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Baptists. Rhode Island. Warren Association, 1795.  
Minutes ... in Bridgewater, September 2 and 9, 1795.  
Boston, Manning & Loring, 1795. 12 pp.  
AAS copy.

MINUTES

OF THE

WARREN ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT THE

Baptist Meeting-House

IN

BRIDGEWATER,

SEPTEMBER 8 and 9,

1795.



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BOSTON:

Printed by MANNING and LORING.

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M,DCC,XCV.

# MINUTES, &c.

TUESDAY, September 8.

1. **A**T two o'clock, P. M. Dr. Samuel Stillman, according to appointment, preached the introductory Sermon from Matt. v. 14.—*A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

2. Proceeded in making the collection for the Widows of Ministers deceased, agreeably to a vote of the last Association.

3. Chose Dr. Samuel Stillman, *Moderator*, and Brother Thomas Baldwin, *Clerk*.

4. Read the letters from the several churches, and took the following account of the members who have been added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died the past year; with the present number in each church.

*N. B.* Ministers' names in *capitals*. Licensed preachers in *Italic*. Those to whose names this mark \* is affixed were not present. From churches marked thus † we had no intelligence. Dashes — denote no settled minister.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Adm.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Number.</i>
1st. Boston,	SAMUEL STILLMAN, Richard Gridley,	5	1	4	4	267
2d. Boston,	THOMAS BALDWIN, Jacob Hollard,	2	2	1	6	158
Bellingham,	* NOAH ALDEN,					51
Haverhill,	HEZERIAH SMITH,	1			3	176
Warren,	LUTHER BAKER,					52
1st. Middleboro',	ISAAC BACKUS, Nathaniel Shaw, David Alden,	3	2	2	2	93
2d. Middleboro',	EBENEZER HINDS, Peter Hoar,				1	29
3d. Middleboro',	SAMUEL NELSON, Elisha Clark, Martin Keeth,	1	1			107
Charlton,	DAVID RATHBUN, Eli Wheelock, David Bates,	1		2	1	113
Royalston,	* MOSES KENNY,	7	1	3	2	155
Wrentham,	WILLIAM WILLIAMS,	5			1	40
† South-Brimfield,	* ELIJAH CODDING,					155
Attleboro',	————— John Sprague, John Cheever, William Everett		2	2	1	68

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Addd.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Number.</i>
† Wilbraham,	* SETH CLARK,					228
† Woodstock,	_____					73
Chelmsford,	JOHN PECKEN,	5		5	1	95
Barnstable,	ENOCH ELDRIDGE,					58
	SHUBAEL LOVELL,					
	Nehemiah Lovell,					
New-Salem,	_____					45
	* <i>Josiah Orcutt,</i>					
Leicester,	NATHAN DANA,				1	45
	John Lyon,					
Freetown,	_____			8		20
	Nathaniel Brailey,					
Medfield,	_____			2		42
	* <i>Edward Clark,</i>					
Harwich,	ABNER LEWIS,	15			2	72
	Obed E. Smith,					
† Harvard,	* ISAIAH PARKER,					129
Newton,	JOSEPH GRAFTON,	6	3			94
	Solomon Richards,					
Salem, (N. H.)*	_____					57
† Northbridge,	* JOHN COOPER,					47
Cambridge and } Woburn,	JOHN PEAK,	11	2	3	2	84
	Josiah Converse,					
† Ashburnham,	_____					57
Providence,	STEPHEN GANO,	9	5	1	5	210
	Philip Martin,					
	David Martin,					
† Gloucester,	* JOSEPH WINDSOR,					81
Sturbridge,	_____	11				96
	Zenas L. Leonard,					
	David Curtis,					
Templeton,	_____	15	3			97
	Silas Cutler,					
	Joshua Tucker,					
	Joel Fletcher,					
New-Rowley,	_____	14	6			50
	Timothy Jackman,					
Bridgewater,	GEORGE ROBINSON,	5			2	53
	Daniel Lathrop,					
	James Perkins,					
	James Perkins, jun.					
Weston,	_____				1	18

The worthy pastor of this church, the Rev. Samuel Fletcher, has the past year  
 departed this life, to the rewards of the blessed; after serving God and his  
 church with fidelity and success.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dismissed.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Number.</i>
Randolph,	JOEL BRIGGS, Jonathan Wales, Elisha Ames,		2	1		58
Carver,	JOHN TRIPP, Joseph Pierce, Jacob Shaw,	2				52
† Hollis,	_____					31
Marshfield,	_____					26
† Hardwick,	_____					40
Belchertown,	SAMUEL BIGELOW,					18

*N. B. This last church was received the present year.*

Total 106 78 27 32 3449

Adjourned until half past eight o'clock to-morrow morning. Brother Baldwin concluded by prayer.

Sermon in the evening by brother *Peter Werden* from Acts xx. 32.—  
*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

WEDNESDAY, September 9.

Met according to adjournment.

Prayer introductory to business, by Brother Isaac Backus.

5. Received and read letters from our Sister Associations. From the Philadelphian a letter but no minutes. From the Charleston a letter and minutes. A letter and minutes from the Shaftsbury, by the hand of Mr. Werden. A letter and minutes from the Stonington, by their Messenger Mr. Pardon Tillinghast. From New-York, a letter and minutes by their Messengers, Dr. Benjamin Foster and Brother Jacob Fitz Randolph. These, with the other ministering Brethren present, were invited to sit in council with us.

6. Appointed the following Brethren to write to the several corresponding Associations, viz. Messrs. Smith to the Philadelphian; Grafton to the Charleston; Backus to the Woodstock; Williams to the Shaftsbury; Stephen S. Nelson to the Stonington; Zenas L. Leonard to the Bowdoinham; David Leonard to the New-York; and Peak to the New-Hampshire.

7. The Circular Letter prepared by brother Gano, was read and unanimously approved.

8. Chose the following Brethren our Messengers to our Sister Associations. To the Philadelphian, Dr. Foster. To the Woodstock, Brethren Baldwin and Grafton. To the Shaftsbury, Brethren Zenas L. Leonard and Stephen S. Nelson. To the Bowdoinham, Brethren Eldridge, Lovell, and D. Leonard. To the New-Hampshire, Brethren Smith, and Peak.

To the Stonington, Brethren Backus, Dana, D. Leonard and Z. L. Leonard. To the New-York, Brethren Gano, Baldwin and Stephen S. Nelson.

9. Voted to recommend it to our several Churches to join in the Concert of Prayer proposed by the Rev. Messrs. King, Astin and others, began on the first Tuesday of January last, at half past two o'clock, P. M. and to be continued through every quarter of the year, to supplicate the throne of grace for a revival of religion.

10. A letter was read from the Secretary of the *Baptist Education Society*, containing a particular account of the state of the Fund, by which it appears that the capital is yet small, and that very considerable sums are necessary to increase it, so as that we may realize the object which we first contemplated. Therefore, voted to request the Elders and Messengers here present, to use their influence with the several Churches they represent, to have a collection made sometime in every year for the purpose of increasing the Fund so as that it may answer the original design. A very pleasing, encouraging letter, was also received and read, from Mr. N. Brown, of Providence, upon the same subject.

11. Chose Col. Stephen Dana one of the Trustees of said Society, in the room of Mr. Robert Rogers resigned.

12. Voted to have a committee to give advice to those who may be taxed by other denominations for the support of religious Teachers whom they do not choose to hear. Chose for the above purpose Mr. Backus, Dr. Stillman, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Smith and Mr. Grafton.

13. Chose Mr. Smith, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Dana a committee to apportion and distribute the money collected yesterday, amounting to 34 dollars and 13 cents, to the several Widows who have been left by ministers of this Association.

14. The Churches in this connexion were desired by the Association last year to instruct their delegates relative to the matter of incorporation by the civil power, for the purpose of supporting the gospel ministry: many of them did so; and we have the pleasure to find that they highly disapprove of it. We refer the Churches to the Minutes of the Association held at New-Rowley, September, 1791, and to those of the last year, for our decided opinion against it, as an associate body.

We are persuaded that the Churches of our denomination in this Commonwealth would not have applied for acts of incorporation, had they been acquainted with a law passed in 1786, intitled, "An act for the better securing, and rendering more effectual, grants and donations to pious and charitable uses:" the principal part of which follows—"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, that the deacons of all the several *Protestant* Churches, not being Episcopal Churches, and the churchwardens of the several Episcopal Churches, are and shall be deemed *so far bodies corporate*, as to take in succession all grants and donations, whether real or personal, made either to their several Churches, the poor of their Churches, or to them and their successors; and to sue in all actions touching the same," &c. &c. &c. Perpetual Laws, folio vol. p. 370.

Our Brethren may peruse the whole act at their leisure, by which they will perceive that all *Protestant Churches* are fully incorporated, so far as re-

spects donations or grants made for pious purposes; consequently all applications to the General Court for acts of incorporation are totally unnecessary.

15. The several letters to the corresponding Associations were read and approved.

16. Agreed to the following supplies:

	{ Mr. Briggs, the 3d Lord's Day in October, and in the four following months. Mr. Stephen S. Nelson, 2d in October. Mr. Samuel Nelson, 2d in November. Mr. Eldridge, 1st and 2d in December. Mr. Lovell, 1st in January.
Marshfield,	
Cambridge,	
Framingham Society,	
	{ Mr. Lovell, last in September, and 1st in October. Mr. Stephen S. Nelson, last in May.
	{ Mr. Ebenezer Nelson, last in September. Mr. Grafton, 2d in October. Mr. Lovell, 1st in November.

17. Appointed Dr. Stillman to write the Circular Letter for next year.

18. Voted, to hold our next Association at Charlton, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, 1796, at two o'clock, P. M.

19. Appointed Brother William Williams to preach the introductory Sermon, in case of failure, Brother Robinson. The business being finished at 4 o'clock, P. M. the Moderator concluded by prayer; and immediately after Dr. Foster preached to a very crowded audience from Dan. xii. 12. *Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.* Sermon in the evening by Brother Baldwin from Rev. ii. 21. *And I gave her space to repent:—and she repented not.*

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INTRODUCTORY

CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The* ELDERS and MESSENGERS of the several CHURCHES met in ASSOCIATION at Bridgewater, September 8th and 9th, 1795—  
*To the* CHURCHES whom they represent, send Christian salutation.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE have been favoured through divine goodness with another annual meeting, and have reason to bless God for the peace, harmony and consolation which we have enjoyed. May the great Head of the Church add his blessing to the following serious, seasonable address, and make it abundantly advantageous to your establishment in the truth.

HAVING the last year addressed you on *The Nature of Salvation by Christ*, we propose this year to address you on **THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS GOD**. This doctrine we consider as lying at the foundation of the Christian religion, and supporting on its basis the true church of Christ, through every age: neither do we suppose that any can deny this chief corner stone of our holy religion, without denying revelation, derogating from the glory of Jesus, and virtually espousing the cause of antichrist.

Indeed, brethren, we view it of the utmost importance, that we are established in this fundamental doctrine of our Bible: since the many modern and violent efforts of Socinian and deistical writers, with their vain philosophy, attempting to depreciate the honour of our exalted Lord and Lawgiver, make it necessary, that we should shew ourselves on the side of the Lord. It cannot be expected that we should offer all, in the compass of a circular letter, which might be produced in vindication of so sublime and precious a truth. Neither do we expect to bring into view any new proof of this doctrine: since so many of the learned and pious have employed their pens in its defence. But we shall esteem it our happiness, if by the following summary statement of some of the most material arguments, your minds should be stirred up by way of remembrance, to hold fast that invaluable truth which upholds the whole family of God, and will excite their adoration to the endless ages of eternal day.

To reduce this subject to some order of examination, it is necessary to premise that our light upon it can only be reflected from the sacred page: for the light of nature is wholly insufficient to discover the profound mystery of "God manifested in the flesh;" hence we take for granted the authenticity of the Bible. This being granted, our information must be derived from the page of inspiration. From this page we are fully taught the doctrine of Christ's Divinity. The Old Testament pointedly predicted the coming of Jesus, as God; the New Testament most clearly displays the verity of those predictions. A very remarkable prophecy is found in Isaiah ix. 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." In these words we have the perfect humanity, and the glory of the inconceivable God, brought into as plain a view as language can express. We find him here styled the mighty God, the everlasting Father, as well as sustaining the mediatorial and precious character of Prince of Peace. Nor is this the only passage in the prophets that speaks of the blessed Redeemer as God. Isaiah vii. 14. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The evangelist, Matthew has placed this passage beyond the shadow of a doubt, when he quotes and explains it, chap. i. 23. and says, "Immanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us." Again, Jeremiah xxiii. 6. "In his days," viz. in Christ's days, "Judah shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" Let these plain passages, selected from many, suffice at present to prove, that the Messiah was promised, to be manifest in flesh, as GOD. It is obvious that many, who had the lively oracles of heaven, looked for his coming in this charac-



ter. The woman of Samaria who conversed with our Saviour at the well, spake of it as a familiar idea, that when the Messiah came he should tell them all things. From the character of this woman, as a stranger to a religious life, the idea is confirmed that it was commonly expected Jesus should possess that knowledge which appertains only to Deity.

When we turn our attention to the New-Testament, we see a most glorious and beautiful coincidence with the Old, in ascribing those names to Jesus which peculiarly belong to the self-existent Jehovah. How plain is the evangelist John in the first chapter and verse—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." If it thus appears, that Christ was promised under those titles, and really hath those names given him which belong only to God; must it not be utterly confounding to common sense, to consider him in any other light than as the true God? How shall or dare we make a distinction in a mystery of such magnitude, where the word of God makes none, either in names or attributes?

That Jesus Christ possesses the attributes of the only living and true God, must be obvious to every unprejudiced reader of the Bible. Omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, it is universally allowed, can dwell only in the incomprehensible God. The work of creation is certainly a work of omnipotence. It is expressly asserted of Christ, "by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Col. i. 16, 17. Again; Eph. iii. 9. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." These pointed texts of scripture, perfectly plain to every common capacity, describe the glory of our Saviour, as our Creator, and they exactly coincide with the apostle's reasoning, Rom. i. 20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. We may add what the apostle says to the Colossians—"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Chap. iii. 10. From this text it appears that Jesus is the Creator. Nor will it avail to object, that this respects the new creation of man, from that spiritual state of death into which he had fallen. For it is equally a work of omnipotence to create a soul to a spiritual life of holiness, as to create a material world.

We may add further in confirmation of this point, that the power displayed by Christ in calming a tempestuous ocean by a sovereign word, in raising the sleeping dead to life and activity, and bursting the bands of death at his own glorious resurrection, and the like, give a demonstration that he was clothed with omnipotence.

It must be acknowledged that one attribute of Jehovah necessarily involves all others, consequently omniscience and omnipresence must dwell with our Lord Jesus Christ. That Jesus evidently possesses the attribute of omniscience shines as the meridian sun in the word of light and life. Perhaps we are conversant with nothing, that we have less adequate ideas of

than the heart of man. Agreeably to this sentiment is the language of the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 9, 10. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and the fruit of his doings." King Solomon, when dedicating the temple by an inspired prayer, says, "For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men." David's solemn and affecting exhortation to his son speaks the same sentiments, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. "Thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." These passages fully prove, that it is the omniscient Jehovah's prerogative to search and know the heart of man. That Jesus manifested his glory in this attribute we learn from that precious volume which declares, "He needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." John ii. 25. Peter's answer to our Lord shews the same—"Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." So does the affecting and heart-searching conversation, between the blessed God-Man, and the woman of Samaria, which caused her to run to her brethren and so earnestly urge them, "Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did ;" drawing the natural conclusion therefrom, "Is not this the Christ ?" So does Jesus's detection of Judas's diabolical conduct in betraying him ; also his perfect knowledge of his enemies' hearts, when they sought to ensnare and betray him ; and sight of Nathanael, when under the fig-tree, and perfect knowledge of his devotion and character. That Jesus is appointed Judge, to take cognizance of thought, word and deed, the scriptures amply declare ; how is it possible he should perform this work unless he is omnipotent and omniscient ? This office fully comports with that solemn declaration given by Christ, Rev. ii. 23. "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts : and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Oh ! that all the churches would fully weigh this text, realizing themselves amenable to Jesus, in whose immediate presence they are. Our Lord himself declares, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Math. xviii. 20. Do not these plain and familiar accounts of Christ's character, waft our minds infinitely beyond the most exalted created being, and cause us profoundly to adore Jesus Christ, as God over all, in all, and through all, blessed forever ?

In holding fast this faithful word of life, we would remind you, that some of our blessed Lord's open and inveterate enemies were obliged to confess the truth for which we contend. In the fourth chapter of Luke, from the 33d verse, we have the following account ; "And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art ; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not." It is likewise said in the 41st verse of the same chapter—"And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak : for they knew that he was Christ."

These confessions from the fiends of darkness shew their knowledge of him as God. If Christ was no more than a mere man, however holy, is it probable Satan would have made such a confession, when it must weaken his own power, and give testimony to the same truth advanced by our blessed Lord? No surely: unless we admit the horrid suggestion, that Jesus and Satan were united to deceive our world, which idea by no means comports with that purity of life so eminent in the Saviour, and even acknowledged by many who oppose his Divinity. The above accounts must likewise confute the absurd opinion advanced by some, "That the persons possessed by evil spirits, spoken of in scripture, were troubled with certain bodily diseases." It is as difficult and preposterous to conceive of diseases speaking, when they leave persons, as for sin to be punished and the sinner entirely freed from pain. But to return: These passages may well amaze us, as they did the beholders; and lead us to adore him who subjected the prince of the power of the air to his almighty mandate.

It is generally allowed by those who oppose the precious and soul-comforting doctrine of the Saviour's Divinity, that the Lord Jesus was truly a most amiable and benevolent character. In what does his amiableness or benevolence appear if we deny his Godhead? Does it appear in leaving us deceived respecting his true character? The character of a deceiver was never amiable, as such. If this doctrine is not true, how are we to understand those positive assertions of Christ? "I and my Father are one," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But what declarations are these, unless we consider him as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father? It is evident that the malicious Jews understood that Christ claimed a title to Divinity. Hence they ask him, "Dost thou make thyself equal with God?" Neither did the Redeemer disown that these were his pretensions, but fully allowed that he claimed this high and holy character.

In confirmation of the above observations, let us remember the worship claimed by and given to our divine Lord. The beloved disciple who wrote in vindication of this sublime mystery, informs us that Jesus, when addressing the Jews who sought to kill him, for making himself equal with God, saith to them, "All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him." John v. 23. How plain this passage, that Jesus claimed a right to their religious adoration, equal with the Father.

But if Jesus had not been truly God, his command would have been a direct transgression of the law of God, which requires our religious adoration and worship to be given to God only; and Christ came not to make void, but establish the law: and by his holy life has most gloriously displayed the perfection of it. Prayer is certainly a part of religious worship. The penitent thief who died in company with our Lord, addressed him in fervent prayer. St. Stephen also in the agonies of death, calls on the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, &c. Nor do we find these acts of religious worship were ever forbidden by our Lord and Master; but the angels of God are called upon to worship him.

Dearly beloved brethren, how can we contemplate this wonderful mystery of "God manifested in the flesh," without being wrapt in profound love and wonder. Shall the Eternal dwell in a house of flesh? Shall the curtains of heaven open, and the incomprehensible Jehovah audibly declare his ap-

probation of this wonderful mystery? Shall all the attributes of God shine in the person of our Saviour? Shall devils be constrained to confess his Sonship? Shall saints worship him in their lives and deaths? Shall the convulsed earth groan when Jesus dies, and the shining luminaries of heaven lose their wonted pleasing lustre for a season? Shall the doleful tomb lose its power of holding the divine prisoner? Shall the everlasting doors of heaven fly wide open to receive the King of Glory, amidst the united acclamations of holy angels, and perfected saints? Shall all these and innumerable more evidences, strike our admiring eyes, and we not be sweetly constrained to cry, Truly this was the Son of God. Yet, brethren, when we reflect, that real Christians must have felt the power of his resurrection on their hearts, we are persuaded that neither wicked men nor devils will be able to wrest this truth from their souls.

It has been impossible, in the compass of our Circular Letter, to bring into view but a very small part of that evidence of this important doctrine which lies at the foundation of all your hopes for life eternal: neither have we attempted to confute all the objections of captious disputants who oppose themselves to the truth. If these hints should prove a mean of stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance, to hold fast the faithful word as ye have been taught, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we shall feel happy.

As the day in which we live abounds with error, as well as portends great events in the kingdom of Providence, we should let it appear in our lives and conversation, that we firmly rely on the foundation of Christ's Divinity. For if we let this truth go, we let the foundation go; and if the foundation be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?

May we be followers of God, even Christ, as dear children, putting on as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, patience, temperance, with every grace, till we arrive to the perfect stature of men in Christ Jesus, and see him in the world of un fading and unceasing glory.

Signed in behalf of the Association.

SAMUEL STILLMAN, Moderator.

THOMAS BALDWIN, Clerk.