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Baptists. Rhode Island. Warren Association, 1789.
Circular Letter from the Warren Baptist Association,
held at Sturbridge ... September 8th and 9th, 1789.
Charleston, Bowen, [1789]. 8 pp.
ABHS copy.

CIRCULAR LETTER,
FROM THE
Warren Baptist Association,

held at STURBRIDGE, Massachusetts State, September 8th
and 9th, 1789, addressed by their Committee to the Churches
in connection, and sent with their Minutes to the corresponding
Associations.

WE the committee who were appointed to revise and a-
bridge the manuscript of the Rev. Mr. Backus, on the
support of the ministers of the gospel, being at a distance from
each other, found that we should be obliged to detain the mi-
nutes too long from the press, by attending to the business of our
appointment, have therefore reprinted an extract from a sermon
on that subject, which was preached by a worthy minister of our
denomination in England 1681, which we have taken from Mr.
Leach's metaphors, p. 259, and we hope will be acceptable to
the churches. We pray God that old truths may have new ef-
fects, 1 Cor. ix. 14 *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they
which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.*

"These words call not only for the maintenance of ministers,
but for such a plentiful contribution, as may make them par-
takers with you in all good things. If God bless the congre-
gation with a plentiful portion of this world's goods, it is their
duty to make their minister a party with them in their flourish-
ing condition. And considering the place and employment he is
in, and the service he attends, it would be extremely unworthy
to think you have done enough, if his pressing necessities be an-
swered, while you abound in superfluities. If the congregation
be poor, their minister must be content to be poor with them,
and rejoice to approve himself a minister of Christ, by hunger
and nakedness, if the providence of God call him thereto: but
if it is in the power of your hand to provide better for him,
God expects it from you, and, *be not deceived, God is not mocked,*
neither will he suffer his commands to be slighted and evaded,
without rendering a just rebuke to the offender; *for whatsoever
man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

'Now that you may the better understand how far you are
concerned in this duty, before I proceed to the further pressing
of it, let me put you in remembrance;

'1. That a minister is bound to attend wholly and only

upon his calling in the ministry, and not to entangle himself in the affairs of life, that he may please him by whom he is called to his spiritual warfare; and nothing but real necessity may dispense with the contrary. His whole time and strength is little enough to be employed in the work and service he is called to. He must give himself to the ministry of the word, and prayer, and continue in reading, meditation, &c. as a man wholly devoted to the gospel service; and is therefore, by his call to the ministry, secluded from those ways and means of providing for his own subsistence, as the trades and secular employments of others furnish them with, that his mind, by the cares of worldly business, may not be diverted from that study of God's word, and care of souls, which the duty of his station engageth him to. And if he may not expose himself to the careful thoughts that accompany worldly business, though tending to his own profit, certainly it is no way meet, that he should be left to conflict with the cares of a necessitous condition, whilst those he ministers to have means to prevent it.

2. It is no less the duty of a minister than of other men, to provide for his family, and (what lies in him) to take care of his wife and children, that they may not be exposed to a thousand miseries and temptations, when he is gone. I confess, of all men in the world, a covetous, raking temper worst becomes a minister; but we greatly mistake, if we think he must divest himself of the due affection of an husband towards his wife, or of a father towards his children; or, that these fruits thereof, which are justly esteemed commendable in others, should be a fault in him.

3. An elder, or bishop is under a special charge to use hospitality, and to be in himself a pattern of charity, and compassionate bounty to poor souls; and if it be his duty to be hospitable and charitable in an eminent degree, then without controversy the people are concerned to endeavour that he may be capable of giving proof of this grace in him, by the exercise of it as there is occasion.

* These things being premised, I shall shew you, that you lie under the strongest obligation imaginable to this duty;

* 1. By the law of nature.

* 2. By the express command and appointment of Christ.

* 3. On the account of the great and manifest evil and inconvenience, that follows the neglect thereof.

* First; The law and light of nature obligeth you to it, as to

matter of equity and justice. And from hence our apostle takes his first plea, in 1 Cor. 9, 7. &c. *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a Vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?* The ministry is a warfare, undertaken at the command of Christ, for the service of your souls; and it is as reasonable that the minister should receive a supply of outward things from you, as that a faithful soldier should receive his pay from his captain, at the charge of the commonwealth, for whose good he militates. Shall a man feed a flock (as a pastor does) and be denied to eat of the milk of that flock, which it is his work to keep and feed? Or, is it consistent with common justice, to deprive a man of the fruit of that Vineyard, which is planted and manured by his own labour? Such is the case, in respect of maintenance, between a minister and the people.—It is not your charity that I ask for him, but justice and debt that I plead for: he is employed in your service, and of right should live upon your charge; nay, you have called him off from other business, and therefore his maintenance is due from you, as is the wages of your servant, though I fear some give more to the meanest servant in their house, than they are willing to do to their minister. Certainly, if you chuse as you ought, your ministers are not of the lowest of the people, but may be allowed to have a share of parts, common prudence, and ability for business, with other men; and could manage trades, or fall into other employments, and get estates as well as you, if they were not devoted to a better service: and must they needs be devoted to necessities and misery, in the same hour that they enter upon the ministry? my brethren, this ought not to be. Let your ministers have as good a treatment at least, as the law provided for the ox that treads out the corn, who might not be muzzled. Neither was this written for the sake of oxen; for, *doth God take care of oxen?* or were there no higher end of this law, than that the brute creature should not be abused? certainly there was; And for your sakes no doubt was this written, that he that ploweth, should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope: for if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

* Secondly; The Lord hath not left us to argue this only from general principles of reason, and common equity; but to put the matter beyond dispute, hath superadded his express command. Thus he provided for his ministers in the time of the law, which

the Apostle urgeth in the next place, 1 Cor. 9. 13. *Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?* God did no sooner separate the Levites to the service of the sanctuary, but he by law provided for their subsistence; and though they were but one tribe in twelve, yet the tenth of the increase of the whole land was given to them, besides the first fruits and offerings, and divers other advantages; so that their lot might equal, yea, exceed that of their brethren. This law is now abrogated, and we pretend to no right of tithing your estates; but the equity of it can never cease; neither hath Christ left gospel ministers to the wide world, but hath made provision for them also, so far as the interest of his command will go with them that profess his name; for so it follows v. 14. *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.* The labourer is still worthy of his hire, and not the less worthy, because he labours in the gospel. Though indeed (if men did fully come up to their duty, yet still) the charge of gospel worship will appear very inconsiderable, when compared with that of the law; for were that my business, I think I could demonstrate, that the fifth part of their estates was yearly to be spent in things relating to the temple service. And if we are sensible of the great privilege and blessing of the gospel, on higher accounts than merely the ease of those burthens, we shall never think much to defray the moderate charge of a gospel ministry, in such a manner as to give reputation to our profession.

Thirdly: That you may prevent the *evil* and *inconvenience*, that follows the neglect of this duty, it concerns you cheerfully to practise it: I might have said, *evils* and *inconveniencies*, as of many, for many there are, and those of easy observation to an unprejudiced eye; but it is the *discouragement of study*, which at present I chiefly aim at. That study must needs be discouraged (I intend the study of theology) by the people's neglect to make a comfortable provision for their ministers, is too evident to require a proof. Who will apply himself to gather and lay up those stores of solid learning, which are needful to a minister, when he can expect to purchase nothing to himself but poverty and distress thereby? or how shall a minister be capable to furnish himself with *universal knowledge* of things relating to this work, that hath no means for providing for his own information, or no time free from cares and worldly business? and the disadvantage of this will at last fall to the share of the people that

administers unto. He that considers that the holy scriptures were originally written in Hebrew and Greek, must have an hard forehead, if he deny the usefulness of learning to a minister; besides many other things there are that call for it, in reference to the opening of the scriptures, which I cannot now insist upon. And it is not without diligent and continued study, that the deep things of God can be searched out, and so proposed to you, as to enrich your mind with the clear and solid knowledge of them. I confess a little learning, and less study, may furnish a man with such a discourse, as may please some weak persons, that judge of a sermon by the loudness of the voice, and affectionate sentences, or can fancy themselves to be fed with the ashes of jingling words, and cadency of terms in a discourse. But alas! the seeming warmth of affection that is stirred up by such means, is as short liv'd as a land flood that hath no spring to feed it. He that will do the souls of his people good, and approve himself a pastor after God's own heart, must feed them with knowledge and understanding, and endeavour to maintain a constant zeal and affection in them, by well informing their judgments, and such an opening of the mind of God from the scriptures as may command their consciences—and this is not to be expected, but from him that labours in his study, as well as in the pulpit. Mistake me not; I know the success and fruit of all the studies and labours of men that preach in the gospel, is from the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, but the *assistance of the spirit* is to be expected by us in the *way of our duty*. These things might be yet applied more home to my present purpose; but perhaps some will think there is too much said already (though I heartily wish more were not needful) and my time calls me to put a period to this exercise.

Two questions yet remain to be considered, which belong to this important subject, viz. 1. In what method may this duty be discharged. 2. To what penalty are members of churches subjected, who, though able, refuse to obey this law of Jesus Christ?

First, by what method may the churches support the gospel ministry? answer, every church is at liberty to chuse its own method. There are three methods which we beg leave to mention.

1. By a *voluntary subscription*. But it has been found by long experience that this is not the most eligible. It is an easy thing for a man to sign his name to a paper, but it has been found ex-

tremely difficult, and in many instances impossible to obtain money that had been subscribed. Hence many ministers have contracted debts for the support of their families in confidence of the money subscribed, who have been unable to pay them; and thereby their feelings and their characters have been wounded.

2. A second method is by raising a fund in the respective churches, and appropriating the annual interest of it to the maintenance of the gospel ministry. There are many ways by which such funds may be raised, which will be easy to the people, viz. By weekly, monthly, or quarterly associations of the friends of religion, who may spend their time at such meetings on some doctrine or practice in the churches, and at each meeting throw into a common stock 1s. 2s. more or less as they shall agree among themselves. However small this fund may appear at the beginning, it will in time increase so much as to become a matter of importance. Such persons as have it in their power may give while living, or bequeath at their death certain sums deposited in the standing fund.—Thus some of our churches to the westward support the gospel.

A third method is by a *voluntary* assessment upon the estates of each member of the congregation. Let a list of property be given in to the society, and each person's proportion of the expence be ascertained by it; in this case, there will be an equality, for each member of the society will bear his part of the burden. Nor can we think that any but the covetous will object to it. No man in this case will pay more than he can afford, according to his estate.

2. To what penalty do those members of churches subject themselves, who, though able, refuse to obey this law of Christ? answer, they fly in the face of divine authority; and are guilty of an act of disobedience to the command of Jesus Christ; and an act of injustice to their minister, as observed in the extract; therefore we believe that they ought to be dealt with as any other delinquent members. Most certainly they walk disorderly. If they loved their adorable master and his cause; they would not refuse to support it according to their ability.

Those persons who go from other societies to save their money, ought to find no protection among the Baptist churches, and we must believe this is their motive, if they refuse to pay their proportion of the expence of the gospel among us.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

ELIJAH CODDING, *Moderator,*
THOMAS GAIR, *Clerk.*

A brief ACCOUNT of the BAPTIST DENOMINATION,
within the FOURTEEN STATES of NORTH-AMERICA.

No.	Associations.	States in which the Chhs. lie.	T. of holding Aff.	Chhs.	Min.	Mem.
1	Bowdoinham	Massachusetts	Sept	8	8	500
2	New Hampshire	Mass. N. Hampshire	2d. Wed. June	8	7	490
3	Windsor	Vermont, Mass. N. H.	4th Wed. Sept	24	14	910
4	Vermont	N. H. Vermont, N. Y.	1st. Wed. Oct.	10	6	480
5	Warren	N. H. Mass. R. I. Con.	Tuesday after 1st. Wed. Sep.	41	25	3300
6	Rhode Island	Mass. Rhode-Island	3d. Frid. Sept.	12	15	6450
7	Groton	Mass. R. I. Connecticut	3d. Frid. June	11	8	1400
8	Stonington	R. Island, Connecticut	3d. Tuesd. Oct.	13	10	950
9	Danbury	Connecticut, New-York	4th Wed. Sept.	12	8	820
10	Shafisbury	Mass. Vermont, N. Y.	1st. Wed. June	14	10	1130
11	Philadelphia	Con N. Y. N. Jersey Penn. Del. Maryland.	1st. Tues. Oct.	55	40	3500
12	Salisbury	Del. Maryland. Virginia	3d Sat. Aug. V 3d Sat. Oct. M	14	5	1100
13	Redstone	Ohio river, Pennsylvania	uncertain	9	8	800
14	South Kentucky	Virginia	do.	12	15	3000
15	North ditto	do.	4th F. May Oct.	12	10	700
16	Ketuckton	Maryland, Virginia	1st Sat. Oct.	12	10	700
17	Chopawamsick	do.	2d Sat. Sept	12	6	700
18	Orange District	do.	2d Frid. Oct.	31	22	4300
19	Dover ditto	do.	1st Fr. May Oct.	26	36	4700
20	Upper ditto	Virginia, N. Carolina	1st Sa. May Oct.	18	10	800
21	Middle ditto	do.	3d Sat. May Oct.	25	24	2000
22	Lower ditto	do.	3d Sat. May	51	45	5300
23	and Kehukey	North-Carolina	3d Sat. Oct.	18	18	1500
24	Roanoke ditto	Virginia, N. Carolina	4th Sat. May Oct.	14	10	1050
25	Sandy Creek	North-Carolina	1st Sat. Aug 4th Sat. Oct.	11	10	500
26	Upper	do.	4th Sat. Aug.	16	9	900
27	Bethel	do. and S. Carolina	2d Sat. Aug	20	17	1895
28	Charleston	do.	4th Sat. Oct.	30	22	2640
29	Georgia	Georgia and do.	3d Sat. May Oct.	538	427	45670

Churches not belonging to any association.
Seventh day Baptist.

150 100 8000
15 12 2000

Sum Total 703 539 55670

For circa, or about

Close Communions, who make laying on of hands a requisite to communion.

Mixed Communions, who will commune with Free-baptists and none for exercise of

(8)

N. B. The times of holding the associations are mentioned; but it is to be observed that whereas 'tis mentioned 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th Saturday in such a month, it ought in many cases to be Saturday before the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th Sunday in the month. The associations in the northern states are holden generally two days, but in the southern states at least three.

The ministers ascertained are all ordained, but there are as many more licensed preachers. The numbers consist of members in full communion, but the adherents are supposed to be four times as many, or 200,000 more.

This statement was principally collected in October 1789, by John Asplund in Southampton, Virginia, who devotes himself entirely to travelling, in order to disperse the gospel, and to be acquainted with the state of the baptists in America. He will (if God permits) give a more perfect account of all the churches—their name—constitution—what state and county they lie in—what associations they belong to—their pastors—licensed preachers—order, and number of members in full communion—their time of monthly and quarterly meetings. Also an account of the associations; their constitutions, plan and sentiments. This book he intends to publish within eight or nine months. It is requested that the leading ministers from every association would send him some intelligence, that the work may be useful.



CHARLESTON (S. C.) PRINTED by T. B. BOWEN, No. 38, Bay

Rev. Oliver Hart. —