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Baptists. Vermont. Shaftsbury Association, 1793.

Minutes ... at Pittstown, June 5th and 6th, 1793.

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1793.

Bathurst
Church

M I N U T E S

O F T H E

S H A F T S B U R Y

A S S O C I A T I O N ;

HOLDEN AT PITTSTOWN,

JUNE 5th and 6th, 1793

TOGETHER WITH THEIR

C I R C U L A R L E T T E R.

L A N S I N G B U R G H . :

Printed by SILVESTER TIFFANY, for the
Reverend Association.

MINUTES, &c.

WEDNESDAY, *June* 5th, 1793.

1. **A**T two o'clock, P. M. elder *Samuel Waldo* preached a suitable sermon from 1 John, iii, 2.
2. A moderator and clerk were chosen.
3. Letters were read from the several churches, and the following list was taken of the number of members that have been added, dismissed, excluded and died the year past.

N. B. Ministers names in italics. Those marked thus *, we had no account from. Dashes denote no settled Ministers.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Add.	Dis.	Exc.	Died.	No.	
Pittsfield*	<i>Valentine Rathburn,</i> <i>Lemuel Powers,</i>					31	
Stillwater,	{ <i>David Irish,</i> <i>John Andrews,</i> <i>James Green,</i> <i>Charles Demon.</i>	91	5	4	2	413	
1st church in Shaftsbry,	{ <i>Cyprian Downer,</i> <i>Stephen Dannels.</i>			2		45	
East church Shaftsbury,	{ <i>Peleg Mattison,</i> <i>Ephraim Willinath.</i>				1	28	
Adams,	{ <i>Peter Worden,</i> <i>Jonathan Richardson,</i> <i>Stephen Carpenter,</i> <i>Gideon Hinman.</i>	229		13		154	
N. Bethlehem	{ <i>Stephen Olmstead,</i> <i>Samuel Sibley,</i> <i>Daniel Vanocot.</i>	17			1	33	
1st church Sandisfield	{ <i>Rufus Babcock,</i> <i>Daniel Chapman.</i>	11			1	88	
Washington *						55	
Batinkill,	{ <i>Nathan Tanner,</i> <i>Rosel Orsburn.</i>	20				209	
Stephentown,	{ <i>Justus Hull,</i> <i>Eber Moffat,</i> <i>Joseph Bates.</i>	13				115	

Little Yonic
at Berlin N. B.

4 CHURCHES.

MINISTERS.

Disseminated from the Bible class in 1880
9 Partners
Canaan, 1782
3d church
Cheshire
4th church
Shaftsbury
Stockbridge and West Stockbridge
Ashfield
Bullock's Grant
New Galloway
Chesterfield
Saratoga
2d church
Colerain
Northeaston, 1789
St. Coick
Greenfield, 1792
1792 1st church
Westfield or Hartford N. B.
Pittstown, 1792

Hildale,	{ Squire Shearwood, Oliver Teal,				
<i>Disseminated from the Bible class in 1880</i> Pawlingstown, 9 Partners,	{ <i>Samuel Waldo,</i> Benjamin Ellis.				
Canaan, 1782	{ Thomas Nicols, Asa Palmer.				
<i>3d church</i> Cheshire,	{ <i>John Leland,</i> Daniel Coomer, Jesse Mason, Hezekiah Mason.				
<i>4th church</i> Shaftsbury,	{ <i>Caleb Blood,</i> Jeremiah Clark, Ichabod Cross.				
Stockbridge and West Stockbridge,	{ <i>Samuel Whelpley,</i> William Whelpley, Thomas Whelpley.				
Ashfield.	<u>Ebenezer Smith.</u>				
Bullock's Grant,	{ <i>Nathan Haskins,</i> William Ingram.				
New Galloway,	{ Abijah Peck, John Mumroe, Jacob Cleaveland.				
Chesterfield,	{ <i>Ebenezer Vining,</i> Benjamin Bates.				
Saratoga,	{ <i>Samuel Rogers,</i> Jonathan Pindal, Solomon Monger.				
<i>2d church</i> Colerain,	{ <i>Edmond Littfield,</i> Josiah Orcut.				
<i>Northeaston, 1789</i> St. Coick,	{ John Waldo, Aaron Haynes, Jehiel Fox.				
Greenfield, 1792	{ <i>Joseph Crow,</i> David Meloy.				
<i>1792 1st church</i> Westfield or <u>Hartford N. B.</u>	{ <i>Amasa Brown,</i> Ezekiel Whitford, David Baker.				
Pittstown, 1792	{ <i>Isaac Webb,</i> John Route, Edward Penw.				

Add.	Dis.	Exc.	Prod.	No.
1	2			53
10				102
				51
				27
38		3	2	162
5			1	127
13		1		42
4			2	26
				55
2			1	45
7	1			43
12		5	2	75
				20
				47
7				27
69				109
27	6	5	2	146
9	2	1	2	99

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Add.	Dis.	Exc.	Died:	No.
Hallifax, *	—					37
1st church	—					41
1792 Galloway *, }	—					
1792 Mapletown, }	Harper Rogers,	2			1	16
	E. Arnold.					
1792 Somerset, }	James Parmely,	2	1		1	26
	John Lawton,					
1793 3d church Galloway *,	—					67
Pownal, —	Caleb Nichols.					72
1793 Franklin, Stoughton	Hugh Thomson,					26
Stoughton	Afa Tanner.					
35. chhs		TOTAL, 261 15 23 18 25 02				
19 ministers						

Note,—The two last churches were received at this association.

4. Received letters and messengers, as follow, (viz.) from Danbury, *Joseph Wadsworth*; from Stonington, elders *Valentine W. Rathburn*, and *Amos Wells*; from Vermont, elders *Obed Warren* and *Henry Green*:—these messengers, together with Mr. P. P. Root, and elder *Joseph Cornwell*, took seats among us.

5. Elder *Blood* brought in a draught of a letter of correspondence, and Elder *Leland* the circular letter which being read were refered to committees for a revision.

Adjourned 'till To-morrow, 8 o'clock.

THURSDAY, June the 6th.

Met pursuant to adjournment.

6. Elder *Rathburn* preached from *Coll. iii, 4*.

7. The letter of correspondence, and the circular letter were brought forward, read and approved.

8. Elders *Blood*, *Powers*, *Hull*, *Leland*, and *Nichols*, were appointed to attend the *General Committee*, to be holden in *Cheshire*, the last Wednesday in June, 1793.

9. Appointed elders, *Powers* and *Rogers* to *WARREN* association; *Whelpley* and *Roots* to *PHILADELPHIA*; *Powers* and *Leland* to *STONINGTON*; *Hull*, *Whelpley* and *Moffat* to *DANBURY*; *Smith*, *Craw* and brother *Lawton* to *WOODSTOCK*; and *Blood* and *Webb* to *VERMONT*.

Adjourned for an hour.

Met again accordingly.

10. Appointed elder *Blood* TREASURER and SECRETARY; to keep the money and papers belonging to the association.

11. Appointed elder *Powers* to superintend the printing of the Minutes.

SUPPLIES for vacant Churches.

Franklin,	Elder <i>Craw</i> , 2d Sunday in January. Elder <i>Irish</i> in October.
	Elder <i>Moffat</i> , 3d Sunday in June.
Hilfdale,	Elder <i>Whelpley</i> , 4th Sunday in July.
Newbritain,	Elder <i>Hull</i> , 2d Sunday in August; Elder <i>Nichols</i> 2d do. in September.
Mapletown,	Elder <i>Nichols</i> 2d Sunday in July. Elder <i>Webb</i> , 1st do. in September.
New Galloway,	Elder <i>Moffat</i> , 2d do. in June. Elder <i>Brown</i> 3d do. in July. Elder <i>Rogers</i> 2d do. in August and the 3d do. in January.

12. Our next association will be holden at Elder *Nichol's* MEETING-HOUSE, in POWNAL, the FIRST WEDNESDAY in June next, at 2 o'clock P. M. Elder *Powers* to preach the INTRODUCTORY SERMON;—in case of failure, Elder *Rogers*.

13. Elder *Samuel Whelpley* is appointed to write letters of correspondence for next year; and Elder *Webb* to write the circular letter.

14. The association closed by a sermon delivered by Elder *Leland* from *Acts xxiii, 6. I am a Pharisee.*

CIRCULAR;

CIRCULAR LETTER.

BELOVED BRETHREN!

IT is a leading characteristic of the *Baptists*, that without pope or king, for head—without spiritual or civil courts, established by law—without a conclave of bishops or convocation of clergy—without legalized creeds or formularies of worship—without a ministry supported by law or any human coercion in discipline, they are so far united in sentiment, respecting the New-Testament, that a free correspondence and communion circulate among them. *They have no king (on earth) yet go they forth all of them by bands.* The Bible is the only confession of faith they dare adopt; the final umpire they appeal unto for a decision of controversies.

But while we would felicitate ourselves with this infallible guide, we find ourselves boldly attacked by deists and infidels; who seek to sap the foundation of our religion, by asserting that Moses and the prophets, were enthusiastical cheats; and that Jesus and his apostles were but pitiful impostors:—That all their writings are like modern priestcraft; *like the sublime nonsense of Jesuits.*

Notwithstanding the variety of opinions, and discordance of sounds among those infidels; yet they are alike confident, and equally assiduous in declaring *what is not true*, and never tell us *what truth is*. With all their boasted illumination in the ground and laws of nature, they never tell us what natural religion is, nor how the God of nature is to be worshiped.

It can hardly be credited that the Parent of the universe should leave his offspring in this dreary world to make their way to eternity, without some guide—some sure word of prophecy to direct their course: That the Bible is such a guide—a revelation of God's will, written by men divinely inspired, is attempted to be supported by the following remarks:

I. The antiquity of some of the sacred writings, is an argument in favor of the divine authority. The writings of Moses are several hundred years earlier than any profane writings now extant; which proves that he did not collect them from any records, but wrote by divine impulse; nor could he or any other man have told how the
worlds

worlds were made and peopled (prior to the formation of Adam) but by a revelation from God.

II. The honesty of the penman has some weight in the argument. Moses, for instance, gives an account of his own sin, as well as the sins of his brother and sister; and is very full in pointing out the faults of his nation, and reproving them therefor; which things are not to be found in prophane authors: and when he had the offer of being made great, and his family important, he declined the offer, and prayed for the pardon and preservation of that people that he had so plainly reprov'd for their sins. To these things we may add, that he says not a word about his learning, wisdom and honor in Egypt; all of which look as if he did not write to honor himself, but to reveal the will of God, and do good to mankind. The same may be said of other sacred writers; they not only made verbal confessions of their sins, but left the same on record that others might fear.

III. Notwithstanding the Bible was about 16 hundred years in writing, by men in different ages, and in very different circumstances, yst they all speak the same things. Some allowance must be made for the different dialects and customs of the people among whom the writers lived, and also for their own peculiar ways of expressing themselves, but in substance they are uniform; infinitely more so than the human accounts of great events by many authors. Many of the apparent mistakes that are in the sacred volume, no doubt, are made by our own ignorance; but if there are a few of them that have been occasioned by a multitude of transcriptions and other causes, yet they only respect numbers and places, and no ways affect our faith and practice.

IV. The prophetic essays in the scripture, together with their exact accomplishment are wonderfull. Joliah and Cyrus were prophesied of by name, a long time before they were born, and the deeds they should perform, which exactly came to pass. The destruction of various kingdoms, and by whom, was foretold, and afterwards, effected. The coming of John Baptist, the conception of Jesus Christ, place of his birth, the work of his ministry, the manner of his death, the effusion of the Holy Ghost, the gathering of the Gentiles, the destruction of Jerusalem and a multitude of things beside, were not more expressly predicted than fully accomplished.

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This leads us to believe, that all prophecies that are yet behind the seven, will, in their times, be completely fulfilled.

V. The sublimity of stile in which the scripture is written, bespeaks its author to be God. Some of the most lofty strokes were delivered by rustic men. Amos, for example, was not a prophet by birth, nor trained in the schools of the prophets, but was an herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and yet some of his tropes are as lofty as the heavens; and the same is true of some others who wrote. How flat and insipid are the writings of Homer, Virgil, Xenophon, Cicero and other Pagans when once compared with the Bible. It is not a blind devotion that Jews have paid to the old testament, and Christians to both old and new; but a consciousness of their supreme merit. Longinus and Cyrus both acknowledged the sublimity of the stile. To this may be added the chastity of diction thro' the sacred volume. Where it was necessary to treat of things rather indecent, it is wonderful to see what euphonisms are used by the sacred writers; and throughout the volume gravity and chastity of dialect is found, and nothing to provoke obscenity, levity or confusion.

VI. The wonderful effects that the reading and explaining of the scripture have had on the hearts and consciences of men, form an incontestible proof of the authenticity of the Bible. The Sybils, by the Romans, and the Koran, by the Turks, have been considered as coming from God: but their admirers have only received them as directions of life (as we do codes of laws) and have never pretended that those books affect the heart. Here then appears the pre-eminence of the Bible above all other books; for thousands of thousands can witness that the truth of the Bible has so affected their hearts as to make them love the divine character and cordially submit to the government of heaven. And this same word of truth has borne up the minds of those who believed it, under all their misfortunes, and made them triumph in the hour of death: so that if the faith of the gospel were a delusion, it would be the best delusion in the world.

VII. The patient sufferings of those who have received the scripture as a revelation from God, is another argument in its favor. These sufferings they have endured, not with the sullen air of a disappointed usurper, or the obstinate

obstinate spirit of a conquered hero; but with the meekness of a christian; prizing life, if they could enjoy it innocently, but chusing suffering and death rather than sin. It is true that men will suffer much for their own wills; but such sufferers will recriminate when it is in their power; a quite different spirit has been seen among those who have suffered for the truth's sake; and it is not rational to suppose that they would have suffered so much for the defence of imposture:

VIII. The great care that God has manifested in keeping these writings in existence, amidst so many attempts to destroy them, is remarkable, and through the various translations that they have past, to keep the sense so pure, still confirms the idea, that God will preserve his own. And if we add to this, the rage that Devils and wicked men have ever had to the Bible, the presumption is very strong that it is the Book of God.

IX. It cannot be that the Bible was written by bad men; for it condemns every branch of vice, and it cannot be supposed that designing men would form a system to condemn themselves in every respect. If it was written by good men it is true, for liars are not good men; and if they spake the truth, then the Bible is of God, for the writers thereof declared that they wrote by the spirit of God.

X. In addition to the grandeur and uniformity of that plain of truth which the Bible contains, we may further alledge in support of its divinity, that in all parts it reflects the most transcendent honor on the character of God—it contains a perfect system of morality answerable in all respects to the purity of God; and of course tends, to the highest happiness of men.

XI. The judgments that have been inflicted on those who have destroyed these writings are not to be forgotten; especially on Antoninus and Dioclesian; the first of whom vented his rage against the old testament, and the last against the new. Both seemed to share nearly one fate; and the first owned it was for destroying the writings of the Jews. Because they took away from God's book, God took away their parts from the book of life, and from the holy City; i. e. he did not suffer them to live to enjoy the blessings described in his book, and when they died, he did not admit them into heaven without a change of character.

XII. If the miracles recorded in the Bible, are not original arguments to prove the divinity of it, yet they must raise the wonder and confidence of all those, who, for other reasons, are persuaded of its veracity, to see what wonders God has wrought to preserve his people—establish his word and furnish his ambassadors with bright credentials that they came and wrought in his name.

These are some of the reasons we assign, wherefore we receive the scripture as the word of God.

Our faith is firm in the divinity of the old testament as it is in the new; but as many things in the old testament are only historical; others form a code of political laws and moral precepts; while many things therein were typical and temporary, suited to the condition of a national church; we believe that christians should have recourse to the new testament for precepts and precedents to direct them in social worship.

By what we have written, our desire is, dear brethren, that your faith may be confirmed in the holy scripture, in this day of infidelity, and that in all your conduct you may give heed thereto, as unto a light shining in a dark place, and thereby prove to all that behold you, that you are *Bible Christians*.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

CALEB BLOOD, *Moderator.*

THOMAS WHELPLEY, *Clerk.*