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Baptists. Rhode Island. Warren Association, 1810.
Minutes of the ... in Providence, Sept. 11th and
12th, 1810.

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MINUTES

OF THE

Warren Association,

HELD AT THE

First Baptist Meeting-House

IN

PROVIDENCE,

SEPT. 11th and 12th,

1810.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY MANNING & LORING, NO. 2, CORNHILL.

MINUTES, &c.

Tuesday, September 11, 1810.*

1. **A**T two o'clock, agreeably to appointment, Brother William Batchelder delivered the introductory sermon, from Eph. v. i. 2; after which, collected for the widows and children of deceased ministers.

2. Chose Brother Stephen Gano, Moderator, and Brother Thomas Baldwin, Clerk.

3. After prayer by Brother Baker, proceeded to read the letters from the Churches, and took the following account of the members added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died in the year past, and 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 are distinguished by a dash —.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
1st Boston 1668	<hr/> James Loring Prince Snow	2	3	3	9	324
2d Boston 1743	THOMAS BALDWIN Thomas Badger John Ripley	14	3	3	2	400
Haverhill 1763	WILLIAM BATCHELDER Moses Carlton	13	2		3	295
Warren 1764	LUTHER BAKER Stephen Davol Thomas Munro Allen Munro Thomas Nelson	12	4	3		161
1st Middleboro' 1756	SAMUEL ABBOT Asahel Shaw Joseph Ames David Weston	1	9		2	130
2d Middleboro' 1757	SIMEON COOMBS Barnabas Clark William Ashly Abiather Briggs, jun.	3			2	131
3d Middleboro' 1761	SAMUEL NELSON Elisha Clark & Josiah Barrows	3			4	154

* At 10 o'clock Brother Bradley delivered a discourse at the 2d Baptist Meeting-house. A prayer meeting was also attended each morning at 6 o'clock.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Addd.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Wrentham 1769	WILLIAM WILLIAMS Joseph Millar Samuel Haskel Jesse Millar	1			2	65
Attleborough 1769	JAMES READ William Blackinton William Everett	1			1	114
1st Chelmsford 1771	————— Benjamin Adams	2	1			57
Barnstable 1771	BARNABAS BATES Seth Ewer	34	2	1	1	190
Medfield 1776	WILLIAM GAMMELL Benjamin Colburn	16			1	50
Harwich 1757	————— <i>Eli Ball</i>	21		1		105
Harvard 1776	GEORGE ROBINSON Ephraim Emerson Jeremiah Dyar	5				70
Newton 1780	JOSEPH GRAFTON John White	4	1			112
Woburn 1781	————— SAMUEL WYDOWN THOMAS WATERMAN Benjamin Wood			5	3	98
1st Providence 1639	STEPHEN GANO ASA MESSER Joseph Jenckes	10	3	3	7	324
Templeton 1782	ELISHA ANDREWS Joel Fletcher	22	2	1	2	111
Rowley 1785	————— JOSIAH CONVERSE Timothy Morse, jun.	2	2	1		42
Bridgewater 1785	VALENTINE W. RATHBUN Alpheus Leach Danl. Tolman Seth Hall William Basset Lazel Dean Thomas Præ Ebenezer Snow	1			1	103
Weston 1789	————— <i>Charles Train</i>	5				19
Randolph 1780	JOEL BRIGGS William Blanchard Micah White Jonathan Wales Seth Alden		2			62

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dimis.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
*Carver 1791	_____					98
Hollis	_____	1	5	4	4	49
Marshfield 1788	_____	1				41
2d Sutton	WILLIAM BATCHELDER Isaac Gale	4	6	1	1	43
Danvers 1793	JEREMIAH CHAPLIN Benj. Kent, & Benj. Porter	7	1	1		64
Londonderry†	_____	7		2		82
1d Tiverton, late Troy	JOB BORDEN Enoch French John Devol Daniel Boomer George Wadell	5		4	2	101
Marshpee	_____	1		1	1	30
Newport 1756	JOHN B. GIBSON Samuel Barker William Taggart William Vernon	4		5	10	280
Charlestown 1801	WILLIAM COLLIER David Goodwin	1	11	5		72
Rehoboth 1791	JOHN PITMAN Joseph Bucklin Caleb Mason Samuel Brown	1				56
Beverly	ELISHA WILLIAMS Eleazer Wallace Francis Lamson Benjamin Pierce	47	2	2		151
Grafton	_____	31	3			59
Reading	Luther Goddard Enoch Batchelder James M'Clellan EBENEZER NELSON Lillie Eaton	4		2		88
Taunton 1761	_____				1	98
† New-Bost. N.H.	<i>Silas Hall</i> <i>Jonathan Smith</i> ISAIAH STONE					64
Malden	_____	3		1		107
Somerset 1803	BELA JACOBS Joseph Marbel Jacob Frieze	2				43
4th Middleboro'	EBENEZER BRIGGS Samuel Fickens	5		3		45
Salem 1804	LUCIUS BOLLES Benjamin Blanchard John Moriarty	135	10		2	271

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
2d Providence 1805	JOSEPH CORNELL John S. Eddy Varnum Wilkinson William Ham	8		1	1	107
2d Chemsford 1804	JOHN PECKENS* Eliakim Hutchins	2				42
Weare, N.H. 1783	-----					51
Patucket 1805	<i>David Benedict</i> Ichabod Tabor Oliver Starkweather William Allen, & Nathl. Lyon	1	1	1		64
Kingston	SAMUEL GLOVER <i>Elisba Cushman</i>	11	2	10	3	105
Nottingham West 1805	-----	39		2	1	114
African Ch. in Boston 1805	} THOMAS PAUL	6		8		69
Hanover 1806	----- <i>John Butler</i> Thomas Barstow John Collamore Charles Whiting	27	2	4		83
Warwick & Co- ventry 1805	} DAVID CURTIS Roger Alexander John Allen	1		1		64
Ipswich	----- † DANIEL D. LEWIS	8		3		75
Newbury & New- buryport 1805	} JOHN PEAK*	29	1	3	2	78
3d Boston 1807	----- Ensign Lincoln Benjamin Ayers	7		2		65
Holden 1807	----- Charles Brooks William Metcalf Amos Smith	28		1		85
Gloucester Dunstable	----- -----	8	3	1	1	28
3d Tiverton 1808	WILLIAM BENTLEY William Humphries Elisha Brown William Norton William Humphrey, jun.	19			2	39 58
Plymouth 1809	LEWIS LEONARD Nathaniel Ripley, jun.	9				41

† Mr. Pottle, late pastor of this church, has been excluded by the above church.

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dismiss.</i>	<i>Exclud.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Northbridge	JOHN COOPER* Nathaniel Cooper	10		3		43
Marblehead	————— ELISHA ELLIS* John Fielding					32
Pawtuxet 1806	————— William Holdridge Rhodes Green					53
<i>Total.</i>		644	81	92	71	6255

N. B. The two last mentioned churches were received the present session.

4. Adjourned until 8 o'clock to-morrow morning. Brother Grafton concluded by prayer.

Sermon in the evening by Brother Maclay of New-York, from John xvii. 21.

Wednesday, Sept. 12.

5. Met according to adjournment. Prayer introductory to business by Brother Bolles.

6. Received from Sister Associations accounts as follows, viz.

<i>From</i>	<i>Let. & Minutes.</i>	<i>Messengers.</i>
Charleston	Let. & Minutes.	
Philadelphia	do.	
New-York	do.	Archibald Maclay
Stonington	do.	N. Dodge, & Gorham Palmer.
Woodstock	Let.	Job Seamans, & Ariel Kendrick.
Bowdoinham	do.	Isaac Case
New-Hampshire	do.	Simon Locke
Sturbridge	do.	Parson Crosby, James Boomer, and David Pease.
Danbury	do.	Silas Covell, Joshua Bradley, and Henry Green.
Vermont	do.	Calvin Chamberlin.
Leyden	do.	David Pease.

7. Read the Circular Letter, prepared by Deacon James Loring; and voted to accept the same.

8. The Corresponding Letter, prepared by Brother Train, was read and accepted.

9. *Education Fund.*—A brief statement was made by the Chairman. Fifty dollars were presented by Brother Bolles, as a bequest from the late Mr. Timothy Brown, of Salem.

Stephen Dana, by letter, requested to be dismissed. His dismissal was accepted. Whereupon, the Association voted, that the thanks of the body be presented to Stephen Dana, Esq. for his services as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Education Fund. Chose Rev. Dr. Messer to fill the vacancy.

10. The subject of the Chelmsford Churches was taken up, and their situation considered. After hearing a statement of the

difficulties from both parties, and finding that nothing that we had done had produced a reconciliation, it was thought proper, and voted, to drop both of them from our Minutes, until they can become reconciled to each other.

11. *Missionary concerns.*—Several interesting communications were made, and the following sums received from churches, Mite Societies, and individuals.

	Dols.	Cts.
From the Female Mite Society in Warren,	50	
From the Female Mite Society in Providence,	132	94
From brother John Pitman, Providence,	10	
From the Baptist Church and Society, Attleborough,	17	91
From the Female Society in Attleborough,	23	82
From brother B. Emerson, by elder Batchelder,	1	
A bequest from the late Mr. Timothy Brown, Salem, by Mr. Bolles,	100	
From the Baptist Church and Society, Newport,	7	75
From the Baptist Church and Society, Pawtucket,	15	
From an unknown friend, by Mr. Grafton,	5	
From a sister of Grafton Church, by do.	1	
From elder Elisha Williams,	1	
From Female Society in Randolph,	16	10
From Baptist Church and Society in Randolph,	11	20
From two Female Friends in Raynham,	1	
From Elder Chaplin, Danvers,	1	
From Mr. Kent, do.	3	
From Brother Pickens, Middleborough,	1	
From Elder Nelson, Middleborough,	2	
From three Friends,	3	75
From Female Society in Barnstable,	11	
From Baptist Church and Society, Barnstable,	17	
	432	47

12. Chose the following Brethren, Messengers to the Sister Associations, viz. to the

Philadelphia	Brother Baldwin.
New-York	Brother Bates.
Stonington	Brethren Andrews and T. Paul.
Woodstock	Brethren Robinson and Going.
Bowdoinham	Brother E. Williams. [and Hall.
New-Hampshire	Brethren E. Williams, Batchelder, Abbott,
Groton Conference	Brethren Bentley, Mason, and Benedict.
Sturbridge	Brethren Bentley, Reed, T. Paul, & Gammell.
Danbury	Brethren Bolles and Batchelder.
Leyden	Brethren S. Nelson, and Abbott.
Vermont	Brethren Going, and Lyon.

13. The committee appointed the last year to consult on the expediency of dividing the Association, reported, that it be recommended to the churches in the northern section of this connexion, who may choose to form a new Association, to meet by their minister and a delegate at Boston, on the Thursday after the General Election, at such time and place as may be assigned.

14. Voted to accept the foregoing report; and appointed brethren Baldwin, Batchelder, and Bolles, to arrange and give notice of the hour and place of meeting.

15. Voted, that we hold our next Association in the Meeting-House belonging to the Second Baptist Church in Boston, on the

Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September next, at three o'clock, P. M.

16. Appointed brother Bolles to preach the introductory sermon ; and in case of failure, brother Reed.

The business of the Association being closed, the Moderator, in a solemn and affectionate address, exhorted the brethren to love and good works, reminding them of the condescension and love of God ; after which, he commended them to the divine blessing in fervent prayer.

Circular Letter.

The Ministers and Messengers of the WARREN ASSOCIATION to the several Churches they represent, send Christian salutation.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

ON this anniversary, in which we see many who are dear to us, as the purchase of our Redeemer, we solicit your attention to the nature, the grounds, and the benefits of Christian Unity. Every other bond, which may be devised by the wisdom of this world, will be destroyed by the lapse of time ; but this will be commensurate with the soul's immortality, and as lasting as the existence of God, having for the broad foundation of its perpetuity, his unchangeable oath and promise. A full discussion of this subject will not be expected in this letter ; but we hope to notice some of its most important parts, and some things which obstruct its increase.

1. Were we to comprise a definition of the nature of Christian unity in one word, we would say it is holy ; because a holy God is its author, and the glorious object in whom it centres. It is described by the apostle Paul as "the unity of the Spirit." Being produced by his sovereign agency, it is directed in all its operations to those things which are holy. It cements the hearts of believers to one another for the truth's sake, being the effect of that charity, or holy love, which is the bond of perfectness.

2. The grounds of this unity are the truths which God has revealed. An apostle calls it "the unity of the faith ;" and he exhorts believers to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Those truths, in which believers should be united, may be comprised in that doctrine, discipline, and practice, which are exhibited in the Holy Scriptures.

A unity of sentiment in the leading principles of the gospel, is the effect of that work of grace, which is wrought in every regenerate soul. When God converts a sinner, he savingly enlightens his understanding to see the nature of moral obligation, his wretchedness as a transgressor of the law, and the infinite evil of

sin. With these apprehensions, the mind is deeply impressed with the truth of the Scriptures. The holiness of God ; the efficacy of the work of Christ in his obedience unto death ; his dignity as one with the Father, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ; justification through his blood and righteousness ; regeneration by the Holy Ghost ; the justice of the endless misery of the finally impenitent ; the certainty of the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the infallible accomplishment of all God's purposes in creation, providence and grace, are readily admitted by the Christian, as truths revealed in the word of God. Hence those, who heartily embrace these truths, experience a union of soul to one another in the exercise of holy love ; because they mutually exhibit the holy image of the Saviour, the temper and spirit of the gospel.

In discipline may be included the regular organization of a church of Christ, and its proper government, according to the model and the precepts of the New Testament. The persons, who are the proper subjects of membership in a church, are those who believe the gospel, who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and who have been baptized on a profession of their faith, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When a suitable number of such persons, of regular character, solemnly covenant together to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord in his fear, depending on his grace to strengthen them for perseverance in his ways, engaging to watch over each other in love, to admonish, exhort, and rebuke one another according to the directions of his word ; they are a church of Christ, and should be acknowledged as such, whilst they continue faithfully to adhere to his doctrine and precepts. The proper government of a church is clearly revealed in the gospel ; and those, who study the laws of Christ with an upright mind, and humbly seek the guidance of his Spirit, will be led in a plain path.

The authority which Jesus has committed to his church for its government and purification is important. It has not only the power of admonition and rebuke, but also that of cutting off disorderly and corrupt members.

Each church is not only commanded to attend to the external conduct, but also to the religious principles of its members. The church in Pergamos was censured for continuing in its membership those who held the doctrine of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitanes, which the Lord hated. It is absurd to retain in communion those persons who deny the leading principles of the gospel. If a silent submission to manifest false doctrine prevails in a church, a foundation is thereby laid for its entire departure from the truth. But if, on the contrary, the church continues faithfully to adhere to the doctrine and laws of Christ, they may, through a divine blessing, preserve themselves in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. When they righteously execute his laws, no power on earth can annul their decisions ; for he has promised that what they thus bind or loose on earth shall be ratified in heaven.

Hence the manifest impropriety of party councils to hear the complaints of excluded persons. Our Lord does not say, respecting the offending brother, 'If he hear not the council,' but, "If he hear not the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

To the church belongs the duty of discerning, and calling forth the exercise of, the gifts possessed by its members. And here we would not overlook that distinction which the Apostle has made between the gift of exhortation and that of teaching. We fear that in some instances persons have been encouraged as teachers, whose gift has been merely that of exhortation. An indispensable qualification of a teacher is, that he be intimately acquainted with the nature of the gospel, and the harmony of that Christian doctrine which he inculcates on others; that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. The Apostle, therefore, commands that the bishop must not be "a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Those who cordially unite in gospel doctrine and discipline, will greatly increase their Christian unity by an accordant practice. Their principles will have a holy tendency to that conduct, which is calculated to honour God and to benefit mankind. Whatever zeal we may appear to discover in contending for the doctrine of the Lord, if we do not add to it a correspondent practice, all our pretensions will be as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

3. The benefits of Christian unity are incalculable. The most important is, that the glory of God is thereby displayed. Were not this a revealed truth, it might be doubted whether so debased and guilty a creature as man could be instrumental in so great a work. But the declaration of our Lord decides this point: "Herein," said he, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." What nobler motive can be set before us than this? Another benefit of this unity is, that the more it is cultivated, having truth for its foundation, the greater will be the happiness of each individual who participates in it. And religious enjoyments differ from those of the world in this important particular, that the more each believer partakes of them, the more is his soul expanded with holy benevolence to others. It is not so with the ungodly. Envy and rivalry corrode the breasts of wicked men, even in the height of worldly prosperity. When this unity in the truth prevails amongst the friends of Jesus, it tends to display the reality of religion. "Hereby shall all men know that we are his disciples, if we have love one to another." Let us therefore constantly press toward the mark of perfection, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

We now solicit your attention to some things, which obstruct this unity, and which appear to threaten the purity of the churches. One is, their legal connexion with the men of the world in the sup-

port of the kingdom of Christ.* Our Lord has declared, that his kingdom is not of this world, and that if it were, his servants would use the civil sword in its defence. "But," said he, "now is my kingdom not from hence." The kingdom of Christ is evidently of a heavenly origin, and all its operations are of a heavenly tendency. Its King is the God of heaven, God manifest in the flesh. Every subject of this kingdom is a heaven-born soul, and the principles and feelings of his heart are in unison with this confession of the ancient worthies, "We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The laws of this kingdom are holy, and possess this peculiar distinction from all other laws, that they command the right exercise of the heart. How important, then, is it, that they who are the voluntary subjects of this kingdom should studiously avoid every embarrassing connexion with those who are unfriendly to its holy nature!

By an improper affinity of the church and world, the enemies of Christ may obtain an undue influence over the church of God. As the former generally possess the principal part of the wealth, and are the largest in number, in almost every community which may thus unite in the support of public worship, it will be singular if they do not in some things give a wrong bias to those, whose duty it is to lead in the public service of God. Is there any thing, brethren, in the sacred history of the primitive churches, which has any resemblance of such a union as this? Does not the scripture assure us, that "whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God?" Can we suppose that the enmity of the natural heart is destroyed by the present refined state of society?—Rather, brethren, it appears to us that the church is in more danger of corruption from this very circumstance. We have reason to suppose, that it is in consequence of that conformity to the world, which is so prevalent in the conduct of professing Christians, that wicked men appear so friendly. Were believers to walk with that circumspection which the gospel enjoins, and to adhere with faithfulness to the self-denying and self-abasing principles which they profess, there would then be a far more evident distinction between him who serveth God and him who serveth him not.

It is in vain to suppose that the churches are shielded from corruption, if they voluntarily practise any line of conduct which is contrary to the genius of the gospel. The history of the people of God, in all ages, will testify, that whenever they have formed an unholy connexion with his enemies, in religious concerns, it has weakened their own hands, and strengthened Satan's kingdom. Let those, therefore, who love the truth, unite closely in its support; and although they may not make so splendid an appearance in the eyes of men as mere worldly churches, the high and lofty One, whose name is Holy, will dwell with and bless them.

But perhaps an objection will be made, that those who embrace the gospel are generally the poor of this world; and, that their

* By this is meant, civil incorporations to support religion.

limited means will not admit of their supporting the ministers of the gospel, and maintaining the visibility of the church, without the aid of the civil power. This has appeared to many as a strong reason for the legal connexion of the church and world, to uphold the kingdom of Christ. But, alas! what kingdom is that, whose King and subjects cannot be supported without the patronage of their enemies? If these are our deliberate sentiments, we have reason to fear that we have never seen, and that we never shall see, the true kingdom of God. We must have forgotten the words of our Lord, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" the meaning of which undoubtedly is, that it is established in such a way as will not attract the admiration and love of the world. The true state of facts is, that Christ has sustained his church, when all the power of the world has been combined against it; and he has given this gracious assurance, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church.

Do we not recollect that Jesus spake of his kingdom, when he was arraigned as a prisoner, and treated as a malefactor before Pilate? To the unbelieving he appeared as a miserable sufferer; but he was then, and ever will be, the adorable Head of that kingdom, which shall break in pieces and destroy every other establishment which is in opposition to it. The penitent thief saw the glory of this kingdom, when its King was nailed to the cross!—O brethren, let our views on this subject be scriptural, and we shall clearly apprehend that the glory of Christ's kingdom is spiritual, and that we can never incorporate with it the glory of this world, without obscuring its spiritual beauty.

The true visibility of a church does not consist in the multitude of its members, nor in the exhibition of worldly magnificence. It is only by an obedience to the precepts of Jesus, and by a practical vindication of divine truth, that they appear to be his disciples. Our Lord has therefore described his church as "the light of the world; a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid." It is through the church that he makes known to angels and to men, the plenitude of his grace, the glory of his justice, and the purity of his religion.

It was an error of our Lord's first disciples, that he would establish an earthly kingdom; and it has been the mistake of many of his professed followers to the present day. Hence in all instances in which they have courted the patronage of the civil power, degeneracy in doctrine or practice has speedily followed. Articles of faith, human forms of discipline, and prayer-books, however correct, and however solemnly adopted, have hitherto proved insufficient to shield the church against this potent engine of corruption.

In descanting on this topic, we find cause, brethren, to lament, that those who profess to be the subjects of this kingdom are so inattentive in their obedience to its laws. God hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But, alas! the sin of covetousness too much closes the hearts and hands of those, who are the most able to support the ministers of Christ.

Whilst we thus withhold good from those to whom it is due, we must expect the Lord will send leanness into our souls. It appears necessary, brethren, that they, who are called to the ministry, should give themselves wholly to the study of divine truth, without being entangled with the affairs of this life. Do we not wish that our teachers should instruct and edify us in the communication of divine knowledge? And how can we expect this, if their minds are harassed with the business and cares of the world? They are not inspired, as were the Apostles, to communicate the mind of God. They must have time for studying the scriptures, and for meditating on divine subjects, or they cannot minister the word in an acceptable and profitable manner. It will also be advantageous to them and us, if they become acquainted with the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written. Let us then freely communicate the goods of this life to those of our brethren who labour in word and doctrine. They will not expect a maintenance in splendid luxury; but whilst our hearts are enlarged towards them, they will feel the obligation of communicating to us spiritual things.

Another subject, brethren, to which we request your attention, is, the independence of the churches. We hope we shall ever watch this privilege with a godly jealousy, and that we shall never acknowledge any individual, or body of men, however learned or respectable, as having the right to govern or direct them. The church is not a monster with many heads. "Christ is the head of the body, the church," and he alone is King in Zion. It is not in need of any other lawgiver, nor of any new laws. Its laws are complete; they are in the hands of all his subjects, and they are easy to be understood by his obedient friends.

Each church may learn its duty by a humble attention to the scriptures. Our Lord, therefore, has given to each the power of executing his laws of discipline, and rendered them accountable to no tribunal but his own. If they abuse this power, either by neglecting to exercise the discipline he has commanded, or by wresting the true meaning of his precepts for their government, he will reprove their backslidings; for he has said, "All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts."

A practical acknowledgment of the independence of the churches, is favourable to the increase of scriptural light and instruction: for if we are candid, we shall not despise an opinion merely because it is opposite to our own; but be willing to examine it by the word of truth, and hold fast that which is good. Whilst each church feels itself accountable to Christ alone, it will diligently inquire, What saith the Scripture? and if it finds itself in need of reformation, it will not so sedulously ask, What will this or the other professor say respecting our conduct? but, Are our sentiments and practice according to the mind of Christ?—Let us recollect, brethren, that we are accountable to him, and that we cannot expect a continuance of our Christian privileges, unless we understand their basis, and defend them by the scriptures. Mosheim informs us, that until about the middle of the second century, "the

churches were entirely independent ; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction ;” but that an alteration was then made, by industriously propagating the opinion, that Christian ministers succeeded to the rights and privileges of the Jewish priesthood. Let us beware of considering annual Associations as councils for the regulation or direction of the churches ; and may we never entertain the idea, that we are righteously connected together, any farther than we are under the influence of a Christian unity in the truth as it is in Jesus.—May this holy oneness pervade all our hearts, till we shall join the whole ransomed family in heaven and earth in the praises of our Redeemer.

Corresponding Letter.

*The WARREN ASSOCIATION, convened at Providence, (R. I.)
September 11th and 12th, 1810, to corresponding Associations, sendeth
Christian salutation.*

MUCH RESPECTED AND BELOVED BRETHREN,

WE will praise the Lord with our whole heart, and show forth all his marvellous works. He hath set his glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes he hath ordained strength. The heavens are the work of his fingers ; of man he is not unmindful. To him he has given dominion over all the works of his hands ; has put all things under his feet. Wonderful indeed are the works of creation and providence, and cannot fail to excite in every serious mind adoring thoughts of the all-wise Creator. The devout philosopher surveys the various parts of an immense universe, as they lie diffused above, beneath and around him ; observes the various operations of nature, and with admiration exclaims, O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! But how much greater must be his surprise, when he contemplates the works of sovereign grace ! The Church of Christ, a spiritual universe of ten thousand glories, presents itself to his view. This is the workmanship of the same divine Artist ; but an infinitely greater display of his power and skill. God manifest in the flesh comes creating all things new ! Instead of the simple operations of nature, now he traces with amazement the operations of the Holy Spirit, quickening sinners, dead in unbelief, and giving them the light of life. Guilty sinners, renewed by this divine influence, are brought into the church with shouts of grace, being united to Christ and justified by faith. With perfect astonishment he now exclaims, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, in wisdom hast thou made them all. The base materials in their original state, and the beauties of that church, which is holy and without blemish, present a contrast truly striking and wonderful. Here we behold a flame, which

the waters cannot quench ; and a bush, which the flame can never consume. True, dear brethren, by reason of sin, which brought ruin into the natural and moral world, the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men ; but, behold, according to the promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The starry heavens and the earth will flee from the face of him, that sitteth upon the throne, “ like the baseless fabric of a vision,” and the great city, the holy Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God. The tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God. This is the city, which hath foundations, and here the righteous shall forever dwell. The angels desire to look into these things, and the redeemed of the Lamb cry out, “ It is the Lord’s doings, and marvellous in our eyes.”

The several churches of Christ are in themselves so many distinct bodies ; again they are integral parts of one immense whole, or members of the same glorious body, of which Christ is the supreme Head, and the Holy Ghost is the living soul. Christians and Christian churches, therefore, those especially of the same faith and order, being of the same bone and of the same flesh, are united in bonds of the dearest union. Having their souls washed in the blood of the Lamb, and their bodies washed with pure water ; being nourished by the same divine truths ; having the same glorious prospect before them ; and being exposed to the same enemies, temptations and dangers ; they cannot but have fellowship with the Father, with his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another. While on this wearisome pilgrimage, therefore, they will speak often one to another upon these interesting subjects, to animate their fellows, and deceive the tedious way. To do this, a personal interview, or epistolary correspondence, is absolutely necessary. We occasionally are favoured with both. By means of letters and messengers, we reap the pleasant fruits of an association of Churches ; and by pursuing the plan, we form one great Association of Associations. How agreeable the thought to every benevolent mind ! How desirable to preserve a correspondence so pleasing and beneficial ! It gives us not only a comprehensive view of the churches in our connexion, and the annual progress of religion among us ; but it affords an opportunity for collecting our wisdom and strength, and for uniting our exertions to promote the cause of our Divine Saviour. We are happy to express the high satisfaction, derived from our present interview, from the letters, minutes, and visiting Brethren of sister Associations. It appears, the Lord has not left his name without a witness. We rejoice with those parts of the Lord’s heritage, which have received refreshing showers, and are in a flourishing state ; nor will we forget to mourn and pray for those, who at present are lamenting their drought and sterility. We rejoice to see the glorious kingdom of the Redeemer gradually extending itself to the East and to the West, North and South ; and fondly do we an-

participate the millennial day, when the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall fill the whole earth.

We conclude, brethren, with reminding you, that as there have been adopted, at different times, many different astronomical systems of the world; so there are many different systems of religious truths. There is however but one true solar system, which satisfactorily explains the various appearances and movements of the heavenly bodies; the same holds equally true in religion. Daily let us search the scriptures of truth: and that we may understand what we read, we must pray the Divine Spirit to guide us. Let us earnestly contend for truth, so far as it shall be made plain to the understanding, that we may keep ourselves, our churches, the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel pure. May our correspondence be continued, and our fellowship perfected, that we may continue to move in our respective orbits with harmony and order, till our work on earth is finished; and when the arch-angel shall sound the last loud trumpet, may we all associate in the New-Jerusalem, where those that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

STEPHEN GANO, *Moderator.*

THOMAS BALDWIN, *Clerk.*

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