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Baptists. Massachusetts. Sturbridge Association, 1816.

Minutes of the ... Held at the Meeting-House of
the First Baptist Church, in Woodstock, (Conn.),
August 20th, and 29th. 1816.

Hartford, Russells, 1816. 12 pp.

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MINUTES

OF THE

STURBRIDGE

BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE

OF THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

IN

WOODSTOCK, (CONN.)

AUGUST, 28th, and 29th.

1816.

HARTFORD.

B. & J. RUSSELL, PRINTERS.

State-Street.

1816.

MINUTES, &c.

1. At 10 o'clock A. M. a sermon was Preached according to appointment, by brother David Pease, from Rom. 1st, Chap. 14 and 15 verses: after which a collection was taken for the widows of deceased ministers.

2. The Association was organized by choosing brother Samuel Waters, Moderator, and brother Z. L. Leonard Clerk.

3. Prayer, introductory to business by brother J. Going, after which proceeded to hear the letters from the churches, and took the following account.

N B. Names of ordained ministers in **SMALL CAPITALS**, licentiates in *italics*; those ministers with this mark,* were not present. Churches not heard from are distinguished by this †; and vacant churches by a dash,——

<i>Churches.</i>	<i>Elders and Messengers.</i>	<i>Added.</i>	<i>Dism.</i>	<i>Excl.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Sutton,	SAMUEL WATERS, Solomon Marble, James Taylor, Samuel Blanchard.	18	0	0	2	136
Liecester,	—— ——— <i>Benjamin Hill.</i> <i>John Chase,</i> James Sprague, David Parker,	1	0	0	1	66
Charlton,	JAMES BOOMER, <i>Job B. Boomer,</i> David Dunbar, Jonathan Curtis.	2	3	0	0	49
1st. Woodstock,	NICHOLAS BRANCH, Samuel Crawford, Penuel Corbin, Joel Gage, Samuel Crawford, Jr.	4	3	0	0	72

Churches. Elders and Messengers.

	<i>Adm.</i>	<i>Dis.</i>	<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
2d. Woodstock, ——— ——— James Wheaton, William H. Manning, Thomas Bugbee, George Lyon.	3	0	0	3	116
S. Brimfield, ELIJAH CODDING,* John Munger, John Wales, James Stewart.	3	0	0	3	37
Belchertown, DAVID PRASE, Randal Stanton. Stephen Chamberlin.	4	1	1	1	121
Sturbridge, ZENAS L. LEONARD, John Phillips, Simeon Fiske, Stephen Haskel.	6	0	0	5	112
2d. Ashford, HENRY CURTIS, Koswell Brown, William Snell.	1	0	0	0	49
3d Ashford, ——— ——— Ephraim Hayward, Jonathan Carpenter, Jesse Bugbee.	2	0	0	0	33
Shutesbery, † JOSEPH SMALEDGE.*					145
Wilbraham } and Monson, } ALVIN BENNET, Ariel Day, Bela Bennet, Alner Bennet.	21	1	0	0	116
Thompson, PIERSON CROSBY, Thomas Day, Stephen Crosby, Jesse Bolles, Joseph Elliot.	6	4	3	1	205
Pemfret, JAMES GROW, Simeon Allen,	7	0	0	4	115

Churches. Elders and Messengers.

		<i>Added.</i>	<i>Disn.</i>	<i>Exp'd.</i>	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
	Dacius Simmons, Stephen Chapman, Jr.					
Enfield, Longmeadow, & Wilbraham,	BUCKLEY WATERS, Stephen Dart.	2	0	1	0	136
Killingly	CALVIN COOPER,* Sampson Covil, Silas Slater.	10	0	6	5	129
Tolland,	AUGUSTUS BOLLES, SPENCER ALDEN, Nathan Lyman, Daniel Rice, John Warren, Jr.	19	0	2	0	67
1st. Stafford,	—— — Jonathan Pasco,* Seth Heath, John Barret, Amos Burrows.	0	4	0	3	25
2d. Stafford,	—— — Abisha Washburn, Aaron Gage, John Baker.	1	0	0	0	49
Dana, †	—— —					52
Shrewsbury, & Boylston.	LUTHER GODDARD.	1	0	0	1	55
Dudley,	ESEK BROWN, Stephen Bartlet, Luther Whitmore, Nathaniel Crosby,	5	0	1	1	61
Ward,	ISAAC DWINNEL, Samuel Warren, David Hosmer.	1	0	0	0	29

Grand Total 116,27,19,28,2014

4. Voted, That hereafter the churches be requested to return the number received by baptism, distinct from those received by letter.

5. Invited ministering brethren present, who are not members of this association, to sit and act with us.

6. Received messengers and minutes from corresponding associations, as follows, viz.

<i>Associations.</i>	<i>Messengers.</i>	<i>Letters & Minutes.</i>
Warren,	————	Letter & Minutes.
Stonington,	J. Goodwin,	} ditto. ditto.
	Wm. Palmer,	
	———— Putnam,	
Hartford,	A. Morse,	do. do.
Boston,	————	————
Westfield,	————	————
Leyden,	————	————
Shaftsbury,	A. Morse,	————

7. Appointed messengers to corresponding associations, as follows, viz.

Warren,	brethren Crosby & Angel,
Hartford,	Branch & B. Waters.
Boston,	Branch & Pease.
Stonington,	Dwinnel & Grow.
Shaftsbury,	Morse & S. Alden,
Leyden,	Dwinnel.
Westfield,	B. Waters & Morse.

8. Appointed brethren Going, Crosby, and Leonard, a committee to examine the circular and corresponding letters.

9. Appointed brother Augustus Bolles standing and corresponding secretary of this association.

10. Adjourned till 8 o'clock to-morrow morning.
Preaching in various places this evening.

Thursday 29th.

Met according to adjournment, and after prayer proceeded to business.

11. Voted, To request the several churches of this association to take up a collection in their assemblies previous to our annual meetings, to be put into the hands of the messengers, to defray the joint expense of printing minutes, and corresponding with the Baptist board of foreign missions.

At 10 o'clock brother Going preached from 2 Cor. 4th, 5th.

12. Read and accepted the circular, and corresponding letters, reported by the committee.

13. Appointed brother Dwinell to write the circular, and brother Leonard the corresponding letter, for next year.

14. Voted, That this association meet at Charlton, Mass. on the last Wednesday of August, 1817, at 10 o'clock, A. M.

15. Appointed brother Leonard to preach the introductory sermon, and brother Crosby, in case of failure.

16. Voted, To recommend to the churches to hold quarterly meetings for prayer, beginning on the first Tuesday of October next, at 1 o'clock, P. M.

The business of the association being finished, the moderator closed the session, by addressing the brethren on the important subject of the present neglect in the churches, properly to set apart those appointed to the office of deacons, &c.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The elders and messengers composing the STURBRIDGE ASSOCIATION, to the churches which they represent, wish grace, mercy, and peace, to be multiplied.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Eleven months diminution of our pilgrimage below has brought another anniversary of association, from which you expect an address. Permit us in this to adopt the language of warning and exhortation. Many professed christians thought, two years since, that religion was soon to be drowned in an ocean of blood; for the whole christian world was at war. So loud was the cry, that many sincere but undiscerning disciples trembled at the prospect before them. Religion drowned in blood! No, brethren, the author of religion shed his blood to redeem his people; but experience proves, that bloody scenes amongst nations, and bloody sufferings amongst saints, have no more the property of extinguishing *their* religion, than night has to extinguish the sun, otherways, religion would have disappeared centuries since, in the blood of the martyrs. War has little to do with the empire of Christ, that empire being purely spiritual. Hence it falls out, that when, in the contentions of wicked men a believer loses his life, the King of Zion obtains complete possession of a subject. By civil and warlike commotions, the local interests of religion may be evilly affected; but God has said that he "will not give his honor to another, nor his praise to graven images." Past and present existing circumstances clearly evince, that religion is neither in danger in war; nor safe from encroachments in peace. For the present is a time of general peace, and a time of great religious revival; in which God is pouring out his spirit, gathering in his people, building up truth, and spreading its precious influence through the world. Notwithstanding which, we see that wickedness is still itself; assuming any imagina-

ble form by which to compass its object. Errors, both in doctrine and practice, are zealously propagated. By some, the Saviour is robbed of the essential honors of his character; by others, one ordinance of the gospel is subjected to the caprice of every man's conscience, while in the practice of it "I feel so" is taught as a sufficient rule of duty; and charity is pressed to perform services, wholly repugnant to her nature. Christians at this day are especially called upon to be sober and vigilant. Not only vigilant to find out and expose the errors of others; but, with a mind open to conviction, to strive to find out and correct their own. We exhort you brethren, thus to do. Regardless of all the reviling excited by your faith or practice, endeavor always to keep in exercise that real charity, which banishes from the mind all asperity of feeling; and so keep yourselves in the love of God and your fellow men. That you have the mind that was in Christ, you will best evince, by a patient, humble, holy life. Having renounced civil law in matters of religion, let the law of the gospel have its whole influence upon you in the church. On this point the baptists fail, perhaps more than on any other. We are not to suppose, that because religious concerns are not to be regulated by civil powers, that they are not to be regulated at all. This is making God the author of confusion, and not of order. System is indispensable to the advancement, or long continuance of any community; and for want of this, many churches once flourishing, are now extinct. System should enter into all your transactions connected with the promotion of religion. God has ordained that his ministers should be supported, (not by civil law,) but many indicate by their conduct, that they have thrown this ordinance back to the Jews. Of this however we are happy to say, that many of the churches are mending; Having denied the position that learning alone, qualifies for preaching the gospel; many have run into the opposite extreme, and practically tell us that a call of God to the ministry, renders learning

useless, if not in reality detrimental to the person so called. Many churches of our connection are vigorously correcting this mistake; and we earnestly hope the rest will soon follow their laudable example. Put in requisition all your mental powers to devise the general advancement of religion, and its particular interest in the churches to which you severally belong. When the law of the gospel, or the promotion of truth, make pecuniary demands upon you, meet and discharge them, according to the ability given. Having "vowed to God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools." Having assented to articles of faith, live as though you believed them. Have you ministers? strengthen and comfort them; nor forsake their ministry by your slothfulness. Finally, brethren, be sober, be vigilant, be undismayed; for God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and a sound mind. Watch evermore, pray without ceasing, in every thing give thanks. Stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong. And let all your things be done with charity. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

THE STURBRIDGE ASSOCIATION.

*Convened at Woodstock, (Conn.) August 28, 1816,
to the several Associations with which they corres-
pond, sendeth christian salutation.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

We are pleased with another opportunity of communicating and receiving that religious information, which will ever be deemed valuable by those who cordially desire the advancement of the Redeemers kingdom. This method of intercourse is a happy substitute for those social interviews which in all ages, have contributed to the comfort and edification of christians. When Paul was confined at Rome, he availed himself of such opportunities, which he improved to the great consolation of primitive saints: the utility of which we reap at the present day; and which, unquestionably will be transmitted down to the latest posterity.

But as our pens are not, like his, guided by the unerring dictates of the Holy Spirit should we not carefully guard this sacred conduit, lest like other channels, it should be prostituted to purposes insignificant, if not sinful and altogether foreign from its original design? From our corresponding letters we are accustomed to hear the praises of God in lofty strains, for the wonders he is performing for his people on earth. "Praise is comely for the upright." And it may be equally comely to notice and avoid such things amongst us as may prevent a continuance of divine favours. Although the consideration of our sins and imperfections, viewed as such must create unpleasant sensations; yet, to notice them, for the purpose of reforming, will doubtless be both advantageous to ourselves, and commendable in the sight of Him, who visits the iniquities of his people

with the rod. We fear that too little attention is paid to the qualification and support of our ministers. Ministers should possess a weight of character, which would give them influence if they were not ministers. There is a rapid improvement of information amongst all classes of men : and it must be important, that the improvement of ministers in literary information, keep pace with the general improvement.

Ministers should devote themselves to the work of the ministry ; and if so, it is self evident, that they to be useful, must be supported. Ministers are debtors to preach the gospel ; and christians are debtors to support them. These duties are reciprocal ; the neglect of one, prevents the performance of the other. Brethren, think of these things, and let there be a reformation ; which will be of incalculable advantage to the churches, and to the cause of Christ. Our present meeting has been pleasant, and we hope, useful. Of the state of the churches, and their additions, our Minutes will inform you. Peace be upon you, and upon the whole Israel of God. AMEN.

SAMUEL WATERS, *Moderator.*

ZENAS L. LEONARD, *Clerk.*