

[NYSCU Annual Session 1825]

The Universalist Convention of the State of New-York was established in the following manner. It had for several years been deemed desirable to have a State Convention as a bond of union between the respective Associations, and as a sort of central point, or focus, where all could meet from every part of the State, and the congregated wisdom of all the Associations be employed in the adoption & recommendation of such measures as should be calculated to promote the best interests of the cause of Universal benevolence. It was also by some deemed advisable that such a convention should exist as a sort of ecclesiastic and court or religious tribunal not only for considering and deciding on the claims of candidates for the ministry, but for settling and adjudicating any cases of contention or difficulty between the brethren in the ministry, or deciding on any charge preferred against any minister without the necessity of going out of the state for such trial and decision. It is not improbable that one circumstance leading to this opinion and desire was the fact that in September 1824 two brethren in the ministry belonging to another State, and living about 300 miles distant, attended the "General Convention of the New England States & Others," holden in Clinton, N.Y. in that year, and brought mutually against each other many bitter accusations and grievous complaints, in examining and deciding on which the Convention was occupied during the greater part of its session, not only to the neglect of other business, but to the great grief and extreme mortification of almost all the members present. To avoid the occurrence of similar cases, and for the other purposes named, the Western Association (since denominated the Central), at its session at Eaton's Bush, June 1 & 2, 1825, appointed a committee to take into consideration the propriety of organizing a Convention, to be called the Universalist Convention of the State of New York. This committee consisted of Brs. S. R. Smith<sup>1</sup>, A. Kneeland<sup>2</sup>, J. S. Thompson<sup>3</sup>, N. Stacy<sup>4</sup>, G. B. Lisher<sup>5</sup>, S. Jones,<sup>6</sup> and P. Morse<sup>7</sup>. After due deliberation, the committee reported that it is expedient to form such a Convention, and reported a Constitution for the same. This elicited a long and animated discussion in council. The plan reported was, however, adopted by the Association, which by such act of approval recommended the following

CONSTITUTION.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Rensselaer Smith

<sup>2</sup> Abner Kneeland

<sup>3</sup> John Samuel Thompson

<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel Stacy

<sup>5</sup> George B. Lisher

<sup>6</sup> Seth Jones

<sup>7</sup> Pitt Morse

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1. This Convention shall be composed exclusively of delegates, consisting of two ministers to be chosen annually from each Association now existing, or which may be hereafter organized within the State of New-York, or such other associations as may wish to come under its jurisdiction; and a majority of all the Delegates chosen shall constitute a quorum to do business.

2. This Convention considers itself in fellowship, and will endeavor always to maintain full fellowship and also perfect harmony with the General Convention of Universalists of the New England States and Others; and are ready to cooperate with them in whatever may promote the cause of Gospel truth, or disseminate the doctrine of our common faith.

3. The meetings of this Convention shall be held on the second Wednesday of May annually, the first meeting to be held at Madison on the second Wednesday of May 1826, which shall be considered the day of public service, and to adjourn from day to day, until the business of the convention shall be completed; and finally to adjourn to such place, from year to year, as shall be thought most expedient.

4. The business of the convention, after the usual organization of choosing a Moderator, Clerk, &c, will be to take cognizance of the qualifications, character and conduct of the ministers in fellowship under its jurisdiction, to reprove, admonish or withdraw fellowship from any brother who shall walk [disrespectfully] as shall be found expedient; and to do all other things in relation to the brethren in the ministry, which God in his wisdom may direct, for the promotion of the cause of truth.

5. In case of complaints and grievances which may be presented to the convention against any brother in the ministry, either directly or through the medium of their standing committee, it shall be the duty of the convention to take immediate cognizance of the same, who shall proceed to hear the parties, if they be prepared for trial, or if it shall be requested by the party accused, the convention shall appoint a committee of three ministers in the vicinity of the parties, giving each party the privilege of nominating one if they choose, whose duty shall be to meet in some convenient place, and after hearing the parties with their witnesses, to decide on the case; which decision (unless in case of appeal) and reported as such to the convention.

6. In case of an appeal from the decision of the committee (which either party shall have the privilege of making) the appeal shall be made before the committee separates, in which case it shall be the duty of the committee to report the evidence on which they grounded their decision, so as to prevent the necessity of the attendance of witnesses before the convention; but the parties may be again heard, together with any new evidence which may be offered by the parties, and being thus heard, the convention shall either confirm or set aside the decision of the committee, as shall be thought just and expedient.

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7. This convention disclaims all right of further interposing with the discipline of the respective Associations, than has been already stated, but recommends it as the duty of each association to attend to the discipline of its respective societies as ecclesiastical bodies; and as the duty of the respective societies to attend to the discipline of their respective members.

Transcribed from an image of the original record with notes added  
in Jan 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY