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otists. Vermont. Shaftsbury Association, 1794.

minutes . . . at Pownal, June 4th and 5th, 1794.

naan, N. J., Phinney, 1794. 10 pp.

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1794.

Battskill
Church

MINUTES

OF THE

SHAFTSBURY

ASSOCIATION:

HOLDEN AT POWNALL,

JUNE 4th and 5th, 1794:

TOGETHER WITH THEIR CIRCULAR

LETTER.



CANAAN, (STATE OF NEW-YORK;)

PRINTED BY ELIHU PHINNEY; FOR THE
REVEREND ASSOCIATION.
M DCC XCIV.

M I N U T E S. &c.

WEDNESDAY, June 4th, 1794.

- A**T two o'clock P. M. elder *Powers* delivered an introductory sermon from 1 Tim. iii, 1.
2. A Moderator and Clerk were chosen.
 3. Letters were read from the several churches; and the present state of this Association was taken as follows.
- N. B. Ministers names in *Italics*. From those marked thus * we received no account. Dashes denote, no settled Ministers.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS:	Add.	Dif.	Exc.	Died	No.
Billwater	{ <i>Lemuel Powers</i> , John Andrews,	493		6	2	308
West church Saratoga,	{ <i>Samuel Rogers</i> Alpheus Davis, Thomas Smith, Abner Reynolds.	40				118
West church Saratoga, 1794	{ Joseph Pooler Nathaniel Saxton,					22
West Church Galloway, *	-----			3	5	33
West Church Galloway,	{ <i>Joseph Cornell</i> , Wait Palmer,	13				58
West Church Galloway,	{ <i>Jonathan Finch</i> , Lemuel Covel,	9	9	3		63
West Church Milton, 1794	{ <i>Simeon Smith</i> , William Burch,					57
West Church Norway, 1794	{ <i>Nathaniel Norton</i> , Ephraim Nolton,					17
West Church Franklin, } N.Y. Saratoga	{ <i>Nathaniel Wattles</i> , Asa Turner,	81				57
West Church Greenfield,	{ <i>Joseph Craw</i> , David Malary, Israel Craw,	8	17	1	1	98
West Church St. Coick,	-----	3	3			27
West Church Shaftsbury,	{ <i>Jehiel Fox</i> , John Waldo,					45
	{ <i>Cyprian Downer</i> , Moses Sage,					

CHURCHES.

MESSENGERS.

4th Church
Shaftsbury,

Caleb Blood,
Jeremiah Clark,
Abiathar Walden,
William Cobb,

5th Church Shaftsbury,

Francis Matterson,
Abel Aylesworth,

Bottenkilt

Robert Kenyon,
Thomas Bently
William Tuff,
John Rogers.

2d Church Coldrain,

Josiah Olcut

Halifax, *

New-Bethlehem

Stephen Olmsted,
William Barnham.

Pittstown,

Isaac Webb,
Lovet Head,
Thaddeus M^c Connel.

Somerset,

John Lawton,
James Parmele.

Sacpenthown

Justus Hull,
Eber Moffat,
Robert Niles,
Dr. Pardy,

Hancock 1794

Elder Rogers, *Clark*
Dr. Carr,
Jonathan Howard.

Mapletown,

Silas Harmon,
Daniel Rogers,
Caleb Nichols,
Joseph D. Farnsworth,
David Page,
Benjamin Gardner,

Pownal

Peter Werden, *Elder*
Stephen Carpenter,

1st Church
Cheshire,

John Leland

3d Church
Cheshire,

Jesse Mason,
Hezekiah Mason,
Squire Munroe.

Pittsfield, *

Bullock's Grass

Nathan Haskins,

ADD.	DIC.	EXC.	DIED.	CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	ADD.	DIC.	EXC.	DIED.	No.
7	4			1st Church Hartford,	Amasa Brown Caleb Cummins, John Ward.	50	21	5	2	16
1				2nd Church Hartford,	Ebenezer Smith, Richard Philips, Ebenezer Vining, Luther Curtis,	2	1			28
10	10			3rd Church Hartford, and west Hartford,	Samuel Whelpley, Samuel Whelpley, Jacob Ford, Thomas Whelpley, Farring Wilson.	44	2			84
1				4th Church Hartford,	John Nichols, John Hunt. John Dobel.					68
12				5th Church Hartford, 1794	Jedathan Gray, Dr. Olcutt.					73
4	4			6th Church Hartford, 1794	John Burroughs.					27
2				7th Church Hartford, *						35
20	1			8th Church Hartford	Richard Kenyon Simon Dakin, William Willis.	2		1		88
4	4			9th Church Hartford		1			2	54
4	2			10th Church Hartford		4	2	1	2	42
TOTAL,						345	188	78	29	2809

B. The churches of Norway, Milton, 2d church Saratoga, Great Barrington, Canaan & Hancock, united with this Association at our present session. 4. Br. Whelpley according to appointment brought forward the corresponding letter- Read and referred to a committee for revision. Adjourned.

THURSDAY 8 o'clock A. M.

Met pursuant to adjournment. Br. Wells delivered a discourse from John 12. 21.
5. Received a letter and minutes from the Stonington Association by the hand of Elder Wel's, and Pardon Tillinghast. Also received Elder Higbe from the Danbury and Elder Lewis from the Warren Association.
6. Br. Webb according to appointment brought in the circular letter. Read and referred to a committee. Adjourned.

THURSDAY, 2 o'clock P. M.

Met pursuant to adjournment.
7. Read and approved the circular and corresponding letters.

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ters as reported by the committee.

8. Dismissed Pawlings-town church to the Danbury Association—dismissed also the 2d church in Coldrain, and Semerfor church to the Leyden Association.

9. We have received painful intelligence from the church in Bottenkils that they have excluded their Elder Nathan Tanner from fellowship. Of him therefore we warn the churches to beware.

10. Appointed Elders Powers, Leland, and Whelpley as our delegates to the Warren Association, and also to the general committee which takes place the Tuesday following at Stockbridge. Appointed, Elders Powers, Moffat and Niles to the Stonington Association and Webb to the Philadelphian. Craw, Vining and Smith, to the Woodstock Association; Rogers and J. Nichols to the Vermont Association; Blood, Moffat, Gray, Vining and Brown, to the Danbury Association; Blood and Hull to visit the Association lately formed at Leyden; and Hull, Webb and Whelpley to the New-York Association.

11. Agreeably to a motion made by the Stockbridge and West-Stockbridge church, this association recommends to all the churches in our connexion to pay a strict and careful attention to regular gospel church discipline.

12. Appointed Elders Hull, to prepare a corresponding letter for next year, Powers to prepare a circular letter, and Whelpley to superintend printing the same minutes.

SUPPLIES for vacant CHURCHES.

Hillsdale,	Elders—Gray, 4th Sunday in July. Nichols, 1st do. in September.
Nine-partners,	Hopkins, 1st do. in October. Higbe 3d do. in January.
Franklin,	Moffat, 3d do. in June. Craw, 3d do. in January. Cornell, 5th do. in August. C. Nichols, 3d do. in December.
Botten-Kill,	Craw, 3d do. in August. Brown, 3d do. in July. C. Nichols, 3d do. in June.
Mapletown,	Webb, 1st do. in July. C. Nichols, 1st do. in August. Hull, 3d do. in October. Rogers, 2d do. in July. Brown, 2d do. in January. Rogers sen. 4th do. in September.
1st Church N. Galloway,	Niles, 5th do. in June. Rogers jun. 3d do. in June. Brown, 2d do. in August. Norton, 1st do. in January.

New-Bethlehem,

New-Concord,

Finch, 3d do. in March.

Craw, 3d do. in April.

Niles, 3d do. in September.

Moffat, 3d do. in June.

Webb, 4th do. in June.

Hull, 3d do. in July.

Blood, 3d do. in August.

Haskins, 2d do. in September.

Niles, 1st do. in July.

Finch, 5th do. in August.

19. The next meeting of this Association will be at Stillwater, Elder Powers's meeting-house, on the first Wednesday of June 1795. Elder Blood to preach the introductory sermon, and in case of failure Elder Hull.

N. B. It is the request of some of the members of this Association, that the several Associations with whom we correspond, would print their annual minutes in sizeable octavo. By this we judge a valuable end might be answered; by being all of one size they might easily be reduced to a volume, without any expence; being ranged in order from year to year, and bound together, they will naturally be preserved. The various circular letters they contain will be richly worthy of perusal and preservation; they will contain a body of divinity, in a familiar style of letter-writing.

This method followed a few years will produce at once a more extensive history, and accurate register of the Baptists in America, than any other. It will at least contain particular and extensive information, for rising generations, without any expence but merely the care of preserving. To this end an octavo size will be best.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

BRETHREN,

IN our last circular letter, we addressed you on the true origin of the scriptures, which we consider as a book clothed with divine authority. Happy would it be for mankind did they generally receive it as such. But sad experience affords daily conviction, that the human heart hardened by sin bids defiance to all persuasion and cannot be influenced, even by the strongest motives unless urged home by almighty power. Judging upon a rational scale one would conclude that sinners must inevitably perish in their sins.

But the almighty Jehovah has shown his grace to be equal with his power, he sends abroad his good spirit, to the agency of which helpless sinners are wholly indebted for the application of all spiritual and eternal blessings. This subject, as it is of great importance, and demands attention, shall be the theme of this letter.

The agency of the spirit of God, is that operation of divine power which either renews the sinner in the image of God, or afterwards produces in him divine conformity to that image. It is the effectual operations of God's spirit of which we intend to treat, in distinction from that operation which attended Saul among the prophets, or Judas among the apostles. We speak of that powerful operation which renews the heart of the dead sinner, translates him out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and carries on the work begun by this change until it be consummated in glory.

The person who is the subject of these effectual operations is not only rationally convinced that he is a sinner, but he is thoroughly roused up to a sense of his condition. His awakened conscience is convinced, his affrighted soul begins to realize his exposedness to the just displeasure of God. He feels himself tottering on the precipice, the awful precipice of remediless destruction unreconciled to justice, he strives to escape it in vain; and is at length brought nigh to the borders of despair. In this critical moment grace interposes, and he is snatched as a brand from the burning, the stony heart is taken away and a heart of flesh is given, the captive soul is released, and a new song is put into his mouth, a new language flows from his lips, a new conduct appears in his life, in a word all things are become new.

The agency of God's spirit carries on the salvation of the sinner from regeneration to glory, it is all of God; but the renewing influences, and sanctifying influences are capable of a distinction; the former implant a principle of life, the latter invigorate the principle implanted. In the first the spirit makes no use of the faculties of the soul, in the last the rational faculties are used & become subservient

to the work. The subject of the sanctifying operations of the spirit has every faculty of soul rendered attentive to the things of God. He with open face beholds as in a glass the glory of the Lord and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord.—By these transforming discoveries progressive conformity to God is carried on in his soul. Whilst he sees in the glass of God's word the REDEEMER'S beauty, and his own frightful deformity, he abhors the one and loves the other. He longs to be delivered from sin, he pants after God, the living God. He frequently feels the infelicity of sin, and bemoans his vileness; the enjoyment of God and that only can make him happy, and as sin hinders this enjoyment, he flies from it as from an enemy of God, a disturber of his peace, unreasonable in nature and dreadful in its effects.

In short the spirit in its sanctifying agency on the human heart shows the creature the awful contrast between him & his God, thoroughly explores the heart, & brings into view all its latent abominations, discovers such vileness & pollution that the creature is truly mortified, & with Job abhors himself & repents in dust and ashes.

Thus the whole work of sanctification is carried on by clear and soul affecting conviction of the beauty of holiness and deformity of sin; whilst the holy-ghost hovering over the soul creates in it, that desire after the one, and aversion from the other, which leads a man to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

The agency of the spirit of God in its sanctifying influences is rational. It brings information to the understanding, inclination to the will, authority to the conscience, and true peace to the whole soul. Rational, because it influences to nothing unreasonable, no extravagance, fanaticism, madness nor folly but to sobermindedness and humility.—Information to the understanding. It does not drive on by blind impulse, or fatal necessity, for it discovers in the fullest light the nature of duty, the ground of obligation, and the reasonableness of immediate compliance with it. Inclination to the will. It produces a pliability of soul to divine authority, and leads men to cry out with eagerness, Lord what wouldest thou have me to do?—Authority to the conscience. The word of God is brought home to the soul in all its majesty from which conscience receives a peculiar sensibility, and with which it joins its voice in commanding into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ.—True peace to the soul. It brings the soul into unconditional subjection to God, quells disorders, harmonizes the faculties, promotes faith in promises, and an unshaken dependance on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

From what has been said, the agency of God's spirit appears to

be of infinite importance in the christian system, a mistake therefore respecting it is attended with great danger. When we consider man as a fallen creature, unwilling to see the worst of himself, or his situation, and too apt to presume that things are better than they really are, we must conclude that however great the danger may be, human nature is exposed to it. Such is the frailty and depravity of our nature, we are liable to mistake imagination for inspiration, a love of happiness, for the love of God, and partial zealous bigotry, for love to the general cause and kingdom of Christ. Sensations merely animal, or selfish, we have great reason to fear, are too often taken for, and gloried in, as immediate fruits of divine agency.

But beloved brethren, let us not be deceived; charity, true charity, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly. Real divine influence produces, in the human heart disinterested love to God and man, brings the sinner to the foot of sovereign mercy, and attaches him to the word of God as an infallible rule of duty: and by this he examines himself and all his exercises. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. Thus we are exhorted by the beloved disciple. But how shall we try the spirit? Shall we measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves among ourselves? God forbid!—But let us measure ourselves by the Bible. Let us compare the voice of God in his word to the voice of God in our hearts, if they are alike we are safe, but if they differ we are in delusion, we are in love with a lie, compassing ourselves about with sparks of our own kindling, and shall lie down in sorrow. But brethren be exhorted to watch unto prayer, love your religion. Seek direction from God—Have recourse to his word on every occasion—Let circumspection mark all your steps, and moderate your proceedings. Let these memorable words of Christ be engraven on your hearts WITHOUT ME, i. e. the agency of any spirit, YE CAN DO NOTHING. If any man lack wisdom, or the teaching of the spirit, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus Amen.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

PETER WERDEN, *Moderator.*

SAMUEL WHELPLEY jun. *Clerk.*