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Minutes ... Clarendon, 1796 ... Salem, ( N.Y. ),  
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# MINUTES

OF THE

## Vermont Association,

HOLDEN AT

CLARENDON, 1796;

MIDDLETOWN, 1797;

AND SALEM, (N. Y.) 1798;



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RUTLAND:

FROM THE HERALD PRESS.

1799.

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# MINUTES, &C.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 5, 1796.

AT 2 o'clock, P. M. Brother ABEL WOOD delivered the Introductory Sermon, from Mal. iii. 8.

1. After divine service, the Association being convened, a Moderator and Clerk were chosen; and letters from the Churches were received and read, and the Delegates names enrolled as follows.

## CHURCHES.

- 1 Clarendon,
- 2 Middletown,
- 3 Wallingford,
- 4 Orwell,
- 5 Pittsford,
- 6 Brandon,
- 7 Salem,
- 8 Shoreham,

## DELEGATES.

- J. Beall, Ozial Smith.  
S. Haynes, C. Smith, J. Bass.  
H. Green, J. Randall.  
J. Nobles, D. Cutting.  
E. Rich.  
C. Chamberlain.  
O. Warren, E. Smith.  
A. Wood, H. Rowley, S. Tower.

The Church of Ira informed us they had dropped out of the Association.

Adjourned till tomorrow 8 o'clock, A. M.

Oct. 6th, Met according to adjournment.

2. Received intelligence from the Woodstock Association, by their messengers, A. LEBLAND, A. KENDRICK, and J. ASPLUND. Also, a letter from the Lyden Association, by their messenger, L. Hodge: who, with Mr. W. CORNAL, (a Congregational minister) were desired to take a seat with us. Also received a letter from the Otsego Association, and a letter from the Shaftsbury Association, by their messenger, E. BARBER, Who took a seat.

3. The question was put by the Moderator, whether the Churches will receive the New Constitution, recommended to them by the Convention January last?

The Churches of Clarendon, Orwell, and Salem, vot-

<sup>4</sup>ed in the affirmative: *Middletown, Pittsford, and Shoreham*, in the negative. *Wallingford and Brandon*, were in suspense.

4. There appearing such a division amongst the Churches, it was proposed to choose messengers to the corresponding Associations, and adjourn this meeting, that there may be a longer time for consideration upon the subject, which was agreed to.

Accordingly made choice of H. Green and J. Beall, to the Shaftsbury Association: S. Haynes and C. Chamberlain, to the Woodstock: and A. Leland, to the Warren.

Then adjourned this meeting to the first Wednesday in October, 1797, at the Meeting-house in Middletown, 2 o'clock, P. M.

MIDDLETOWN, OCT. 4. 1797.

Met according to adjournment.

Eld. P. Werden, being present, delivered a discourse from 1. Cor. i. 23, 24.

After divine service, the Moderator called the Association to business.

Letters were received and read from the Churches present: and the Delegates names enrolled as follows.

CHURCHES.

Clarendon,  
Wallingford,  
Orwell,  
Middletown,  
Pittsford,  
Brandon,  
Kingsbury,  
Salem,  
Pawlet,  
Shoreham,  
Granville,

DELEGATES.

J. Beall, L. Walker.  
H. Green, J. Randall.  
J. Nobles, E. Wilson.  
S. Haynes, C. Smith, J. Bass.  
E. Rich, J. Mott.  
E. Chamberlain.  
E. Willoby, J. Barnum, J. Cove.  
O. Warren, J. Hodge.  
J. Brewster, J. Haskal.  
A. Wood, H. Rowley.  
C. Barns, J. Brown.

Adjourned till tomorrow 9 o'clock, A. M.

Oct. 5th, met pursuant to adjournment.

2. Received a letter and minutes from the Shaftsbury Association, by the hand of their messengers, Elders

Werden and Barber ; who, with Eld. Blood, took a<sup>5</sup> seat with us. Elders, Ransom and Leland, from the Woodstock, who also took a seat with us. Received and read a letter from the Warren Association. Received a letter from the Otsego Association, by their messengers, Elders, Cornal and Roots, who took a seat with us. Received minutes from the Philadelphian, Virginian, Goshen, Dover, and Ketoc-ton Associations : For which, this Association return them thanks.

3. A plan of an Association was presented, and read, by Elder Haynes.

4. As there is still a division among the Churches, respecting the New Constitution, agreed to choose a committee out of some of our sister Associations to take the New Constitution, and the plan presented by E. Haynes, and make a draught of a plan, of an Association, according to their own judgment ; considering our circumstances . and present the same to this Association, at their next meeting. Accordingly made choice of Messrs. Blood, A. Leland, Cornal and Barber, for said committee.

5. A letter was received from the Baptist Church in Benson, by their messengers, Rufus B. Slett and John Shaw ; desiring to connect with this Association : who, after examination, were cordially received into sister-relation with us.

6. Made choice of the following Brethren, our messengers to the corresponding associations : Warren and Green, to the Shaftsbury, Beall and Green, to the Woodstock, Cornal and Haynes, to the Otsego.

7. Adjourned this meeting to the Baptist meeting-house, in Salem (N. Y.) on the first Wednesday of Oct. 1798, at 2 o'clock, P. M.—Elder A. Leland to preach an introductory Sermon, in case of failure Eld. Blood.

SALEM, OCT. 3. 1798.

Met according to adjournment.—At 2 o'clock, P. M. Eld. Blood delivered an introductory sermon, from Mat. xviii. 4.

After divine service, the Association attended to

business.—Letters were received and read from the Churches. The names of the delegates are as follows.

CHURCHES	DELEGATES
1 Clarendon,	J. Beall, L. Walker.
Middletown,	S. Haynes, C. Smith.
Hubbardston,	N. Dana.
Wallingford,	H. Green, J. Randall.
Orwell,	J. Nobles, D. Douglass.
Salem,	O. Warren, J. Hodge.
Pawlet,	J. Brewster, J. Haskall.
Kingsbury,	E. Willoby, J. Covel, W. Paterson
Georgia,	{ A letter from this Church, in-
	{ forming, they had received
	{ the New Constitution.
Benson,	R. Bassett, D. Gibbs.

2. Elder Chamberlain, from Brandon, informed us, that that church had concluded to drop their connection with all associations, for the present, of course we leave them out of our minutes.

3. Received a letter from the Shaftsbury Association, by their Messengers, Elders, Blood and Rogers. Likewise from the Woodstock, by Elder Root.

4. Elders, Cornal, Webb, Barber, S. Brown, and Harrington, were invited to take a seat.

5. By conversation, finding there was a misunderstanding between the members of this Association, last year, respecting the particular business of the committee appointed to prepare a plan, &c. For which reason, Resolved, not to call upon said committee to make their report; and that the thanks of this Association be returned to said committee, for their service, and desire them to excuse our not calling upon them for their performances.

6. Took under consideration, a number of proposed amendments of the New Constitution.

Adjourned till tomorrow morning, 8 o'clock, A. M.  
Oct. 4th, Met pursuant to adjournment.

7. The question being put, whether the churches will receive, and proceed to operate upon the New Constitution, with its proposed amendments? Passed in

the affirmative, 6 to 1.—In the affirmative, Clarendon,<sup>7</sup> Wallingford, Orwell, Salem, Pawlet, and Georgia,—  
In the negative, Middleton.

The Delegates from the church of Benson, Hubbardston, and two of those from Kingsburg, observed, they had no objection to the New Constitution; and the reasons of their not voting in its favor, was, that the churches they represented, had not had an opportunity of a full acquaintance with it: but they thot it probable, they would receive it hereafter.

8. Made choice of Joseph Randall, Clerk, for the ensuing year.

9. Received a letter from the 2 Church in Clarendon, by their messenger, Elder William Harrington, requesting to join this Association: which, after the necessary examination, was accordingly received.

10. Resolved, That any church, which has been connected with this Association, which has not received the New Constitution, should they be desirous of connecting with us, within three years from this date, may be received without any examination. Nevertheless, should there be any church in this association, who has an existing difficulty against any such church or churches, or that may hereafter take place, between this and the time of their joining; it shall be their duty to proceed with them as pointed out in the New Constitution, in like cases.—Furthermore, that it is no bar of fellowship between us and any church, merely for their not receiving the New Constitution.

11. Messengers to the corresponding association, To the Shaftsbury, Elders, Warren and Harrington, To the Woodstock, Beall, Green and Chamberlain.

12. Brother Harrington to prepare a circular letter for next year, and Warren a corresponding letter.

13. The Association to meet next year at Elder Harrington's meeting house in Clarendon, on the first Wednesday in October, 2 o'clock, P. M. Elder Aaron Leland to preach the Sermon, in case of failure, Elder Chamberlain.

By order of the Association.

JOSEPH RANDALL, Clerk.

# Circular Letter.

*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you. PETER.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

**W**HEN our Lord ascended up on high he gave gifts unto men. For the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ. But since we are advertised that *false teachers* shall arise, it becomes us critically to examine the character and work of a gospel minister. In order to this, let us appeal to the Law and to the testimony.

1. A bishop or gospel minister must be blameless, in his conduct, as a man, a christian, and an overseer in the church of God. A man of integrity and uprightness; a humble and devotional christian; and a plain, faithful, and zealous preacher of the gospel of Christ. The husband of one wife. He must be a chaste man. Vigilant: diligent in his work: sober, in his conversation: Of good behavior in the church of God, and in the world: Given to hospitality; being disposed to entertain strangers, and relieve the distressed: Apt to teach: his discourses fraught with matter, and delivered in such a manner that the hearer may receive instruction. He must be temperate, not given to wine: mild in reprovng and admonishing: No Striker: Patient with the allotments of divine providence, and, not greedy of filthy lucre: not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God. He must be well instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, and discipline of the church; Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them that are without; his conduct such toward all men, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances; that those who are without cannot in justice say any evil thing of him; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. He must be



a true lover of God : Lovest thou me ? said our Lord to Simon Peter when he was about to charge him to feed his lambs : He must have the love of souls at heart ; otherwise he will not naturally care for the state of the flock ; nor earnestly endeavor to persuade men and to beseech them to be reconciled to God.

2. It is the work of gospel ministers to preach the word. As far as divine providence permits, to preach the gospel to every creature. In this work they must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God ; but teach his true character as a God of truth, righteousness, holiness and benevolence ; the nature and perfections of his law, and equity of his government. Also the character and state of men as enemies to God, and under the condemnation of his holy law. Likewise, to proclaim the tidings of grace thro the divine Redeemer ; that there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. It is an important part of the work of a gospel minister, to preach *Jesus Christ* and him crucified, to the perishing world of mankind : to hold up the character of Christ in his person, nature, offices and work : and to call upon men to repent and believe the gospel. And in particular to feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. They are stewards of the mysteries of God : and as such it their duty rightly to divide the word, to break the bread of life that the flock may be fed with knowledge and understanding : with the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby. As wise householders, bringing out of the unsearchable treasures of the gospel, and distributing to their flock, things new and old. Also to shew the necessity of a life of self-denial, that they should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present evil world.

Ministers of the gospel are appointed to administer the special ordinances of Christ. They are not only to teach, but to baptize in the name of the *Father*, of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*. The Lord's supper was first administered by Christ himself. In imitation of his example, it is the business of his ministers, to administer to his people, and exhort them to partake of

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the bread and wine, in remembrance of their ascended Lord.

It is also the duty of gospel ministers to take the oversight of the flock. They are made overseers by the *Holy Ghost*: and ought to take the oversight of the flock not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock. They must be ensamples in doctrine and manners, and watch for souls as those who must give an account, lest any of the flock should be turned aside from the doctrine of Christ to another gospel, or in their conduct, walk contrary to the commands and examples of Christ: and the church of Christ be corrupted by false doctrine, and ungodly members.

Thus brethren, we see from the bible, the true character and important work of ministers of the gospel: and may conclude that we ought to be very cautious, not to receive and give fellowship to men as gospel ministers, whose characters do not agree with the word of inspiration, neither lay hands suddenly on any man, lest we should be partakers of other men's sins.

When we consider the charge, given to gospel ministers, that they have to treat with souls bound to eternity, to feed the flock of Christ, and take the oversight of them: that they are appointed as leaders and rulers in the church of God, and that they must give account to the great shepherd: we are ready to cry, who is sufficient for these things? Truly, without help from Christ, his ministers can do nothing. Hence they ought to give themselves much to reading the scriptures, and to prayer. Should any be remiss and inattentive to their duty, neglect to declare the truth for fear of displeasing their hearers; not attend to a strict discipline in the church: and the church become impure thro their neglect: or give fellowship to men as Christ's ministers whom he hath not called, and sent to the work, whose characters are vicious, or doctrine corrupt: or on the other hand become haughty and lord it over God's heritage, and cruelly treat the Lamb:

of Christ : how could they answer it to God or their own consciences.

Let those who profess to be ministers of Christ consider what manner of persons they ought to be in all manner of holy conversation and Godliness. In teaching, their doctrine pure and consonant to the Bible : in exhortation, their hearts warmed with zeal for God's glory, and love to souls : in warning, solemn : in invitation endearing ; in discipline, mild and faithful. Ministers of Christ ought to be sober, but not sullen ; they may be chearful, but not vain and rude : they ought to be bold, but not impudent : they may speak like men established in their judgments, but not too confident and dogmatical : they may be diffident, but ought not to be servile : but in all things approve themselves as sincere christians, and faithful ministers of the New Testament, workmen who need not to be ashamed.

Let ministers of Christ consider that notwithstanding the work they are called to is important, and that they have many enemies to encounter ; yet there is no real matter of discouragement. The hope of winning souls might stimulate to endure hardness as good soldiers : but the principal matter of encouragement is the word and faithfulness of him who cannot lie : Lo I am with you always to the end of the world.

Let all christians consider how they ought to treat the ministers of the gospel. They ought to be received and treated with respect, as those who are called and sent of Christ. He that receiveth you, saith Christ, received me. When they preach the doctrine of Christ, their doctrine ought to be received, and treasured up in the heart : when they lead the church according to divine rule, they ought to be received by their lead being attended to : in a word, they ought to be followed as far as they follow Christ. By these things the saints render them a degree of honor which is their due : The elders that rule well are counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine. They have a right to the prayers of their brethren ;

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brethren pray for us, said an inspired apostle : ministers of the gospel at the present day have a right to the same privileges. Nor ought they to be forgotten as to their temporal subsistence. God hath ordained that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, for the laborer is worthy of his meat.

And now dear brethren permit us to exhort you to beware of false teachers ; Wolves in sheeps' clothing ; or dumb dogs that cannot bark. There may be several sorts of false ministers. Some, who, tho they may preach the truth, and speak with ease and fluency, yet their conduct is vicious, and they are servants to corruption ; of these be aware, as enemies of Christ. Others may speak the truth, but with such carelessness, and stupidity, that their hearers might suppose it a matter of no consequence to believe their report. Some teach for doctrine the commandments and inventions of men, and endeavor to enforce their errors with all the sophistry that human wisdom is capable of, and with slight and cunning craftiness deceive immortal souls, who are hastening to eternity. Others without qualifications or a call from Christ, undertake the work of the ministry ; and amuse ; or rather confuse their hearers with empty sounds without matter ; a confused noise without reason ; a jargon of words without ideas, as if they could carry people to heaven, in an enthusiastical whirlwind. All these, when compared with the rule are found deficient, when weighed in the ballance, are found wanting. Remember brethren, that we are commanded not to receive such preachers into our houses, neither bid them God speed. Finally, be exhorted not to turn aside after every wind of doctrine, but be steadfast and unmoveable in the doctrine of Christ, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord : To him be glory for ever, *Amen.*