royalton,	† WHITMAN JACOBS.					74
* Richmond,	MATTURFAN BILAU,					79
Wrentham,	WILLIAM WILLIAMS Ebenezer Guild,	2				20
Attleborough,	JOB SFAMANS, John Sprague, Noah Clifton, Samuel Blais,	1	1			60
So. Brimfield,	† ELIJAH CODDING, Nathaniel Murger,	5				23
* Sturbridge,						24
Woodstock,	BIEL LEDOYT,	15	1	14	2	45
* Chelmsford,	† ELISHA RICK,					76
Earnstable,		1	1			10
New Salem,	SAMUEL BIGELOW,	5	3			23
* Grafton,						27
Leicester,	BENJAMIN FOSTER,	2	1			31
Freetown,	APRER LEWIS,					39
Medfield,	THOMAS GAIR, James Morse,	13	2			41
Harwich,	SETH CLARK,					43
Killingley,	GEORGE ROBINSON, Ephraim Park.					39
		55	15	10	7	1517

THE two last of these churches, upon satisfaction given, were received at this meeting. And president Manning was also received to act with us. 1. A Letter and minutes from the Association of Charlestown, South-Carolina, were received and read, and an answer returned. 2. The minutes of the Philadelphia Association were received and read; and ours are to be sent to them. 3. The Committee who were last year appointed, in concurrence with the parties concerned, to endeavour to settle an unhappy difference which had for sometime subsisted betwixt the churches of Attleborough and Bellingham, now made a report of the circumstances and success of their meeting; upon hearing of which, this Association not only approved of their report, that said difference was happily settled, but could not help observing with the highest satisfaction, what a remarkable divine blessing attended their endeavours. 4. Voted, That the thanks of this Association be given to elder Beckus, for the indefatigable pains he hath taken in collecting and publishing the first volume of a History of the Baptists, from the first settlement of New-England; and he is requested to go on with that work.

5. Agreed

5. Agreed upon the following supplies for destitute societies, viz.

Grafton, Elder Lewis, the second Lord's-day in October; Elder Alden the second in December; Elder Ledoyt, the second in June; Elder Gair, the third in June.

Wesson, Elder Backus, the third in September; Elder Williams, the fourth in October; Elder Gair the second in November; Elder Foster, the third in November; Elder Lewis, the third in December; Elder Seamans, the second in February.

Framingham, Elder Seamans, the third in October; Elder Williams, the fourth in April; Elder Lewis, the second in May; Elder Gair, the second in August.

Warren, Elder Seamans, the third in September; Elder Nelson, the first in October; Elder Manning, the second in October; Elder Lewis, the second in November.

Barnstable, Elder Hunt, the first in October, and first in April; Elder Backus, the first in December; Elder Seamans, the second in January; Elder Lewis, the third in June.

Harwich, Elder Seamans, the third in January; Elder Hunt, the third in February, and third in June; Elder Lewis the first in August.

Duxley, Elder Alden, the third in May.

6. Voted, To recommend it to all the churches belonging to this Association to consider, whether it will not be for their benefit to have this Association divided, so as to have another formed in such part of the country as may be convenient for churches too remote to attend with us, as matters are now circumstanced; and to report their judgement upon it at our next meeting.

7 Our former agent and committee are re-chosen for the year ensuing, with the addition of brother James Merse.

The next Association is to be at Leicester, on the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September next. Elder Ledoyt to preach the sermon, or in case of failure, Elder Gair. The church and society of Medfield, having complained, that all but about six of their members are now taxed to a minister that they dissent from, and do not go to hear; and having requested our advice in the case; the like to which being also done in many other places, the Elders and Brethren present voted, unanimously to have an address, which Elder Backus has drawn up, examined by our committee, and published as our circular letter to the churches. This was accordingly done, and is as follows.

The Elders and Brethren of fifteen baptist churches, assembled at Middleborough on the 9th and 10th of September 1777, unto our friends and countrymen send Greeting.

Men,

Men, Brethren and Fathers,

At a time when the inhabitants of this vast Continent are appealing to Heaven against oppressors, and for the defence and maintenance of their liberties, it greatly concerns every one to regard that command of Heaven, *Make STRAIGHT paths for your feet*. Our Lord says, *My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. --- Thou sayst that I am a King; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* From whence we observe,

1. That fighting with the sword, or a defensive war, is allowed of in worldly states: but that the Saviour's kingdom receives neither its rise nor support *from thence*.

2 As his kingdom is founded in, and supported by **THE TRUTH**; so none are *of it* but such as hear and obey *his voice*.

3 Therefore all use of secular force to support religion, is from beneath, and not from above; and is so far from promoting the cause of truth, that it is diametrically opposite thereto. For the truth shews, that Christ is the only **HEAD** of his body, the church; and that whatsoever is rightly done therein, is done in *his name*. And while he requires us to submit to *every ordinance of man* for his sake, in civil affairs, he most solemnly warns us, not to be *subject to ordinances*, in his church, *after the commandments and doctrines of men*. Col. 2, 20—22 and 3, 17. 1 Pet. 2. And it is most evident, that the settlement and support of religious ministers, is as much an *ordinance of God*, as any one that he ever instituted, either in the old testament or the new: and that ministers faithfulness to the people, and the peoples faithfulness to their ministers, and one to another, are enforced by the authority of **HIM** who is possessed of *all power in heaven and in earth, and who can destroy both soul and body in hell*. Exod. 28, 1—3 and 29, 1—25. Deut. 26. Mal, 3. Mat. 10 7—28, and 28, 18—20. 1 Cor. 9. Gal. 6. 6—9. Phil. 4. 17—19. Heb. 13. Now what can be more contrary to this voice of truth, than it is for a civil state to form *religious societies by force*, and to compel all their subjects to support such religious ministers as they have set up, or else to pay a submissive acknowledgment to that power, in order to be exempted therefrom! The sacred passage which has often been perverted to countenance such doings, Isa. 49. 23, shews expressly, that when civil rulers shall become *nursing fathers* to the church, they will *bow down to JEHOVAH'S AUTHORITY* therein. But when his church placed her affections and
trust

trust for temporal support, upon any beside himself, he said, *she hath played the harlot—she hath done shamefully.* Hosea, 2, 5. And this hath long been the dreadful trade betwixt the mother of harlots and the kings of the earth, who have made merchandize of slaves and souls of men. And the voice from Heaven is, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities; and says, How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.* Rev. 18, 2—18.

We are far from desiring to conceal or undervalue, the civil privileges which we have long enjoyed; but verily think they have been as great in New-England, as in any part of the world. And our denomination have as readily and vigorously joined of late in the general defence of them, as any others have. Yet how can any person lift up his head before God or man, in resisting a power that would tax us where we are not represented, while himself doth the same thing! For a civil assembly to impose religious taxes, is more certainly out of their jurisdiction, than it can be for Britain to tax America; because the latter is only an extending of the power of one civil legislature into the territories of another of the same kind, while the former is for earth to encroach upon the authority of Heaven. A collecting of religious ministers maintenance by secular force, is so far from being countenanced by the gospel, that those who attempted it under the law, were *sons of Beliel*, and such heads and princes as *abhorred judgement, and perverted all equity.* 1 Sam. 2, 12, 16. Micah 3, 5—9. The divine oracles inform us of a gradual victory, which the church of Christ shall obtain *over the beast and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name; which is the number of a man.* And also that the beast *was, and is not, and yet is.* Now what can this mean, but the use of beastly force to support religion by human laws? *It was,* in the times of popish darkness and tyranny, *it is not,* in a land of gospel light and liberty, and yet *it is,* still exercising both deceit and cruelty.

When England rejected the Pope, and set up a temporal prince as head of the church, our fathers found that this *image exercised all the power of the first beast;* which caused them to flee into this land for religious liberty. But after they had broken the ice, others followed them, who were not willing that any should buy or sell in the country, that would not receive a mark of subjection to secular force in religious affairs. And since the revolution that mark has appeared so openly in the foreheads of the ruling party

party, that their religious ministers have been called, settled and supported, in the name of the king of Great-Britain; and one of their most noted authors says, "In consequence of this, the minister they chose, is in reality the king's minister, and the salary for him is raised in the king's name."* And though the commillions of all civil and military officers, who received their authority in that name, have long been out of date among us, yet religious officers who were so set up still hold their power; and many of our societies have been taxed to them, even since the beginning of this memorable year 1777, for no other reason than because we have refused to receive a mark in our hands, of subjection to that power. It has been the constant trade of our oppressors, for these 240 years, to reproach our denomination with the scandals of the mad men of Munster. But the greatest error of those men lay in holding, "That the kingdom of Christ was thus to commence, that the elect should reign, and all the wicked be rooted out—that though the apostles were not, yet the present ministers ought to take the sword." And though Luther said, "Such pranks as these men do, must be the contrivance of some raw, unexperienced devil;" † yet the ecclesiastical establishment by human laws in this country, was most evidently introduced by this very principle; while the Baptists, for opposing it, have all along been reproached with the mad actions of those men. ‡

The common pretence is, that civil rulers only regulate the circumstantials of religion. But the worthy pastor of the church that first planted New-England, justly said upon it, "if a subject should usurp the crown, and exercise regal authority, the difference were but in the circumstance of person, which notwithstanding made the action high treason. Or if a priest, coming to say his evening song, should fall asleep on his desk, it were but a matter of circumstance in respect of time and place; it might lawfully be done in another place, and at another time: yet there and then it were a great profaning of the service-book. What sway authority hath in the church of England, appears in the laws of the land, which make the government of the church alterable at the magistrates pleasure.—But as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, but spiritual, and he a spiritual King; so must the government of this spiritual kingdom under this spiritual King needs be spiritual, and all the laws of it. And as Christ Jesus hath by the merits of his priesthood redeemed as well the body as the soul; so is he also by the scepter of his kingdom to rule and reign over both: unto which christian magistrates

* See the *Hist. of the Baptists*, just published. Appendix p. 7.

† *Abstract of the Hist. of Papers*, vol. 2, p. 573, 576.

‡ *Baptist Hist.* p. 82, 129, 150, 166, 170, 251.

magistrates as well as meaner persons ought to submit themselves; and the more christian they are, the more meekly to take the yoke of Christ upon them, and the greater authority they have the more effectually to advance his sceptre over themselves and their people, by all good means. Neither can there be any reason given, why the merits of saints, may not as well be mingled with the merits of Christ for the saving of his church, as the laws of men with his laws, for the ruling and guiding of it. He is as absolute and as entire a King as he is a Priest, and his people must be as careful to preserve the dignity of the one, as to enjoy the benefit of the other." *

Had this first principle of New-England been duly regarded, it would not only have prevented an unknown deal of costs in our assemblies and courts, upon business which they had no just right to meddle with, but also would have prevented the great guilt of being *partial in the law*. Mal. 2. 9. For more than eighty years past, the majority of inhabitants in every town and parish in this province, have been empowered to covenant for the rest with religious ministers, and to prosecute many as truce-breakers, for not fulfilling a covenant which they never made; and executive officers have been solemnly required to punish "all defects and neglects of that kind:" While we cannot find that any care at all has been taken by our legislature, to punish the defects and neglects of ministers in their work. A sight of which has carried some to the opposite extreme; so as to treat those which they receive and own as true labourers in Christ's vineyard, worse than they would think of treating common labourers in their fields; if not worse than they treat their oxen that plow their land and bring in their corn. Whereas the law of Christ plainly makes the obligation to be mutual, betwixt ministers and their people; and while he commands ministers to *watch for souls as those that must give account*, he says to the people, *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* A due attention to our Lord's golden rule, would rectify these and all other disorders among us, and make us a truly happy people. Let us all therefore cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and so speak and so act as those who shall be judged by the LAW OF LIBERTY.

By order of the Association.

NOAH ALDEN, Moderator.

BENJAMIN FOSTER, Clerk.

* *Robinson's Justification of Separation from the Church England*, 1610. p. 37, 38.