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[Baptists. Vermont. Shaftsbury Association, 1795.

Minutes . . . in Stillwater, 1795.

n.p., n. d., [1795].

(Probably not printed.)

MINUTES

OF THE

SHAFTSBURY

ASSOCIATION;

HOLDEN AT STILLWATER,

June 3d and 4th, 1795.

TOGETHER WITH THEIR

CIRCULAR AND CORRESPONDING

LETTERS.

PRINTED IN LANSINGBURGH,

BY SILVESTER TIFFANY,

For the Reverend Association.

MDCCLXV.

M I N U T E S, &c.

WEDNESDAY, June 3d, 1795.

1. **A**T two o'clock, P. M. the Association was opened, by a Discourse from *Exodus xxxix, 8.*—
And he made the breast-plate of cunning work. Delivered by
 Brother JOHN LELAND.

2. A moderator and clerk were chosen.

3. The letters from the churches were read; and the following list taken of the *Additions, Diminutions, and Present State of the churches.*

N. B. In the list the ministers names are in SMALL CAPITALS, and
 others in *Italicks*,—Those with an (*) were not present.—From churches
 marked with a † we received no letters.

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Add.	Dis.	Exc.	Died	No.
Fittsfield,	*VALENTINE RATHBON,					31
Millwater,	{ LEMUEL POWERS,	1	7	3	0	299
	{ John Andrews,					
	{ Charles Demore,					
1st Shaftsbury,						24
2d Shaftsbury,		1	1	1	0	30
3d Shaftsbury,	{ CALEB BLOOD,	33	1	2	0	160
	{ Isaian Hindrix,					
	{ John Park.					
1st Cheshire,	{ PETER WERDEN,	1	6	7	0	115
	{ Stephen Carpenter.					
2d Cheshire,	{ *NATHAN MASON,	4	1	2	2	173
	{ JOHN LELAND,					
	{ Joel Readaway,					
	{ Samson Mason,					
	{ Roger Pettibone.					
1st Saratoga,	{ SAMUEL ROGERS,	11	14	0	2	80
	{ Parker Reynolds,					
	{ Hezekiah Dunham,					
	{ Asher Davis.					
2d Saratoga,	{ Gershum Saxton,	4	0	0	0	26
	{ Eliphaz Fish.					
1st N. Galloway	{ ABEL BROWN,	5	3	0	0	37
	{ Ephraim Smith,					
	{ Silas Brown.					

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.
2d N. Galloway	JOSEPH CORNWELL, John Munro, Nathaniel Kuler.
† Chesterfield, Hillsdale,	• EBENEZER VINING, Seth Pettit.
3d N. Galloway	JONATHAN FINCH, William Birch, Peleg Hart.
Milton,	Daniel Couch, Abraham Thomas, Salmon Child.
Norway,	NATHANIEL NORTON, Peleg Card.
† Franklin,	
1st Greenfield,	JOSEPH CRAW, Isaac Brewster.
St. Coick,	Jehiel Fox, John Waldo.
Battenkill,	EDWARD BARBER, Robert Kynyon, Thomas Bentley, Elijah Cale.
N. Bethlehem,	Stephen Clinstead, Daniel Vancotts.
Pittstown,	ISAAC WEBB, Lovet Head, Thaddens McConnel.
Stephentown,	JUSTUS HULL, * ROBERT NILES, * EBER MOFFIT.
Hanceck,	* CLARK ROGERS, Robert Carr.
† Mapletown,	
Pownal,	* CALEB NICHOLS, Benjamin Gardner, Samuel Baker, Judiah Aylesworth.
† Bullock's Grants	* NATHAN HASKINS,
1st Hartford,	* AMASA BROWN, Henry Mattison.
H. Stockbridge,	SAMUEL WHELFLEY, Jan. A. M.

MEMBERS.	ADDS.	DIS.	EXC.	DEAD.	NO.
4	1	0	0	0	5
2	0	1	0	0	1
3	1	2	0	0	2
4	2	0	0	0	6
10	0	0	0	0	10
2	1	3	0	0	0
					17
					96
					17
27	6	3	0	0	190
3	0	3	1	0	1
2	6	0	2	0	2
10	2	1	1	0	11
11	9	1	0	0	19
10	7	2	3	0	105
31	0	4	5	0	36
6	3	1	0	0	8

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Add.	Dis.	Exc.	Dead.	No.
Washington,	* JOHN NICHOLS.					68
Gt. Barrington,	* JEDUTHAN GRAY.	6	2	1	0	76
1st Canaan,	Daniel Pain, John Burris.	2	0	0	0	37
Sandisfield,	* JOSHUA MORS.					88
Northestown,	* SIMON DACAN.					42
Nine Partners, 4th N. Galloway			1	0	1	43
Mayfield,	Lemuel Coceel.					48
2d Canaan,	Hezekiah Gorton, Mequeen Fox.					42
2d Greenfield,	ELISHA BARNS, Daniel Rowley.					37
Williamstown,	Israel Crow. Joseph Burchard, Joseph Hand, Elijah Rich.					39
						16

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N. B. The five last mentioned churches united with us at this time.

4. Upon the request of Ashfield church, they were dismissed to join the Leyden association.

5. Received letters of correspondence from the Warren and Philadelphia associations; and likewise from the Danbury association, by their messenger brother HIGBY:— Also, from the Stonington association, by brother SMITH. These messengers took a seat with us.

6. The circular letter brought forward by brother POWERS, and the corresponding letter by brother HULL were read, and after a small amendment of the first, were approved.

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

THURSDAY, June the 4th.

Met according to adjournment.

Brother HULL preached a morning discourse.

7. Appointed messengers as follow:—

- To the General Committee, Brother Leland,
- To the Philadelphia Association, Brother Isaac Webb,
- To the Warren do. Brother John Leland.
- To the Stonington do. Brothers Barber and Kynyon,
- To the Danbury do. Brothers Samuel Mattison and Deacon Whippley,

To the *Vermont* do. Brothers *Blood* and *S. Rogers*,
 To the *Woodstock* do. Brother *Craw*,
 To the *New-York* do. Brothers *Hull* and *Whepley*,

8. Appointed our brethren, *Blood*, *Powers*, *Rogers*, *Cornet*, *Craw*, and *Finch*, to attend a conference at *Springfield*, on the *first Wednesday* in *September* next.

9. Appointed brother *Blood* to write the *Circular Letter* for next year, and brother *Leland* the *Letter of Correspondence*.

10. Appointed brother *Powers* to superintend the printing of the minutes.

11. Agreed to print the corresponding letter with the minutes.

12. Our next association is to be holden at *West-Stockbridge* Baptist meeting-house, the *first Wednesday* in *June*, 1796, at 2 o'clock, P. M. brother *Blood*, to preach the *introductory sermon*; in case of failure, brother *S. Rogers*.

13. Whereas a number of well disposed people on this continent have agreed to unite in a *general concert of prayer*, for the outpouring of God's Spirit, on the *first Wednesdays* of *January*, *April*, *July*, and *October*, this association, with heart-felt satisfaction, approves of the same; we therefore recommend the observance of said days to the churches which we represent. In this concert, we hope, there will be no distinction of denominations; but that all will unite in the love and fear of God.

The association being dismissed, brother *Blood* preached to the people.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

MINISTERIAL COMMISSION AND REWARD.

BELoved BRETHREN!

WE conceive that the Ministers of the Gospel receive their commission to teach and baptise, not from the Church, Presbytery, Bishop, Pope nor King, but from the Lord *Jesus Christ*. HE who is absolute Sovereign in his church, calls some from the seats of erudition, and others, from the plough, flock or boat, and sends them forth to bear up his name in the world: whether they bear the title of ambassadors, angels, apostles, bishops, elders, evangelists, fathers, husbandmen, keepers, laborers, master-builders, men of God, messengers, ministers, overseers, pastors, preachers, priests, prophets, reapers, rulers, scribes, servants, sons of Zion, stars, stewarts, teachers, vine dressers, watchmen, wisemen, witnesses or any other, they receive their orders alone from Christ, and are accountable to him for the discharge of their sacred functions. There is not a single condition in their commission. Jesus does not say "go and preach, if people will applaud and pay you for your labor, but contrawise, "you shall speak my word unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." In the discharge of this sacred trust, the faithful servants of God have received disgrace, reproach, stripes and banishment, and the loss of all things, their lives not excepted; but none of these things moved them; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, to finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus. These all died in the faith (having obtained a good report) and rode to heaven in a fiery chariot. But amidst all their hardships, we never hear them complaining thus, "we wish we never had undertaken to preach: if the people continue ungrateful and covetous, and will not give us more money, we will quit the work." No: they had their eyes on God—they viewed a day approaching when they should be called before an omniscient Judge to give account of their stewardship. They knew that the ingratitude and covetousness of others would not atone for their own neglect: a

necessity was laid on them, yea woe unto them if they did not preach.

But, are these things right? It is certainly right for ministers to mind their own business; but are ingratitude and covetousness commendable in hearers? by no means: all the sufferings of Christ were occasioned by the wrongs of men, and many of the sufferings of his ministers proceed from the covetousness of those to whom they preach. Can it be supposed that Jesus Christ, who is infinitely wise, just and good, would ever call men from the duties of life, to leave their families and concerns to spend their lives in serving others for their profit, and lay no obligation on others to make just returns? Surely no. The laborer is worthy of his hire—He who sows spiritual things should reap temporal—He who is taught in the word should communicate all good things to the teacher; the Lord hath ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of it. These, and many collateral texts are read and consented to, but poorly acted upon. Some call in the aid of human law to force people to pay the preacher; but this is making religion a principle of state policy, and keeping the preacher in a state house. Jesus Christ never assumed the character of a civil judge, or a divider of interests among men; he made no code of penal laws to punish men in this world, for not complying with his award.

Others suppose that these texts have no force in them without the preacher is so poor and indigent that he cannot live without help; but this makes the Christian system partial, and unequal; destroys the sense of those bible words, *hire, wages and reward*, and, finally, keeps the preacher in an alms-house. A preacher was once ordained in North-Wales, after the rites were performed, one of the deacons took him by the hand and saluted him thus; "God bless you, brother, and keep you humble, for we intend to keep you poor." All that a minister can expect in such a predicament is to grow rich by his poverty of spirit, being poor in purse, among a poor spirited people. If a minister, in such circumstances, attends to merchandize, trade or hard labor, it greatly embarrasses his mind and generally destroys his usefulness and influence, and sometimes spots his garments to that degree, that he never gets them clean as long as he lives.

No doubt there is a gospel mansion, between a state

house and an alms-house, in which a preacher should live; this house, like the Tabernacle and Temple, should be built with free-will offerings; and where the generous and noble offerings of the public spirited fall, the expence should be equalized on all concerned; and the man, who is so poor spirited as not to be willing to do his equal part, gives incontestable proof of his covetousness, which is idolatry.

There seems to be a significant silence in the New Testament about the mode of ministerial compensation; very likely for this reason: no mode would be convenient in all places, some adapt the mode of voluntary stipulation with the preacher; others agree among themselves how much they will give the preacher, without consulting him;—some again carry in their presents individually without any mutual consultation while others trust to their weekly or monthly contributions, &c. Each of these modes have their advantages and disadvantages; nor is it much matter what mode is fallen upon, if three things are attended to, viz. *First*, that such collections are not made by the force of human law. *Second*, that the burthen is equalized as nearly as the circumstance of things will admit. *Third*, that enough is done; for after all the plans that are adopted, for want of more of the spirit and punctuality of the gospel, many of the ministers are poor, while they make many rich. A man without paternal love and conjugal sympathy, at least without natural affection, makes but a poor preacher; and if the preacher has natural affection, what pain must fill his heart to see his neighbours living in prosperity, hoarding up money to purchase cheap farms with for their children, while his own children are scuffling hard for a living without the aid of their father, and without any prospect of assistance from him.

It is nothing strange for useful ministers to have many pressing calls to impart their spiritual gifts around, and what drawings of soul they feel to answer those calls, none know but themselves; but how often circumstances seem to forbid; and if love to souls, and the fear of offending God stimulate them to break over all obstructions; what inquietudes attend them on their way, and how great is their sorrow when they return, to find their affairs all deranged, their families in want, and having little or nothing to relieve those wants.

A minister who wishes to be profitable to mankind, let

the need of searching the bible, and studying the things of God; but if he is entangled with the cares of a family, his proficiency will be but small: at times he may be greatly blessed of God among the people, but the prospect is but poor, for his being a general and constant blessing. The man of God, who has eternal things at heart, cannot pay that attention to human economy that others can, and therefore when he attempts to labor, he cannot work to the same advantage: and how often the souls of such are shocked, for fear that the Lord will blast them in their concerns, for neglecting the more important affairs of eternity.

What remains, is, *First*, an earnest exhortation to ministers to magnify their office, and make full proof of their ministry; taking the prophets and apostles and the whole cloud of witnesses for example; and where any or all of them fail, thro' infirmity, let them look unto Jesus, considering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest they grow weary and faint in their minds. Let not the ministers of Jesus encourage a thorn in their hearts, that their Lord delayeth his coming; and that the time is not come to build the house; and from that belief begin to eat and drink, and dwell in their own beggled houses; and because preaching is not a trade or engulment, grow peevish and smite their fellow-servants, and strike and wound the lambs and sheep of Jesus; making this world their main object, and preach only as the world will allow leisure; but, contrawise, viewing themselves on a narrow neck of land, between two vast seas, soon to appear before their God to give account of their stewardships. *Second*, let churches, that have ministers settled with them, prove their obedience to the faith, by freely communicating to them, who are set over them in the Lord. Instances have been when ministers have had great searchings of heart, when coming to the Table of the Lord, to know how they could commune with a people, so blind to their duty, and so close with their pennies: they often fear that all their labor has been in vain; that they have fed the flock with unsavory food that produces no milk. Let members never stand disputing about a mode of communication, but let each act according to his faith in the mode, and provoke each other to emulation, by striving who will offer the most willingly to the Lord.—*Third*. Let not vacant churches, that have no settled mi-

nisters, consider themselves disinterested in this matter. From such churches, urgent solicitations are sometimes more lavish than liberal contributions: when that is the case, such churches have need of preaching, it is true; and we advise the ministers to preach to them; and while they instruct them in the things of God, let them exhort the churches to abound in *this* grace also: and if ministers have hitherto been too negligent in this matter, we wish to supply their failure by this letter. Vacant churches are often very inquisitive to know the worldly circumstances of preachers who visit them, and the wealth of the people among whom they live; and if they find the preachers are not in pinching need, that the people where they live wealthy, they excuse themselves, in their covetousness, from doing any thing to help the cause. This mode of procedure, looks too much like making the whole of Christian liberality to consist in alms-giving; and besides, it either fixes the burthen on the travelling preacher, or going a warfare at his own charges, or on the people among whom he resides, in affording their preacher assistance while he is gone from them to serve others. We wish to see vacant churches assisted, and we wish them to assist others, according to their power, that one should not be eased and another burdened. And may the Lord direct all of us hearts to do our duty, each in his particular station, for Jesus' sake. Amen!

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

The Shaftsbury Association, to the Corresponding Associations, sendeth greeting.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

IT is with pleasure, unaffected pleasure, that we often recollect and dwell upon the pleasing idea, that heaven has not only formed hearts for, and disposed them to the most friendly interviews with each other; but likewise when local circumstances forbid the wished-for opportunity of personal acquaintance, prescribes means by which we (tho' most of us strangers by face) may correspond—freely correspond on subjects the most important, and mingle hearts tho' ever so remote. This divine enthusiasm of Christian fellowship, that kindles in, and flows from heart to heart; and lessons, rich with instruction,

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comfort and consolation, are some of the happy effects of the welcome reception of your messengers, minutes and letters, which you so often favor us with. This representative relation—this letter acquaintance—this mode of correspondence (while in this imperfect state) we wish—earnestly wish to be continued. While we look forward and fondly anticipate the arrival of the happy period, when we shall need no exterior medium to convey our knowledge and feelings to each other; but shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, in that endless world of consummate bliss; where rivers of pleasure forever flow, and streams of delight perpetually run.

Dear brethren, we have had another anniversary meeting, greatly to our joy and comfort: we think the divine presence evidently presided over us, and made it a house of prayer to our waiting souls; and, altho' in some of our churches, trials await us, yet in others, great peace abounds, and increase prevails (we trust) to the glory of the despised Nazarine. Meanwhile we humbly trust we feel ourselves unalterably fixed and established in the great doctrine of the gospel of Jesus; even in the midst of the error of error, deism, and infidelity; for, notwithstanding Bolingbroke, with all his false pleasure to allure—Paine, with all his art of cogent reasoning to persuade—Hume, with all his cruel invectives, mixed with all the envy of devils, unitedly leveled at the foundation of the church of God, the chief corner stone, yet all in vain, and worse than vain, for it triumphs in defiance of their false pretences, and will reign to their eternal confusion, while all the Zion of God, on this foundation, may rest assured, and smile, even in the midst of a crushing world. Oh! that we might live lives corresponding with our profession, that might speak the dignity of our calling. Surely religion, the religion of Jesus, exemplified in life, is the greatest beauty on earth: would to God! we all might share, largely share in this inestimable blessing, this rich heritage of the Lord, to the peace of our souls and the declarative glory of God, thro' grace in a mediator, to whom be praise forever. Amen.

In behalf of the Association,

JOHN LELAND, *Moderator.*

Attest, SAMUEL WHELPLY, jun. *Clerk.*

N. B. By turning to pages 5th and 6th, each association may see who are our messengers.