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Minutes ... at West-Stockbridge, June 1st & 2nd,
Lansingburgh, 1796. 20 pp.
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MINUTES

OF THE

Shaftsbury Association;

Holden at West-Stockbridge, June 1st & 2d, 1796.

Together with their Circular and Corresponding Letters.

LANSINGBURGH

PRINTED BY LUTHER PRYTH, & Co.

For the Reverend Association.

M,DCC,XCVI.

MINUTES, &c.

WEDNESDAY, June 1st, 1796.

1. AT two o'clock P. M. the Aſſociation was opened by a Diſcourſe from 1ſt John, iv. 8. Delivered by Elder *Caleb Blood*.

2. A Moderator and Clerk were choſen.

3. The letters from the Churches were read; and the liſts taken of the additions, diminutions and preſent ſtate of the Churches.

N. B. In the Minutes, the names of Miniſters are in *Italic*. Thoſe with an (*) were not preſent. From Churches marked thus (†) we received no letters.

Churches.	*Meſſengers.*	Add.	Dils.	Ex.	Died.	No.
Bottſkill.	*Edward Barber*, Robert Hinyon, Smith Barber.	31	9	1		219
† Bullock's-Grant.	* *Nathan Haſkins.*					55
Chatham.	Iſaac Mills, Job Champion.					26
1 Canaan.	Daniel Pain, John Gatt, Samuel Johnſon.		2			35
2 Canaan.	*Eliſha Barns*, John Crolby, Aſa Palmer.	12				33

Churche.	Meſſengers.	Add.	Dif.	Ex.	Died.	No.
1 Cheſhire.	*Peter Werden*, Steph. Carpenter Eleazer Rhodes, Jona. Richardſon.		9	3	1	102
3 Cheſhire.	* *Nathan Maſon*, *John Leland*, Hezekiah Maſon, Daniel Cooman, Squire Munro.	26	1	2	2	197
Cheſterfield.	*Ebenezer Vining*, Dan Daniels.	2				47
Cliftonpark.	Ruſus Mors, Philip King.					30
1 Galloway	Aſa Chatfield.	24				64
2 Galloway	*Joſeph Cornwell*, Eliſha Lungworthy	5		1	1	63
Great Barrington.	*Jedathan Gray*, Peter Orcut, Moſes Gill.	13	1	2		86
1 Greenfield.	*Joſeph Crave.*					96
2 Greenfield.	———	28		1		66
3 Greenfield.	Elnathan Finch, Daniel Boardman.					54
Hancock.	*Clark Rogers*, Thadeus Patchen.			2	1	42
1 Hartford.	*Aneſa Brown*, Ezekiel Whitford.	49	30	1	1	212
2 Hartford.	Gamaliel Barns, Emanuel Dake.					32
Hillſdale.	Benjamin Twiſt, Oliver Teal.	4				59

Churches.	Meſſengers.	Add.	Dif.	Ex.	Died.	No.
† Maple Town.	———					16
Mayfield.	Hezekiah Gorton, William Fox.	5				47
Milton.	Daniel Church.	1			1	59
New-Bethleham.	Stephen Olmſted, Daniel Van Coots, William Hunt.	9	1	1		47
† Norway.	* *Nathaniel Norton.*					27
† Nine-partners.	———					48
Pittsfield.	*Valentine Rathbun.*					31
Pittstown.	John Rowe, Cornelius Wilſey.	1	3	1	1	80
1 Providence.	———	5	1	1		63
2 Providence.	*Lemuel Covel.*	4		1	1	50
Pownal.	*Caleb Nichols*, Benjn. Gardner, Jed. Ailſworth.	3	2		1	129
† 1 Saratoga.	———					26
2 Saratoga.	Andrew Sprague.	3		1		28
† 1 Shaftſbury.	———					24
† 3 Shaftſbury.	———					30
4 Shaftſbury.	*Caleb Blood*, Iſaiah Hindrick.	9			1	168
Sandisfield.	Jeſſe Morey, Daniel Chapman.	9	4	2	4	89
Stephentown.	*Juſtus Hull*, James Green, Benjamin Pearce.	10	2		3	123
Stillwater.	* *Lemuel Powers.* John Andrus, Sylvenus Sayls.		7		3	255

Churches.	Messengers.	Ap.	Dif.	Ex.	Died.	No.
† St. Coick.	———					27
Washington.	———					68
West-Stockbridge.	*Saml. Whelpley*, A. M. Nathaniel Wilson, Moses Parmelee, Thomas Whelpley.	5	7	1	2	82
Williamstown.	John Lawton, Elijah Rich, Joseph Rich.	2				10
		260	78	21	21	3181

42 Churches.
20 Ministers

N. B. The Churches of Chatham, Clifton-park, 3d Greenfield and 2d Hartford, were received at this session.

4. The Circular letter, prepared by *Elder Blood*, and the Corresponding letter prepared by *Elder Leland*, were both read and referred to a Committee.

Adjourned until to-morrow 8 o'clock.

THURSDAY, June 2.

Met according to adjournment.

Brother *Zenas L. Leonard* preached a Sermon, from 1 Cor. 1. xxi.

5. Received the Minutes of the Otsego Association, by the hand of Elder *Ashbel Hosmer*, with a request to unite with us, which, upon due deliberation, met our unanimous and cordial reception: Their Messenger took a seat with us.

6. A like request came from the Leyden Association by their messengers, Elder *Littlefield* and brother *John Asplund*; and met with the same reception: Their messengers also took seats among us.

7. A letter and minutes came from the Vermont Association, by their messenger, Elder *Henry Green*: and also a letter from the Warren Association, by brother *Zenas L. Leonard*: and likewise a letter from the Danbury Association, by their messenger, Elder *Higby*: these, with all the ministering visitants, were requested to take their seats.

8. The circular and corresponding letters were brought forward, which, with the amendments of the committee, were approved of.

9. The Church of Franklin requested, and was dismissed to the Otsego Association.

10. Appointed messengers, as follows.

To the Warren Association.	Elders, *Vining* and *Whelpley*.
To the Stonington do.	Brethren Cadey and Olmsted.
To the Danbury do.	Elders *Hull* & *Whelpley* & Deacon *Whelpley*.
To the Vermont do.	Elders *Leland*, *Blood* & *Barber*.
To the Woodstock do.	Brother John Asplund.
To the New-York do.	Elder *Whelpley*, & Thos. Whelpley,

To the Otſego do. Elders *Werden, C. Nicholls, J. Nichols, Craw, & Moſſet: And*, Brethren Gorton and Hindrick.

To the Leyden, do. Elder *Vining, &* Brother *Lawton.*

11. Appointed Elder *Whelpley* to prepare the circular letter, and Elder *Barber* the correſponding letter for next year.

12. As the Aſſociations, with whom we correſpond, are numerous, and we cannot, at all times, find Meſſengers, who can conveniently viſit them: we have therefore appointed Elder *John Leland*, to ſuperintend the Printing of the Minutes, and to intereſt himſelf in ſending packets of them to all the correſponding Aſſociations, as well as to all the Churches of this Aſſociation.

13. Our next Aſſociation is to be holden at Bottſkill, on the firſt Wendſday of June next, at 2 o'clock. P. M. Elder Gray to preach the introductory Sermon, and in caſe of failure Elder *C. Nichols.*

Elder *Parſons*, preached a concluding diſcourſe from Heb. xii. 15.

14. Voted the Rev. Mr. *Ayer*, and his congregation, the thanks of this Aſſociation, for the uſe of their Meeting-houſe, and other tokens of politeneſs, at this ſeſſion. Appointed a Committee to wait on Mr. *Ayer* and preſent the ſame.

Circular Letter.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

WHILE we enjoy the ineſtimable bleſſings of public and ſocial fellowſhip, and communion, permit us to remind you of ſome of the great benefits ariſing from the practice of the religion of JESUS, in a more private capacity; particularly in families.

Family religion is quite as important, if not more ſo, than any part of practical Godlineſs: It has great influence in all the more public concerns of CHRIST's kingdom on earth.

We ſhall therefore ſpeak of its benefits, both as it relates to the family and public.

If men and their wives were to maintain a conſtant communion with Heaven, by faith, prayer, and a cloſe walk with GOD, they would undoubtedly enjoy a good degree of that friendly, meek, mild and Heavenly temper of the Divine Redeemer: *This* would ſtimulate them in the moſt chearful and friendly manner, to diſcharge all thoſe relative duties they owe to each other, in ſo near a relation: This would make them delight to pray with, and for each other; to reprove, rebuke and exhort each other in the ſpirit of meekneſs; to bear with patience the weakneſs of each other, and to be partners in the joys and ſorrows of life. *This* would make their communion ſweet—their devotion ſolemn and delightful—their family diſcourſe entertaining

and profitable: Yes, dear brethren, *this* religion will alſo give our family goverment acceſs to the reaſon and conſciences of thoſe committed to our care; being alike free from that auſterity and harſhneſs which diſcourages children, and that lenity which will indulge them in the gratification of their vain paſſions.

Let children alſo poſſeſs the ſpirit of JESUS, and it at once, becomes their pleaſure to love, honor and obey their parents in all things; to love one another, and in their reſpective places, to take an active part in that Heavenly converſation, ſo conſtantly interſperſed in the family diſcourſe of the pious; and which is ſo eſſential to domeſtic happineſs.

In this way of living, we receive all the mercies of Heaven, both ſpiritual and temporal, with united gratitude, and gladly join in the ſweet employment of returning thankſgiving and praiſe to our divine benefactor. And if it pleaſe our Heavenly Father to viſit us with his chaſtiſing rod, or to roll upon us ſome dark and trying ſcenes of Providence, yet while we feel a becoming ſubmiſſion to his Heavenly will, we may enjoy freedom of acceſs to the throne of his grace, pour out our complaints there, caſt all our burdens upon *him* and be ſuſtained. Here we can enjoy the utmoſt confidence that the righteous Judge of all the earth, ever has and ever will do right.

Thus the truly pious family, whether in proſperity or adverſity, will enjoy peace and good

order; with ſuch the peaceful ſpirit dwells: ſuch families are like the houſe of *Obededom*, where the ark of GOD reſted; an houſehold of faith.

Here is true devotion, Godly ſorrow, Heavenly joy, fillial fear, ſtrong confidence, chriſtian meekneſs, fervant prayer and conſtant watchfulneſs. However poor as to this world's goods, ſuch families are infinitely rich: GOD is their portion—their treaſure is inexauſtable—their food is the bread of GOD, which gives eternal life, and their drink, the wine of divine conſolation—their clothing is infinitely rich; the robe of the Redeemer's righteouſneſs, comes to them at no leſs price than the humiliation, obedience and death of the Son of GOD: This robe, which they put on by faith is the matter of their juſtification before GOD, and never changes nor waxes old. They have alſo the precious ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which is in the ſight of GOD, of great price. Thus their robe and ornaments, make them (in the eyes of GOD, Angels and ſaints) infinitely outſhine all the worldly glory of *Solomon*—the pomp of courts, and the beauties of nature and art; while their food, their drink, their company and employment exceedingly delight their inmoſt ſouls: they have a houſe, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; and if dangers approach, they are defended by the impregnable walls of Salvation. They are armed from grace's magazine with the breaſt-plate of faith and love,

the helmet of ſalvation, the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of GOD; the armour of righteouſneſs on the right hand and on the left, the girdle of truth and the weapon of *all prayer*. The members of this Family are ſtrangers and pilgrims in this world; Heaven is their home, and the pearly gates of that holy city, they will enter in ſpite of all the oppoſition of men and devils.

But the benefits of their religion are not confined to themſelves, but are like a box of very precious ointment, the perfume of which is very extenſive.

The characters and qualifications of men for public ſervices depend much on the conduct of domeſtic life: The Apoſtle to *Timothy*, ſuggeſts, that it is abſolutely neceſſary, for the two moſt eſſential officers in the Church of CHRIST: The uſefulneſs of thoſe officers muſt therefore depend much on their maintaining ſuch domeſtic characters as are *eſſential* to their truſt. A preacher of the goſpel will offer more conviction to the conſciences of ſinners, by practiſing the truth he preaches, when out of the pulpit, than he will with all the arguments he can uſe when *in* it: Nor is it the unguarded conduct of miniſters *only*, that weakens the energy of goſpel truth on the conſciences of men; but ſuppoſe a miniſter to be faithful and true, both *in* and *out* of the pulpit; and the profeſſors of religion, particularly heads of families, ſhould attend with their families on his public miniſtry; and thoſe heads of families ſhould return home, with

their children, perhaps conſcience convicted, that the truth which they had been hearing was of infinite importance; in ſuch a caſe, thoſe children will ſtrictly watch whether their parents and other profeſſors of religion, apply the truth which they have heard, to practice and converſation; and if they find that they conſciencioufly do, then their conviction remains; but if they ſee nothing of it regarded by thoſe profeſſors, after the ſermon is over, then they begin to think themſelves at liberty to purſue their old courſe of ſin. Thus it appears, that practical Godlineſs, in a private capacity, is one great mean of the ſucceſs of a preached goſpel. Furthermore, if religion is practiſed in our families while our children are young and ſuſceptible of its impreſſions, we have great reaſon to hope it may be a mean of fixing right principles in their minds, which may have a precious influence on them, in whatever ſtation or relation they may be called to in riper years. It is therefore poſſible, and in many inſtances probable, that a whole community, and even a whole kingdom or kingdoms may reap ſome ſpecial benifit from the practice of religion in *one* family. Hence it appears, that family religion is of great importance: Indeed without it, we are not ſuitably qualified for the more public ſervices of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Let us then, beloved brethren, maintain religion at home, bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the LORD: By ſuch

a procedure we may, not only be a means of good to our families, but also to the Church of GOD and to society in general, even after we are dead. The great business assigned us in life, is to glorify GOD and do good to our fellow creatures. This work is great and important: There is no room for idleness, may we then cultivate well our moments, our dear master is on his way, and will soon call us to an account how we have filled our stations and relations in life. The prospect before us is glorious. If we love the business of self-denial, cross-bearing, prayer and watchfulness; if we fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, and hold out in the truth unto the end, we are sure of an immortal crown that fadeth not away. We ought then to remember, that we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of GOD, we may inherit the promise; considering him who endured such contradictions against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. No excuse can be sufficient for the neglect of duty. May the LORD help us all to do our duty, both at home and abroad; that whether we live, we may live unto the LORD, or whether we die we may die unto the LORD; whether we live therefore or die we may be the LORD's.

Corresponding Letter.

The Shaftsbury Association, to the Corresponding Associations, sendeth Christian Love and Salutation.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

AS the indulgent guardian of men has preserved our lives, and brought us together, at this our anual meeting; we have now an opportunity of addressing you in a collective capacity. It is a saying of the wise man, that *two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not easily broken.*

From which we learn, that the design of Heaven, manifested by nature's great law, as well as revelation, is, that men should be helpers of each other. The feeble state of infants—the unwary paths of youth—the decripitude of old age—the want in each sex of the other to make life agreable; and indeed, the inability of individuals to execute business of agriculture and the arts of mechanism, all evince the utility of society in civil life: Nor are arguments less conclusive and pungent in matters of religion. But how are the laws of Heaven (in some sort) frustrated by sin! rather we express it, the plumb is gathered from the thorn, the rose from the brier, and the honey from amidst the stings. How has sin? How does self love and self importance torment and chafe our minds among those very persons—our partners—our neareſt connections, whom Heaven has appointed for our comforters, and without whom we are more forlorn than the beasts of the wilderness. But is there no antidote, is there no way to escape all the snarls of social life! O Gracious Heaven! shew us the way—the hidden way to obtain all the blessings of society without the disadvantages thereof: But here again, we check the language of our hearts; for the voice of revelation promises neither to individuals nor societies, in *this* world, good without evil—peace without contention—a crown without cross, nor profit without incumbrance. Seeing then that this world is a mixture of good

evil, and men are in a middle state, between the consumate Holiness of Heaven, and the intire deformity of Hell; let us wait patiently till our change comes; nor be so overcharged with the evils of life, as to neglect the use of those talents and means that GOD has assigned us in our pilgrimage here on earth. In this point of light, we joyfully embrace this opportunity of corresponding with you, by letter and delegates; wishing that we might suggest a little to you (at least two mites) for your furtherance in the Gospel; and that in return, we might receive much from you, for our reproof, instruction and comfort.

We conceive that the church of CHRIST, which is the kingdom of Heaven, is not governed by the laws of men, but by the laws of CHRIST—Not by the acts of parliament; but by the acts and Epistles of the Apostles—not defended by carnal weapons and instruments of death, but by spiritual weapons and instruments of righteousness. *Not by might and power, but by my spirit, saith the* LORD. This kingdom forms no alliance with the kingdoms, and states of this world, but is distinct from them; yet containing subjects in all of them, to be redeemed from among them. The negociations, failures, violations, ratifications or punctual compliances of treaties between earthly kingdoms and states, no ways affect the church in its spiritual standing, which is secured in the great treaty between

JEHOVAH and the MEDIATOR. *The council of peace was between them both:* in which Covenant the perſons and bleſſings of CHRIST's kingdom are both made ſure. The offspring and veſſels all hang upon this nail.

Dear brethren, if ſuch is the ſecurity and happineſs of the ſaints, O, let us never forget the price of our redemption! The bleſſed JESUS came into this world, not to teach men huſbandry or the mechanical arts—not to inſtruct them in politics, or any of the branches of ſcience or natural philoſophy—he never taught man the uſe of the magnet or the mariners art: No. Theſe things are good and profitable among men, but infinitely beneath the cauſe that JESUS came to eſpouſe. He came to do the will of him who ſent him, and finiſh his work, to magnify his law, to clear his amiable character, to make a diſplay of his excellent perfections, to build up truth, to expoſe ſin, conquer Satan, and ſave ſinners by his blood. Oh! How immenſe the love! How free the grace! How inexpreſſible the kindneſs! How painful the conflict! How intereſting to us and how triumphant to himſelf the victory!—The bleeding victims ſlain under the Moſaic inſtitution; the blood and ſmoke of the Jewiſh altars, but faintly pointed out the great offering of CHRIST, to make atonement for the ſins of men.

Let arians ſocinians or any other undervalue the bloody ſacrifice and vicarious ſufferings of the GOD MAN, CHRIST JESUS; Yet on this

foundation we truſt our ſouls, and humbly hope to ſpend a long Eternity, in finding out this knowledge of witty inventions; and adoring the wiſdom, love and grace, which we never expect nor never wiſh to comprehend.

Since our laſt Aſſociation, our dear brother Rev. Joſhua Mors of Sandisfield, has departed this life. He began the work of the Miniſtry in his youth, has followed it with unwearied zeal, ſolemn devotion and practical piety, to a good old age, and died in the triumphs of faith. We have goſpel grounds to believe, that while we are aſſociating here on earth, and ſee his ſeat empty among us, that he is aſſociating with the ſaints in Heaven and filling his ſeat among the ſervants of the LORD, and has hear'd and received the bleſſed plaudit, "Well done "good and faithful ſervant, becauſe thou haſt "been faithful over a little, I will make the "ruler over much; Enter thou into the joy of "thy LORD." O, may all of us, who are called to miniſter in holy things, be faithful unto death, that we may receive a crown of life. And may the LORD raiſe up and ſend forth able, wiſe, ſpiritual and faithful labourers into his vinyard.

As to the ſtate of our Churches, there is nothing very flattering, nor is there any thing peculiarly diſcouraging. A worldly careleſs ſpirit too much abounds in general; but there are ſome revivings. Upon the whole, we can ſay, "The LORD reigns," and his word of revelation recommends itſelf to us with ſatisfactory evi-

dence. The preceding Minutes will give any curious inquirer, the number of our Churches, and what alterations have taken place ſince our laſt aniverſary.

In this preſent ſeſſion, moderation and good order have prefided, and ſome quickenings of the holy ſpirit. And may the word and ſpirit of the living GOD be our guide and comforter forever. *Amen.*

By order of Aſſociation,

CALEB BLOOD *Mdr.*

Atteſt, JUSTUS HULL *Clk.*

END.