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Minutes ... in Boston, September 12 and 13, 1797.
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MINUTES

OF THE

WARREN ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT THE

FIRST BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE

IN

B O S T O N,

SEPTEMBER 12 and 13,

1797.



B O S T O N :

Printed by MANNING and LORING.

MDCCXCVII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A NUMBER of subscribers having appeared for the publication of President MAXCY's introductory Sermon at this Association, and also for Dr. STILLMAN's Sermon delivered the day following at the Ordination of the Rev. STEPHEN S. NELSON, it is expected that both of them will be published. Those who wish to purchase either or both of these Sermons may probably be gratified by applying in a few weeks at MANNING & LORING's Printing-Office, in Boston.

Also for sale, at the above Office,

THE Third Volume of a CHURCH HISTORY OF NEW-ENGLAND, by ISAAC BACKUS. A. M. Price 7s. 6d. Subscribers are requested to call or send for their Books. Those who wish to purchase the First and Second Volumes, may also be supplied.

Boston, Sept. 28, 1797.

MINUTES, &c.



TUESDAY, September 12.

1. **A**T three o'clock, P. M. Rev. Jonathan Maxcy delivered the introductory Sermon from Heb. ii. 3---*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?** After service had a collection for the widows of ministers who have been members of this Association.

2. Chose Dr. Hezekiah Smith, *Moderator*, and Brother Thomas Baldwin, *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.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Add.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Number.</i>
1st. Boston,	SAMUEL STILLMAN, Richard Gridley, Daniel Wild, William Capen.	2		1	3	266
2d. Boston,	THOMAS BALDWIN, Jacob Holland, Richard Smith.		1	1	3	157
Bellingham,	----- EBER MOFFIT, David Cook, Aaron Thayer.		1		1	48
Haverhill,	HEZEKIAH SMITH, John Chase.	2	2			163
† Warren,	* LUTHER BAKER.					52
1st. Middleborough,	ISAAC BACKUS, Joseph Ames.				2	88
† 2d. Middleborough,	-----					29
3d. Middleborough,	SAMUEL NELSON, Elisha Clark.	1	7		3	98
Charlton,	----- Daniel Bacon, Samuel Robinson.	7			1	111
Royalston,	-----	1		1		142
Wrentham,	WILLIAM WILLIAMS, Joseph Miller.				1	38

* Brother Robinson who was appointed to preach on this occasion, was present, but his ill state of health prevented.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Add.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Numb.</i>
† South Brimfield,	* ELIJAH CODDING.		2			155
Attleborough,						68
† Wilbraham	* SETH CLARK.					228
Woodstock,		1		3	1	63
	<i>Robert Stanton.</i>					
Chelmsford,	JOHN PECKENS,				1	88
	Samuel Brown,					
	Nathaniel Hutchinson,					
Barnstable,	ENOCH ELDRIDGE.	2	1			61
New Salem,	* JOSIAH ORCUTT.		3		1	41
Leicester,		2			1	42
	Samuel Denny.					
† Freetown,						20
Medfield,		1			2	41
	* <i>Edward Clark,</i>					
	Afa Mason.					
Harwich,	ABNER LEWIS,	4				79
	Anthony Kelly.					
Harvard,	* ISAIAH PARKER,				1	118
	John Hawks.					
Newton,	JOSEPH GRAFTON,	5				100
	Jeremiah Richardson,					
	Samuel Richardson.					
† Salem (N. H.)						57
Northbridge,	* JOHN COOPER.				1	46
Cambridge & Woburn,				1	1	82
	Joseph Winn,					
	John Williams,					
	Josiah Converse.					
† Ashburnham,						57
Providence,	STEPHEN GANO,	5		3		208
	JONATHAN MAXCY,					
	JOHN PITTMAN.					
Sturbridge,	* ZENAS L. LEONARD,	18		1	1	127
	Henry Fisk,					
	Samuel Cheever,					
	Simeon Fisk.					
Templeton,		13				123
	Joshua Tucker,					
	Nathan Bryant.					
New Rowley,		3		1	3	48
	* SHUBAEL LOVELL,					
	Timothy Jackman,					
	Joseph Goodridge.					
Bridgewater,	GEORGE ROBINSON,		1			52
	<i>James Reed,</i>					
	James Perkins.					

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Ministers and Messengers.</i>	<i>Add.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Numb.</i>
Welton,	Samuel Haynes, Samuel Train.					28
Randolph,	JOEL BRIGGS, William Blanchard.	1				258
Carver,	* JOHN TRIPP, John Benson, Josiah Leonard.					250
Hollis,	Samuel Taylor, Benaiah Blodgett.	5		1		130
Marblefield,	Prince Hatch, William Curtis, jun.			1		26
† Hardwick,						35
Belcherton,	SAMUEL BIGELOW.	1	1		2	20
1st. Sutton,	DAVID RATHBUN, Samuel King, Samuel Waters,	2				57
2d. Sutton,	WM. BATCHELDOR, Reuben Tisdale.			1	1	53
Danvers,	Israel Porter, Eleazer Wallis, Asa Woodbury.					50
Total		76	19	15	35	3493

N. B. The last church was added the present session.

Adjourned until eight o'clock to morrow morning. Mr. Backus concluded by prayer.

Sermon in the evening at Mr. Baldwin's meeting-house, by Brother Gano, from Col. ii. 2.

WEDNESDAY, September 13.

Met according to adjournment.

Prayer introductory to business, by the Clerk.

4. Received and read letters from the following Associations, viz. From the Philadelphian a letter and minutes. From Charleston, letters and minutes for 1795 and 1796. From the Shaftsbury, letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Eber. Moffit. From the Stonington, letter & minutes, by their messengers, Brother Valentine W. Rathbun and Brother Robert Stanton. From New-York, a letter only. From the Woodstock, a letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Simon Coombs. From the New-Hampshire, letter and minutes, by their messenger, Brother Walter Powers. And from the Bowdoinham, a letter and minutes, by their messengers, Brother Elisha Williams and Brother Isaac Case.

5. The

5. The Rev. Job Seamans and the Rev. Joshua Jones being present, were invited to a seat in the Association.

6. Received, by the care of Brother A. Brain, minutes of the following Associations, viz. The Portsmouth, Dover, Roanoake-District, Middle-District, Kettocton, Goshen, Newse and Baltimore.

7. Voted to have a corresponding letter drawn, and if thought proper, to be printed in the minutes.

Chose Mr. Backus for the above purpose.

8. Appointed Mr. Gano to write the Circular Letter for next year.

9. Appointed President Maxcy to prepare a corresponding letter for next year.

10. Chose the following Brethren to visit our Sister Associations, viz. Stephen S. Nelson and Joshua Jones, to the Philadelphian. To the Shaftsbury, Samuel Bigelow, and Stephen Gano. To the Stonington, Isaac Backus, Thomas Baldwin, and S. S. Nelson. To the New-York, Stephen Gano, and S. S. Nelson. To the New-Hampshire, Hezekiah Smith and Joseph Grafton. To the Woodstock, Simeon Coombs. To the Bowdoinham, Abner Lewis.

11. Chose Dr. Stillman, Dr. Smith, Mr. Backus, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Grafton a committee, to whom any persons taxed to religious teachers of other denominations whom they do not choose to hear, may apply for advice.

Whereas the Baptist church and society in the south parish of Herwich have been taxed for several years past to the support of the Congregational minister to the amount of several hundred dollars, and very considerable sums of it have been actually distrained from them; and in attempting to recover it by law, they have expended near five hundred dollars more—It is therefore earnestly recommended to the several churches to have a contribution for the said society, in order to assist them in supporting their just rights, and that the money be brought forward to the next Association.

12. Recommended to the churches that some time in the year they have a collection in each church, for the purpose of increasing the Baptist Education Fund.

13. Chose Deacon Richard Gridley, and Rev. Joel Briggs, Trustees of the Baptist Education Society in the room of Rev. Noah Alden, deceased, and Rev. Isaiah Parker, resigned.

14. Received and read a letter from the Secretary of the Education Society, giving an account of the state of the fund, of the vacancies, &c.

15. Voted to have a committee of seven to petition the General Court of this Commonwealth, if they should think proper, to have an act passed to exempt the Baptists from being taxed to religious teachers of other denominations.

16. Chose Dr. Stillman, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Grafton, Dr. Smith, Col. Dana, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Briggs for the above purpose.

17. Read and accepted the Circular Letter, prepared by Brother Baldwin.

18. Chose Dr. Stillman, Mr. Baldwin and Dr. Smith a committee to count and distribute the money collected for the widows of ministers deceased.

19. Agreed

19. Agreed upon the following supplies :

Bellingham,	{	Mr. Rathbun, 3d. Lord's Day in September.
	{	Mr. King, 1st. in October.
	{	Mr. Pittman, 2d. in October.
	{	Mr. Clark, 3d. in October.
	{	Mr. Batcheldor, 4th. in October.
	{	Mr. Briggs, 1st. in November.
Weston,	{	Mr. Gano, 3d. in November.
	{	Mr. Briggs, 1st. in October.
	{	Mr. King, 4th. in October.
	{	Mr. Waters, 2d. in Jan. and 2d. in July.
Framingham Society,	{	Mr. Batcheldor, 1st. in June.
	{	Mr. King, 1st. in November.
	{	Mr. Williams, 2d. in November.
	{	Mr. Peckens, 1st. in December.
	{	Mr. Briggs, last in Dec. and 2d. in April.
Danvers,	{	Mr. Thurber 2d. in May.
	{	Mr. Lewis, 3d. in May.
	{	Mr. Pittman, 2d. in June.

20. Voted to hold our next Association at the Baptist Meeting-House in Barnstable, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, 1798, at two o'clock, P. M.

21. Appointed Dr. Stillman to preach the introductory Sermon, and in case of failure, Mr. Baldwin.

22. Voted to refer the corresponding letter to be drawn by Mr. Backus, to Dr. Stillman and Mr. Baldwin, to be examined and amended if thought necessary, and then to be printed with the minutes.

Business being finished at one o'clock, the Moderator concluded by prayer.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The ELDERS and MESSENGERS of the several CHURCHES met in ASSOCIATION at Boston, September 12th and 13th, 1797—
To the CHURCHES whom they represent, send Christian salutation.*

BELOVED BRETHREN,

IT is our happy lot to live in an age when the churches of Christ sit under their own vine and fig-tree, and none are suffered to make them afraid. Persecution for conscience sake is almost universally discountenanced, and the instances in which any of our brethren suffer the spoiling of their goods are comparatively few. Our churches in general have rest and peace, and we are happy to add that, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, some of them have additions made to them. Others, however, complain of great deadness and stupidity ; yet appear to be steadfast in the faith.

When

When we compare our present situation with former ages, in which persecution raged with relentless fury, and the innocent followers of Christ were sacrificed upon the altars of ignorance and superstition, what reason have we to adore the goodness of God to us, in granting us a smoother passage across the tempestuous ocean of life. But let us not from hence conclude that we are in a state less exposed to temptation than they were. By no means. They had indeed trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; but we have the false friendship of this world, with all its allurements, to engage; and to wage open war with error and infidelity. The time is evidently come, predicted by the apostle, when men would not endure sound doctrine, but should turn away their ears from the *truth*, and be turned unto fables. Many of the errors which we are called to oppose, acquire a kind of veneration merely from their antiquity; others from the sanctimonious garb in which they are dressed; but the most formidable are those which accord with the corruptions of the human heart. A small degree of probability will be sufficient to give currency to such sentiments as these; sentiments, the most fatal to the present and future peace of mankind! But the same kind Providence which has watched over and protected the church of Christ hitherto, has said, "I will never leave nor forsake you." The people of God, amidst all these varied and trying events, rest assured, that under the wise and perfect administration of the moral government of God, all will be favourable in the issue. "All things shall work together for good to them that love him." And although others, beholding the wrongs which they frequently suffer, may ask, "*Where is the God of justice?*" yet they know and rejoice, that the LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH. This consoling truth is the very foundation of the Christian's hope. If this *foundation* could be destroyed, it might very properly be asked, "What will the righteous do?"* But blessed be God, it was never yet in the power of any, nor of all his enemies combined, to subvert one of his purposes.

May it not then be profitable and afford us real pleasure, to contemplate a few moments upon the nature and extent of God's *moral government*.

The nature of divine government, like its author, is holy, just and good. It originates in the natural and moral fitness of things; in our absolute dependence on God, and his constant care over us; in his right as our Creator and Preserver to rule, and in our capacity as rational, accountable creatures to obey. The moral system results immediately from the attributes of Deity, and is as much governed and directed by the immutable principles of holiness, justice, goodness and truth, as the natural system is by the laws of attraction and gravitation. Our ignorance and partiality upon particular occasions might induce us to wish nature to suspend the operation of her laws, whenever they seem to contravene our designs; the same blind partiality might lead us upon other occasions, to wish the righteous judge of the universe to deviate from those eternal principles of justice and truth on which his throne is established. But these are alike unavailing. For as we see nature proceeding

* Psa. xi. iii.

ing in her steady course notwithstanding all the convulsions in kingdoms and states; so we behold the purposes of God's moral government in a most striking and harmonious succession unfolding, notwithstanding the revolt of angels and the apostacy of men. The disorder and confusion which appear to us to take place in the moral system, do not arise from any defect in the constitution or administration of it; but from the opposing passions of men. The same government in heaven amongst holy beings, exhibits nothing but harmony. Hence we conclude that the divine government in its nature is a system of pure benevolence, and in its administration a constant display of every engaging and lovely attribute.

Let us now contemplate the *vast extent* of God's moral kingdom. And here, my brethren, we are not to confine our views to the race of man, or to the globe which we inhabit; but to extend them to other worlds and other beings. The divine jurisdiction is not bounded by the everlasting hills, nor by any thing short of the utmost verge of the universe. As the sun in the firmament forms the centre of the natural system, so God our sun and shield forms the centre of the moral. In the heavenly world, those holy beings who approach nearest to God in love and perfection, enjoy the first and fullest displays of his glory. There the moral perfections of Deity shine in full-orbed majesty! There perfect order and harmony prevail among all the *principalities and powers in the heavenly places*! There perfect love and cheerful obedience spontaneously flow from all the happy millions! There the spirits of the just made perfect, unite with cherubim and seraphim in ascriptions of praise to Him who liveth and reigneth forever and ever. These holy beings are continually ministering before his throne. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.*

If we now call our thoughts from heaven to earth, and but carefully observe the operations of Divine Providence, we shall feel constrained to join with the Psalmist and say, "The LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Yes, brethren, the divine care extends to man, and that not merely as a class of creatures, but to each individual of the race! Yea, to every particular circumstance which attends him, from the first dawn of his existence till he makes his exit from time. Our blessed Lord, in comforting the hearts of his disciples against the malice of their enemies, reminds them of the particular care of their great Preserver. *Are not, saith he, two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

The great revolutions that have been and are now taking place in kingdoms and states, are all under the direction and control of the Sovereign Disposer of events. *The Most High* seems determined to let us know, that he *ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will.* He has the hearts of all men in his hand, and he can turn them as the rivers of water are turned. He can employ them as in-

instruments to accomplish his pleasure, and to fulfil the predictions of his word, without their knowledge or design. And inasmuch as they feel conscious of the freedom of their own volitions, he may with the greatest propriety punish them for their wicked opposition to that very cause which they undesignedly are helping to support. These reflections, brethren, will calm our minds while we behold the evils which are done under the sun.

Do we hear of wars and rumours of wars, of nation rising against nation, and of earthquakes in divers places? Let us not be greatly troubled. Do we see the sons of infidelity waging war with superstition and idolatry? Should they dethrone them and reign in their stead; and should they still go farther and trample upon the truths of divine revelation, and even bid defiance to the armies of the living God; let us remember that wherein they act proudly, God is above them. Do they think to change times and seasons, and in this way to subvert the Christian sabbath? We know that the Son of Man is *Lord of the Sabbath*. Do they attempt to rob the Christian of his hope of immortality, and sow on his peaceful grave the seeds of annihilation? The archangel's trump will confound their bold impiety, and re-animate the dust of the saints.

Does it look sometimes as if all the foundations of the earth were out of course; as if virtue and innocence were punished, and vice and wickedness were rewarded? Let us not hastily infer, that there must be some defect in the moral system, or want of energy in its administration, in order to prevent these supposed evils. By no means. But let us rest assured, that suffering virtue shall meet a satisfactory reward, and vice its full and justly-deserved punishment. Yes, *verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.**

We not only trace the moral government of God through heaven, and through earth; but it extends to the dark world of hell! This seems designed as his prison for the punishment of impenitent rebels. "The angels which rebelled, and were cast out of heaven, are not removed from the universe; nor have they escaped from the eye of Omniscience, or the arm of the Almighty." No--*they are reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day.* These cannot be released from their moral obligations; for if they could, they would cease to be guilty, and of course to suffer.

Thus we see that God's moral government extends to all events, to all rational intelligences in all worlds--heaven, earth and hell. Believing and rejoicing in the wisdom and equity of the divine government, it must afford additional happiness to consider that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of his dominion there is no end.

That the Lord will be forever exalted, and that he will forever reign, is what gives permanency to the happiness of the saints. On the other hand, it is the same reflection which will awake in the breast of his enemies the keenest sensations of misery.

Thus you see, brethren, amidst all the tumultuous commotions of the world, how ~~firm~~ the church abides. The arm of almighty power is continually stretched out for her defence; and the wings of everlasting love

love are spread wide for her protection. May we feel our love and gratitude continually flowing forth to our all-bountiful Benefactor, and our desires continually increasing after greater conformity to the will and image of God, until our souls, by an immortal ardor, shall catch the celestial fire, and, bursting the veil of sense, shall rise to the full fruition of God.

In the course of the last year, additions have been made to some of our churches, and others have been diminished by death. Amongst the number of the deceased, we have to lament the death of our much-esteemed friend and brother, the Rev. NOAH ALDEN, of Bellingham; whose memory will long be precious to many of our churches. God was pleased to honour him for many years, as a faithful, successful minister of the gospel, and even to continue him to a good old age a blessing to his church. But having fought the good fight of faith and finished his course, we trust he has long ere now received that crown which is laid up for those who love God. *Blissed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

Brethren, let us be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, and stand fast in one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; remembering he that cometh will come and will not tarry; to whom be glory forever and ever. *Amen.*

The WARREN ASSOCIATION, met in Boston, Sept. 12 and 13, 1797, to the CORRESPONDING ASSOCIATIONS sendeth Christian salutation.

DEARLY BELOVED,

THIRTY years have now rolled away since this Association was formed by four churches, and now there are ten Associations formed in the five States of New-England in fellowship. These things are evidently the Lord's doing, and they are marvellous in our eyes. The policy and power of the world have all been exerted against this work, and our own corruptions have been our most dangerous enemies. Could any thing but the power of the Spirit of God have ever accomplished this great event? And how loud is the call to us, to render to him all the glory of his works, by a holy life and heavenly conversation!

Outward prosperity, and worldly glory, have ever been very ensnaring enemies to the children of God, who therefore says to them, Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. All the good that we can reasonably desire, for time and eternity, is to be obtained and enjoyed in the way of obedience to his holy word, and no where else. The obedience of faith is ever acceptable to God, and to all men who love the truth. And the holy scriptures are sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The men of the world will injure their neighbours more

or less, if they are not restrained, and therefore the magistrate is armed with the sword for that purpose; but wherever his power has been exerted to support religious teachers, men have injured their neighbours thereby more or less. And some of our churches have experienced cruel oppression in this way in the year past. But the most of them are freed from oppression and have a good measure of harmony among themselves. A few of them have happy revivals of religion, though a general coldness, and want of life and zeal for God, is complained of in most of them.

A continuance of your correspondence, as well as united prayers that God would pour out his Spirit, and revive his work through this land, and in all parts of the world, is earnestly desired. These Associations have evidently been blessed hitherto, as a mean to unite our churches, to guard against oppression, and against deceivers, to quicken and animate many in the Christian life, and to supply the destitute. And that these great objects may be pursued, and every thing of a contrary nature guarded against, is the earnest desire and prayer of your brethren in the gospel.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

HEZEKIAH SMITH, *Moderator.*

THOMAS BALDWIN, *Clerk.*