

19360

Warren Association of Baptists, 1785.

Minutes ... at their Annual Convention ... in Wrentham.

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M I N U T E S

OF THE

WARREN ASSOCIATION,

At their annual Convention, held at Mr. WILLIAMS'S
Meeting-house, in *Wrentham*, 1785.

TUESDAY, September 13, 1785.

1. **A**T 2 o'clock, P. M. elder Hezekiah Smith, according to appointment, preached the introductory sermon, from *Dan. ix. 24.* After which Dr. *Manning* opened the Association by prayer.

2. Chose a Moderator and Clerk.

3. Letters were read from the respective churches, and the following account was taken of the members added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died the last year; and of the present number in each church.

N. B. No accounts were received from the churches distinguished by an *. Ministers marked with an †, were not present.

Churches.	Messengers.	Add.	Dis.	Excl.	Died.	No.
1st. * Boston,	† Samuel Stillman,					158
2d. * Boston, Bellingham,	† Isaac Skillman, Noah Alden, Ebenezer Holbrook, Samuel Darling, Hezekiah Smith,				1	43 54
Haverhill, * Warren,		12	28			121 83
1st. Middleborough,	Isaac Backus, Nathaniel Shaw,	4	17			121
2d. Middleborough,	Ebenezer Hinds, Levi Rounsevel, Peter Hoar,				1	51
3d. Middleborough,	Asa Hunt, Ebenezer Nelson,	5		1	3	195
Charlton,	Nathaniel Green, Peter Wheelock, † Seth Clark, † Ebenezer Smith,			8	3	144
* Wilbraham, * Ashfield, * Montague, * Sutton, Royalston,	Whitman Jacobs, Isaac Esty, Enos Metcalf,	7	2	2		159 93 82 78
						94

Churches.	Messengers.	Add.	Dic.	Exc.	Died.	No.
Richmond,	† <i>Matterean Bellou,</i> Oliver Garnsey,					39
Wrentham,	<i>William Williams,</i> Ebenezer Giuld, Joseph Millar,					38
1st. Attleborough,	<i>Job Seamans,</i> Samuel Blois,			2	1	78
South-Brimfield,	<i>Elijah Coding,</i> Elijah Wales,	2	3		2	233
Woodstock,	† <i>Biel Leddyt,</i> Silas Corbin,		1		1	139
Chelmsford,	<i>A Jhu Crosman,</i> Nathaniel Thatcher,	15		5		97
Barnstable,	Enoch Eldridge,				1	40
New-Salem,	<i>Samuel Bigelow,</i>					38
Grafton,	<i>Elkanah Ingalls,</i> Ephraim Wheeler, Daniel Heydon,	1			1	38
Leicester,	<i>Isaac Beals,</i> Jonathan Newhall, Samuel Cheever,	13	2	11		70
* Freetown,	† <i>Abner Lewis,</i>					97
Medfield,	<i>Thomas Gair,</i> Benjamin Borden, Seth Cla	8				78
Harwich,						47
* Killingly,						60
* Dudley,						33
* Southington,						18
* Rehoboth,	† <i>John Hicks,</i>					100
Harvard,	† <i>Isaiab Parker,</i> Simeon Snow,	1		2	1	108
Newton,	<i>Caleb Blood,</i> Thomas Tolman, Robert Prentiss, <i>Samuel Fletcher,</i>	3		5	1	74
Salem, (N. Ham.)		3				62
* Colerain,						26
Northbridge,	William Bachelor, Nathaniel Cooper,					25
Cambridge,	† <i>Thomas Green,</i> Thomas Lock,	3			1	28
2d. * Ashford,	† <i>John Rathban,</i>					47
* Ashburnham,						37
Providence,	<i>James Manning,</i> John Pitman, Jonathan Dexter,	6		1	2	105
* Gloucester,	† <i>Joseph Winsor,</i>					81
Starbridge.	<i>Jordan Dodge,</i>	18		1	1	66

Churches.	Messengers.	Add.	Dis.	Excl.	Died.	No.
Templeton,	Henry Fisk, Elijah Batchelor, Silas Cutler, Nathaniel Bryant,	2	1			37
New-Rowley, Bridgewater,	† <i>William Erving,</i> <i>George Robinson,</i> Daniel Lothrop, James Perkins,					30 16
		103	1	38	20	3451

The two last churches were received into our fellowship the present year.

4. A letter and the minutes were read from the Association in New-Hampshire, handed to us by their messenger, elder Hooper. Also, a letter and the minutes were read from the Philadelphian Association.

5. Chose Dr. Manning and elder Pitman to draw a letter to our sister Associations.

6. Adjourned to 8 o'clock to-morrow morning.

SEPTEMBER 14. Met according to adjournment.

7. Received the minutes and a letter from the Shaftsbury Association, by the hands of their messenger, Benjamin Colvin.

8. Received a letter and the minutes from the Stonington Association, by elder Simeon Brown and brother Joseph Case, their messengers.

9. Received a letter and the minutes from the Woodstock Association, by the hand of elder Thomas Baldwin, and brethren John Perkins and Ezekiel Powers, their messengers.

10. The church at South-Brimfield desired the opinion of this Association to these queries :

1st. Two or three members complain to the church, that they heard one of the members say something, which is offensive to them : the accused brother confesses to them, and to the church, that he has no remembrance of ever saying what is alledged against him ; but if he did say so, he is heartily sorry for it, and desireth forgiveness—Ought said member to be held in good standing, or not ?

Ans. If his character be inexceptionable, and no other circumstances appear against him, we are of opinion, that he ought to be continued in good standing in the church.

2d. Whether it be a transgression for a brother to appear in a court of judicature, and plead as an attorney against another brother ? and if so, what precept is broken ?

Ans. If an attorney, in all other respects, conducts himself in character as a church member, he is not censurable for acting as an attorney.

11. The letter to the several Associations, and also the circular letter to the churches, were read and approved.

12. Adjourned to 2 o'clock, P. M.

Met pursuant to adjournment.

13. By a letter from the church at New-Salem, it appears, that differences have subsisted there for a considerable time, respecting family government, and the government of the church; especially as to the support of the ministry, and other charges of the community.—We would observe, that disorders and arbitrary methods of conduct, in these respects, have so long and so extensively prevailed, that an entire reformation is not to be expected at once, yet to pursue it earnestly is an indispensable duty, and is what we would inculcate on ourselves, and on all our brethren.—On family government we have distinctly treated in our circular letter.—As to the mutual obligation between pastors and people, we refer to the sacred authority of Christ, expressed in Luke x, 1—12; 1 Cor. ix. 7—14; Gal. vi. 6—9. Which passages as clearly urge upon every member liberality to contribute to the support of the gospel, as any other duty whatever: for the neglect of which, we are to be accountable to the Great Head of the Church.

14. Having received letters from several places where our brethren and friends are taxed to the other denominations, re-chose our committee of grievances, viz. Messrs. Stillman, Skillinan, Smith, of Haverhill, Backus and Blood, for the purposes expressed in the last year's minutes.—To whom we refer our churches and friends for advice when oppressed, that we may, one and all, pursue the same mode of conduct, to obtain and enjoy our natural rights in common with our fellow-citizens.

15. As difficulties in the church at Sutton brought on long discussions, without a possibility of doing any thing to settle them:

Voted, That those brethren of the church, formerly acknowledged a member of this Association, here present, do not set as members of this body, nor any thing be done relative to the result of the councils which they have had on said difficulties; and that this Association advise both the contending parties to unite in a mutual council before our next yearly meeting.

16. The thanks of this Association were given to our beloved elder Backus, for his indefatigable application in collecting and publishing his history, by which so impartial an account of our denomination, may be handed down to posterity.

17. Agreed on the following supplies for destitute societies:

Templeton. Elder Ingalls, 2d Lord's-day in July; elder Jacobs, 2d in December.

Brookfield. Elder Ingalls, last Lord's-day in November.

Weston. Elder Alden, last Lord's-day in October; elder Bigelow, the month of November; elder Robinson, 2d Lord's-day in December; elder Beals, last in April; elder Seaman's, 2d in May;

elder Fletcher, 1st in June ; elder Jacobs, 2d in June ; elder Hunt, the 3d ; Mr. Clark, 2d in July.

18. Appointed elder Hezekiah Smith our messenger to the Philadelphia Association ; elders Backus and Hinds messengers to the Woodstock Association ; elders Ledoyt and Dodge to that of Stonington ; elders Ebenezer Smith and Beals to that of Shaftsbury ; and elders Hunt and Gair to that of New-Hampshire Association.

19. Elder Smith, of Haverhill, was appointed to write the circular letter for the next year.

20. Upon a letter of complaint against one of the churches of the Association, and its minutes, being presented to elder Backus by a person who had been excluded from said church,

Voted, That the principles of this Association render it inconsistent to receive any letter from *an excommunicated person against the church.*

21. The next Association is to be held at Mr. Blood's meeting-house in Newton, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, at 2 o'clock, P. M. Dr. Manning to preach the introductory sermon, and in case of failure, elder Alden.

The CIRCULAR LETTER,

PREPARED BY MR. GAIR,

Is now presented to the Churches.

DEARLY BELOVED,

SUFFER us to address you, at the close of this interview, on *the importance of family religion and government.*

Our pious predecessors were justly distinguished for walking with God in their families, and paying strict attention to the education and morals of the youth. Nor is any part of practical religion of greater moment ; especially as the character of the *rising generation* will, in a great measure, depend on a proper discharge of these obligations. Among the various causes of prevailing immorality, is not a neglect of these duties, a principal evil ?

By *family religion and government*, we mean, that, agreeably to the relation which they bear to God and their domestics, heads of families should live in the faithful discharge of the duties commanded in the sacred scriptures, such as *praying* and *reading* with them, *restraining* and *educating* them in such a manner as, under God, may render them useful in this world, and happy in the next. To the great honour of Abraham, the Most High declares, *I know him that he will command his household and his children after him, and they shall keep*

*the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, &c.** Every head of a family should represent the Great Parent of the universe, who provides for his numerous dependants, and most reasonably expects subjection to his authority. Many are the considerations which urge this practice ; but the usual limits of a circular letter do not permit us to enlarge : we must, therefore, content ourselves with suggesting the few which follow.

The oracles of God, enjoin it on parents to *bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*† This, doubtless, implies, that they give them such instructions, and exhibit before them such examples, as tend to impress their minds with a deep reverence of the majesty of God, which cannot fail to regulate their morals. The stages of childhood and youth are favourable to this undertaking. In the morning of life, they are more susceptible of impressions, than in after periods.—And however the heart may be naturally biassed to the paths of vice, through the total depravity of our nature, a timely attention to the conduct of our little ones, will render it easier to check the excess of their passions, and rivet proper habits, than can be otherwise effected. Constant observation corroborates that declaration of Solomon,—*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it :*‡ i. e. ordinarily, he who hath had a religious education, and, in early life, hath been taught obedience, will not easily depart to a vicious course,—the habits, thus established, *he will not readily conquer.* “ In early life,” says one, “ those principles are sown which impregnate, and, in time, fill whole countries with the most powerful prejudices, and produce effects in them hardly to be eradicated.” We do not pretend that parents can change the hearts of their dear offspring : this is the province of the Holy Spirit only ; yet every good man should exert himself that they may be brought up for God, and from religious motives should assist in acquiring whatever shall tend to render them extensively useful in their day and generation. In every instance wherein learning and the advantages of a proper education are withheld from youth, according to their expected occupation and the ability of their parents, the voice of revelation is disregarded.

The worth of the soul, is a still greater consideration to urge this duty. Other objects, which relate to the good of our domestics, are of less importance. It is laudable to secure and promote their reputation, health, and whatever is included in their earthly felicity ; but none of these are to be named in comparison of the immortal part. To neglect the warning, restraining, and correcting them, according to their age and circumstances, may be fatal to their present interest, yea, may become instrumental of their eternal ruin. Let parents remember how *indefatigable* they are for the *temporal advantage* of their families ! how solicitous are many in *this respect,* while, perhaps, the salvation of the soul is wholly neglected ! If the business of the world engrosses the attention, prevents the proper

* Gen. xviii. ver. 19.

† Ephes. vi. ver. 4.

‡ Prov. xxii. ver. 6.

instruction of our domestics, and roots out the regular duties of religion in the family, is not this living "*without God in the world?*" Therefore, however the hurries of life engage us, and whatever we omit besides, let us not neglect the religious education of those for whose souls we must give an account to God.

The propriety of attending to these obligations is also apparent from *our expectations being placed on the rising generation, for future usefulness in the church and state.* Our families should be as so many nurseries for the church of Christ, that when we are sleeping in the dust, our dear children, having been transplanted into God's Zion, may fill our places, and rise up to call us blessed! The notion of *federal holiness*, and that our offspring, by virtue of any connection with us, have a right to the special privileges of God's house, we reject. Nevertheless, if he is pleased, through the riches of his grace, to give them a name and a place there, our attempts may become greatly beneficial in qualifying them to do good in the cause of christianity.

The good of the civil community should likewise induce us to attend to this practice. Mankind, by being restrained in the early stages of life, are more easily led into subjection to government. When children and servants are allowed to conduct themselves in a lawless manner; when their passions have had their sway in *private life*, and they have transgressed the laws of the *family* with impunity, we cannot expect them to become good citizens, or friendly to good government in civil society; but will, in all probability, gratify their desires to their own shame, and to the disgrace and sorrow of such indulgent and negligent parents.

In this state, the *voice of our civil fathers*, in a late proclamation, encourages us to call on the churches to engage in these duties. At a very seasonable time, and by weighty reasons, *the first magistrate of this commonwealth* urges us to consider the causes of the prevalence of vice, and the importance of good education and family government. As heads of families, you may do much,—and much is expected. And of what avail will be the best laws—the most virtuous rulers—and the spirited exertions of those in authority, if domestic government is not maintained?

To this we will add, that while parents and masters neglect their families, it is to but little purpose that *christian ministers* urge a reformation. Under what great encouragements must they discharge this part of the ministerial service; and how shall they go forward in this duty, while *the people* do not stand by and support them? To commend the enforcement of it from the pulpit, and do nothing farther to carry it into practice, is surely inconsistent. Strengthen, therefore, brethren, the hands of your ministers, by walking in this, and every other practical part of christianity. Be exhorted to maintain religion and government in your houses, to the honour of Christ, and the good of posterity. Say not that you are unequal to the at-

tempt.—A proper *disposition* to these duties, will obviate the numerous objections, and conquer the common excuses against it.

Let the practice become general.---For we need not inform you, unless it does, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for those who may feel its importance, to do much in this undertaking. The domesticities of one family, if restrained, will consider themselves as *hardly treated*, while the children and servants of the same neighbourhood are indulged. Gaming, swearing, drinking, nocturnal revelling, uncleanness, profanation of the Lord's-day, &c. which have arrived to such an awful height, if checked at all, must be checked by the united influence of those whose relation to their families, whose age, and whose examples, give them importance.

In fine, let us all, according to our opportunity, plead the cause of virtue and religion. Let us bear a practical testimony against the dissipations, luxuries and extravagances which now prevail, and so eminently threaten the interests of liberty, learning, morality and religion.

We received accounts from most of the churches. Many of them lament their stupidity, and express a deep sense of their declensions. We had agreeable information from some parts of the country, where there have been great revivals. May the sacred effusions become general! May the blessed Jesus go forth conquering and to conquer, until his name and praise is one in all the earth!

Signed by order of the Association.

HEZEKIAH SMITH, Moderator.
THOMAS GAIR, Clerk.

B O S T O N :

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