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**Baptists. Warren Association, 1787.**

**Minutes of the Warren Association ... in Chelmsford, 1787.**

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**AAS copy.**

# **MINUTES**

**OF THE**

**WARREN ASSOCIATION,**

**AT THEIR**

**YEARLY MEETING,**

**HELD AT**

**Mr. *CROSSMAN*'s MEETING-HOUSE,**

**In CHELMSFORD, 1787.**

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# MINUTES.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1787.

**A**T two o'clock, P. M. doctor *Manning* preached the introductory sermon, from Psalm cxxxii. 15.

2. Proceeded to the choice of a moderator and clerk.

3. The letters were read from the several churches, and the following list was taken of the members added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died, since the meeting of the last Association.

N B. We had no information, this year, from the churches distinguished by an \*.—Ministers distinguished by an † were absent.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Ad.	Dis.	Excl.	Died	No.
1st Boston,	† Samuel Stillman, Richard Gridley, Ralph Abrahams,	12			1	201
2d Boston,	† Isaac Skillman, John Martin,	10		1	1	66
Bellingham, Haverhill,	† Noab Alden, † Hozkiab Smith, Moses Welch,	1			1 5	54 171
* Warren, 1st Middleborough,	Isaac Backus, Samuel Nelson,	3	1	1		83 173
* 2d Middleborough, 3d Middleborough,	Asa Hunt, Simeon Coomes,	1			2	189
Charleton, * Wilbraham, * Athfield, * Montague,	Nathaniel Green, † Seth Clark, † Ebenezer Smith,	1	2	2	2	137 154 90 38
Royallstone, * Richmond, Wentham,	Jacob Eftey, Matthew Bollen, William Williams, Joseph Willard,		1		1	73 39 39
1st Attleborough, South Braintree, Woodstock,	Job Seamans, † Elijah Coddington, † Bet. Ideoyt, David B. ne, jun.	1 5			1 2	74 191
Chelmsford	Abigail Cuffman, Omer Prescott, Amos Fletcher,	12		3	4	113

CHURCHES,	MESSENGERS.	Ad.	Diff.	Excl.	Died	No.
Barnstable,		3				48
* New-Salem,						20
* Grafton,	† Elkanah Ingham,					38
Leicester,	Ijaac Beals,		5	1	1	68
	Samuel Green,					
* Freetown,						57
Medfield,	Thomas Gair,					81
	Asa Malon,					
Harwich,					2	45
* Killingly,						60
* Dadev,						33
* Southington,						18
* Rehoboth,	† John Hicks,					100
Harvard,	Ijaiab Parker,	10			1	118
	Lemuel Willard,					
	Jonathan Lewis,					
	Caleb Blood,				1	2
Newton,	Jeremiah Richardson,					68
Salem, (New-Hamp.)	Samuel Fletcher,	1			1	64
	Richard Kimball,					
	Joseph Richardson,					
* Colerain,						26
Northbridge,	William Bachelor,					25
Cambridge,	Thomas Green,	5		1	1	33
	Daniel Crooks,					
	Stephen Blanchard,					
* 2d Ashford,						44
Abburnham,	Samuel Gibson,	25			1	61
	Elijah Willard,					
Providence,	James Manning,	3		1		106
	Joseph Grafton,					
* Gloucester,	† Joseph Winsor,					81
Stratbridge,	† Jordan Dodge,	2				82
	Jonathan Phillips,					
	Simon Fisk,					
Templeton,	Ephraim Whitney,	5	1		1	61
New-Powley,	William Ewing,	2			1	44
	Timothy Jackman,					
	Asa Chaplain,					
Bridgewater,	† George Robinson,					16
* Newport,	† Benjamin Egler,					69

12-5, 21, 53, 32, 55, 17

4. Appointed messrs Edward Clark and William Williams to draw the circular letter to the sister Associations.

5. Adjourned till 8 o'clock to-morrow morning.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12.

6. Spent some time in prayer for a revival of religion in our churches, and throughout the world.

7. Read the letters and minutes from the several Associations. From those of *Philadelphia* and *Shaftsbury* there were no messengers: those from the *Woodstock* are, mess'rs Samuel Ambrose, Joel Butler, and John Peckens: from the *New-Hampshire* Association, mess'rs Samuel Shepard, William Hooper and Moses Chase: from the *Stonington* Association, mess'rs Abel Palmer and Valentine W. Rathbun.

8. The circular letter to the corresponding Associations was read and approved.

9. Appointed doctor Manning our messenger to the *Philadelphian* Association, which is to meet in New-York the first Tuesday in October. Mess'rs Nathaniel Green, Beals and Blood to that of *Shaftsbury*, which is to be held at Shaftsbury the first Wednesday in June, at 2 o'clock, P. M. Mess'rs Backus, Thomas Green and Grafton to the *Stonington* Association, which is to meet at Stonington the third Tuesday in October, at 10 o'clock, A. M. Doctor Manning, mess'rs Backus, Ewing, Smith and Green to the *New-Hampshire* Association, which is to be held at *Stratham* the second Wednesday in June, at 2 o'clock P. M.

10. Appointed Mr. Edward Clark to write the circular letter to the churches for the next year.

11. As a number of churches belonging to this body have omitted sending letters and messengers for several years together, Mr. Gair is requested to address them by a letter, to inquire into the causes of this neglect, and to inform them that the Association will be obliged to drop them from a connection with them unless they hear from them by another annual meeting.

12. Notwithstanding the great expense of blood and treasure during the late war, to ward off slavery from ourselves, we are informed, that in various parts of this country many have recurred to the horrid practice of sending our shipping to Africa, to bring from thence the natives and to sell them as slaves in the West-Indies: And as *man-stealing* is a capital crime by the laws of God—(see Deut. xxiv. 7—1 Tim. i 10)—we, therefore, earnestly desire all our brethren to guard against giving the least countenance to that heaven-daring wickedness.

13. Only a few of the churches having paid an attention to the promise of affording assistance to our brethren at Cambridge, who expended large sums of money to obtain religious liberty. Mess'rs Gair and Blood are chosen to write an address to the negligent churches, and in the name

of this Association to inform them, that such inattention to their own sacred obligations is considered by this body as a great grievance.

14. The next Association is to be held at *Starbridge*, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, at 2 o'clock P. M. Doctor Manning is appointed to preach the introductory sermon, if he fails Mr. Blood.

15. If the sum now raised is not equal to the expense of printing these Minutes, Mr. Gair is requested to make use of such a part of the monies already in his hands as shall be necessary.

NOT having received the draft of a circular letter to the churches according to the last years appointment, one from an Association in *England* in last May, was proposed to be adopted by us. A committee was chosen to examine it, who reported, that it is proper to be presented as an address to *our* churches, with an introduction suited to their particular circumstances; which being read in the Association, was unanimously approved.

Therefore, we the elders and brethren met in Association, address our several churches in the following manner.

DEAR BRETHREN.

WE have received very agreeable accounts from several of the churches, who inform us that God hath afforded the gracious visitations of his presence, in the awakening and converting of sinners; in quickening his people, and in recovering backsliders.—A large share of those blessings have also been afforded to many of the churches in *Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, &c.* as appears by letters, messengers, and minutes from our sister Associations.

We were favoured with much harmony in our deliberations, and with other tokens of the divine presence in our worship, all which, with innumerable other mercies, call for our devout acknowledgments. At the same time many of the churches lament the coldness, unfaithfulness and great want of that spiritual life which becometh the gospel, and which is the glory of Christianity. Loose principles, concerning the *nature* and *extent* of *divine grace*, have undoubtedly had a great influence in producing these evils. Its *extent* to *Christ's sheep who hear his voice*, and *not to all mankind*, is explicitly pointed out by the *Saviour himself*—John x. 15—18, and 26—29. The nature and efficacy of God's grace are opened and inculcated in an excellent manner, in the following address;

" **Y**OU will remember, brethren, the dignity of the dispensation under which you live; that it is not the institution of man, but the wise and gracious plan of God to make you happy. With this view he raised up the people of the Jews, kept them distinct from all others and gave them such a portion of knowledge as might, in due time, prepare for the display of the gospel. With this view a succession of priests was kept up, the eye of prophecy was enlightened, and the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth. After thus preparing the way, our Great Redeemer himself appeared upon the earth, lived in humiliation and sorrow, and died in agony and disgrace. During the time of his personal ministry he had every attestation of deity in his favour, and the power of God was often exerted in a most signal manner. After his ascension a larger measure of knowledge and power was given to his disciples than had been afforded them before. They asserted his character, and affirmed that he had risen from the dead, in the very place in which he had been crucified.— They were endued with a miraculous skill in tongues for the very purpose of spreading the gospel through the different parts of the world, and with that success they did it, and how, in the face of danger and death, they maintained their cause, whilst many of them perished in their sufferings, is well known, and will draw tears of admiration and gratitude from all succeeding ages. When we see the Saviour descending from Heaven as a witness for God, and behold his sufferings and death, we cannot help being astonished at so stupendous a scene, and inquiring into the purpose it was intended to accomplish. One among many other great ends which are answered by it, is the removing the ignorance and error in which we are by nature involved, and giving us the knowledge of God and our true happiness. If there be a moral governour of the world, it must be of great importance to know upon what terms we stand with him, and what expectations we may form from him. A sober, reflecting man could scarcely feel himself at ease, till he attained to some certainty in points of so much consequence: and yet how little information we can derive from reason in inquiries of this nature, may be seen from the experience of past ages, and those the most enlightened and refined; who after all their researches have not been able to come to any agreement, or to gain any satisfaction. We may discover by the light of nature the existence of a being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom and power; but with respect to the application of these in any particular instance it leaves us entirely at a loss. We have no measure which we can apply to the operations of an

infinite mind; and therefore, though we may be assured that the divine being possesses all the attributes which compose supreme excellence, it is impossible for us to say in particular instances what path of conduct may best consist with those perfections in their most extensive operation. Indeed to discover not only the leading attributes of the divine nature, but to be acquainted before hand with every direction they will take, would be fully to comprehend the Most High. When therefore without the aid of revelation we attempt to foretell the dispensations of the Almighty, we are lost in a maze, and are obliged to rest in vague and uncertain conjectures. This holds true more especially when applied to the conduct of providence with respect to only a small part of creation. In this case our uncertainty is doubled, since we know that all the works of God form one vast system, and that the regulation of the parts must be subservient to the administration of the whole. But this situation is ours. Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem fit to divine providence to dispose of us in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on. Our meaning may be illustrated by the following instance. It is certain that the divine being is in the greatest degree compassionate and good; but if a number of creatures render themselves unhappy by a wilful rebellion against him, a singular instance would arise. It would be impossible to say whether the exercise of compassion *here* would best comport with the highest goodness and the greatest happiness in the general administration of providence; because no one could trace every relation which the parts bear to the whole.

“This you will perceive is a case entirely to the point, for disorder and sin *have* entered into the world. It is evident things are turned out of their natural and original channel, that they are not what they *have* been, nor what they *ought* to be. Men have corrupted their way. A change so singular in the creation, a situation so striking and so little to be apprehended under the government of a holy and perfect being, naturally leads us to look for a revolution in the dispensations of providence. In such a state some new and awful interposition of the divine hand might well be expected. There is something at the same time in the idea of having provoked the displeasure of God, when seriously thought of, too heavy for the heart of man to bear. We cannot leave his presence, we cannot resist his power, we cannot evade his stroke. Hence mankind in all ages have had their fears awakened and have taken a gloomy survey of an hereafter. They saw death cast around them carrying their fellow



creatures out of their sight. Anxious and fearful for themselves they sought for them in the dreams of poetick illusion, and followed them in the gloomy visions of unenlightened fancy. They found that life was filled with vanity and sorrow, they knew not but death would extinguish their existence, or transmit them to still greater misery. They had just light enough dimly to shew them the judge of the universe seated on his throne, in wrath, clouded with darkness and beset with judgments. They had no certain access to him, no acceptable worship to pay him, no assurance that their prayers would be answered or their sins forgiven them. They saw not the issue of things, nor could they take any lengthened view of futurity. They knew not therefore how to cherish any great hopes, to form any high and extensive plans; they were confined to the present moment, and all beyond it was covered with confusion and horror. You will not, my brethren, think this description over-wrought, if you read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

“ HEREIN then appears the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation. In the midst of this darkness it rises like the sun in its strength and all these gloomy shades melt away and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares, it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of his Father, from eternity, who was acquainted with all his counsels and created all his works. It raises no hopes within but what are built upon the promise and oath of him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion, whilst at the same moment the law of God received more honour than it could have done by the obedience and death of any or of all his creatures. “ Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” In this dispensation of his grace he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that, if we love him, we may be assured that he will with it freely give us all things. Access to God is now opened at all times and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it he has promised his spirit to teach them to pray and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it just for him to forgive sin: and whenever we are led to repent of and to forsake it, even the righteousness of God is declared in the pardon of it. My dear brethren, consolation pours itself on every side, whilst we contemplate the

gospel, and refreshes our inmost souls. It give us the prospect of our sins being pardoned, our prayers accepted, our very afflictions turned into blessings, and our existence prolonged to an endless duration. We see Christianity indeed as yet but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present it is but as a grain of mustard seed and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop, but be assured it is of God's own right hand planting and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the river and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it, the hungry will partake of its fruits, and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

“You, dear brethren, who profess the name of Jesus, will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom, and your expectations will not deceive you. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continge to move and to spread till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessing will descend, and its influence will be felt, to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects and the accomplishment of its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth, as the judge and ruler of it; will send forth his angels and gather his elect from the four winds; will abolish sin, and death, and hell, and will place the righteous for ever in the presence of his God, and their God, of his Father, and their Father. If such be our religion, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness? You are conscious, that a mere belief of the Christian revelation will not purify the heart, or regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of Christianity, and afterwards suffer them to slide out of our minds, without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back upon the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects than by their weight and importance, and that habit has more force in forming our characters than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is that the world, by continually pressing upon our senses and being ever open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart.—How think you, dear brethren, must we correct this influence,

and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity ? Let us beseech you then to make them familiar with your minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of your thoughts : retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and your own souls. In these solemn moments nature and the shifting scenes of it will retire from your view, and you will feel yourselves left alone with God. You will walk as in his sight, you will stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour. You will estimate human life and the worth of it, not by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. You will see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter ; its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantment be dissolved. It is much, however, if faith do not upon such occasions draw aside the veil which rests on futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes ? They have entered already the rest which remained for them ; they have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to God the judge of all. From these seasons of retirement and religious meditation you will return to the active scenes of life with preater advantage. From the presence of God you will come forth with your passions more composed, your thoughts better regulated, and your heart more steady and pure. Do not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them : for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have been so long shed ; so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.

“ If your religion be genuine, it will often be the source of the warmest and most interesting feelings. It will be a spring of consolation within, which will often be full and pour itself forth. If the gospel has not taken a share in the feelings of our hearts, if it has not moved the great springs of our hopes and fears, we may be assured we never experienced its force. It is filled with such views as cannot fail to interest and transport us. Besides, if we do not feel the gospel as well as believe it, how can it support against the overwhelming influence of what we do feel ? The world steals upon us, and engages our affections on all sides. Its prospects enrapture and its pleasures are seducing us. Will a religion, which rests only upon opinion and conviction at times extorted from us, keep us firm against those assaults, and stem the force of a torrent, which nev-

er ceases to flow? This can be done only by opposing hope to hope, feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure.

“PERHAPS one of the chief reasons why Christianity does no more purify our hearts is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate, that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one, without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never indeed be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion, and religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. And the reason of this is obvious. The world and the fashion of it is passing away, and our union with it will soon be dissolved; whilst the relation which we bear to God and to eternity is ever the same, and extends to all times and to all places. The character which, as Christians, we sustain is our highest character; and the hopes which, as such, we indulge are our highest hopes. It is but reasonable, it is but just, therefore, that a desire of discharging the one, and attaining the other, should sway the whole of our conduct. Perhaps you will be ready to think that this advice is impracticable. You will urge the necessity of attending to your worldly callings, which, you will say, cannot be carried on, unless you give them the greater part of your time and attention. Be it so. Remember we do not advise you to spend more of your *time* in religion than in your ordinary concerns. This would extinguish all human industry. But if you be sincere in your profession of religion, you will regulate your pursuits by it, and engage no farther in any of them than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all your other concerns, you will still make religion the centre of your hopes, and the consummation of your wishes. An ordinary mechanick devotes more of his time to the labour of his hands than to any other concern; but it is not his labourious employment that interests his heart: it is his desire of procuring subsistence, and of warding off the inconveniences of poverty and want.

“Finally, brethren, let each of us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not; let us prove our own selves; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be indeed found sincere after thus searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm and our consolations more steady. Or if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and being deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for

mercy, and of reading our danger in our sin, not in our punishment.—  
 But we hope better things of you, brethren, and things which accompany  
 salvation. We hope that you have fled from the wrath to come, and have  
 laid hold on eternal life; and we rejoice in the prospect of meeting you  
 in a much larger assembly, at the great day, when you shall have washed  
 your robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Then,  
 brought out of much tribulation, and redeemed from every nation, and  
 tongue, and people, his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the king-  
 dom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of indi-  
 vidual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with ado-  
 ration and delight, when, while we are praising him, he shall receive, from  
 millions of beings, and millions of worlds, the same incense!

BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

JAMES MANNING, Moderator;

THOMAS GAIR, Clerk.

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