

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNIVERSALIST
CONVENTION OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK, A.D. 1828

The Universalist Convention of the State of New-York assembled in Utica, according to adjournment, at the house of bro. Dolphus Skinner, on the Wednesday in May 1828, and after uniting with Br. N. [Nathaniel] Stacy in a solemn address to the throne of grace, proceeded to organize the council, by choosing

Br. N. Stacy, *Moderator*, and

Brs. D. [Dolphus] Skinner and G. Messenger, Clerks

Made arrangements for public services, which were as follows:

WEDNESDAY MORNING SERVICE

Introductory Prayer—Br. N. Stacy

SERMON—Br. T. F. King—Text; Job, v:17. *"Shall mortal man be more just than God."*

Second Prayer—Br. W. [William] Underwood

P.M. SERVICE

First Prayer—Br. J. [Job] Potter

SERMON—Br. L. [Lemuel] Willis—Text; 1 Tim. iv:10. *"For therefore we both labor, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God."*

Second Prayer—Br. George Messenger

EVENING SERVICE¹

First Prayer—Br. S. [Stephen] Miles

SERMON—Br. N. Stacy—Text; John xviii:37. *"To this end I was born; and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."*

Second Prayer—Br. L. Willis.

Wednesday evening, met in council, and after conversing freely on the subject of this convention—its existence, utility, mode of organization, &c., and considering that its utility and objects are almost universally acknowledged and approved; yet, that there are objections existing in the minds of some of our brethren and some associations in this state, against some features of the constitution and present mode of organization;

Voted to appoint a committee of three to take into consideration the propriety of revising the Constitution of this convention, and submitting it, thus revised, to the consideration and approval of the respective Associations in this state; and recommending it to be adopted at the next session of this body.

Appointed Brs. N. Stacy, T. F. King, and L. Willis the above named committee.

¹ In addition to these services, public worship was attended on Thursday evening, after the convention had adjourned, when Br. S. [Stephen] Miles delivered a discourse from John iii:3d. Br. King from Hudson tarried over the Sabbath following, and preached three discourses to attentive and overflowing congregations.

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Thursday morning, May 15th, met and opened the council by uniting in solemn prayer with Br. W. Underwood.

The committee appointed the last evening to take into consideration the subject of the constitution, etc., reported, as the result of their deliberations, that in their opinion, it is expedient that the Constitution of this Convention be amended; and submitted the following revised

CONSTITUTION

OF THE UNIVERSALIST CONVENTION OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

ART. 1st. This Convention shall consist of Delegates chosen annually from the respective Associations of Universalists in this state, not exceeding four from each; one half of whom may be lay delegates, at the discretion of the Associations; and five when assembled shall constitute a quorum to do business.

ART. 2d. The meetings of the Convention shall be holden on the second Wednesday in May annually; which shall uniformly be a day of public worship. But the convention may adjourn from day to day, until their business shall be completed; and finally may adjourn to such place, from year to year, as shall be tho't most expedient.

ART. 3d. The business of the Convention, in addition to public worship, shall be, to choose a Moderator and Clerk, for the time being, and to appoint such other officers and committees for the year ensuing as shall be deemed expedient; to hear the reports of the several delegates relative to the condition of their respective Associations;—to receive requests for Ordination, and grant or refuse such requests as may be tho't proper;—and to adopt and recommend such measures as shall be deemed necessary for the spread of the truth, the promotion of piety, and the good of Zion at large.

ART. 4th. Any association aggrieved by the conduct of any ministering brother, or by the doings of any sister associations; or any ministering brother aggrieved by the doings of an Association, may have the privilege of applying to the Convention for counsel on the subject; and in such cases it shall be the duty of the convention to appoint a committee to assist in enquiring into the cause of difficulty, and endeavoring to restore harmony. But this convention disclaims all right of passing any further judgment against any individual, or association than the mere withdrawing of fellowship.

ART. 5th. Any association belonging to this convention, may have the privilege of withdrawing their fellowship therefrom, by assigning their reasons in writing, and giving notice of their intention at a previous meeting of the convention.

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happy, and we trust, a *profitable* meeting. Tho' three of the Delegates appointed to attend were unavoidably detained (which to us was cause of regret, but not of blame to them) yet a goodly number have attended from various parts of our Lord's heritage, and we have heard from each, cheering reports relative to the harmony of our order and the spread of truth throughout our Zion.

The public services on this occasion, were well attended. A respectable, solemn, and deeply attentive congregation listened with joy to the word of life; while those who spake in the name of the holy child Jesus, seemed to be richly endowed with wisdom from on high, as their doctrine dropped like the rain upon the mown grass, and their speech distilled like the dew upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for evermore.

In the deliberations and proceedings of our council, the most perfect order, peace and cordial good will prevailed throughout our session; and the most complete unanimity of feeling and views as to the measures adopted and the steps taken for the furtherance of the cause of truth and righteousness. It will be seen by our minutes that the convention deemed it expedient to recommend a revision of our constitution, and that the revised constitution proposed differs considerably from the one first adopted by this body, especially in relation to the delegation and mode of organization. This measure was not adopted in haste, nor unadvisedly. The subject has been considerably agitated and discussed during the year past; and the minds of our brethren in this state are pretty generally known in relation to it. Tho' the proposed plan differs some from the plan of state conventions proposed by the 'General Convention of the New-England states and others' at its last session; and considerably from the plan first adopted by this body, yet it is believed, from the knowledge and means of information which we have, that it is a plan that will more generally meet the views and wishes of our order in this state than either of these.

When the constitution first adopted by this body was framed, about three years ago, the subject of a state convention, (especially in this state,) was *then* fully *seen* and *felt*; and has been ever since. But whether such a body ought to consist exclusively of ministers, or of laymen, or of both together, was not then so fully understood; and the plan adopted at that time was supposed by its framers to be the best that could be proposed. Since that period, several worthy brethren in the ministry, as well as several associations in this state have disapproved of some parts of that constitution, and particularly of that clause which required the delegates from the Associations to the state Convention to be composed exclusively of ministers. And altho' the spirit of our religion is directly opposed to any unwarrantable assumptions of power, and to all ecclesiastical domination;

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yet it is well—yea it ought ever to be our studious aim—to guard against even the *possibility* of those greatest of evils that have ever infested the Church of Christ. By the revised constitution proposed, that offensive feature is effectually removed; and by it also it will be perceived that every desirable object can be obtained without that particular feature. According to the constitution proposed, each Association will have the privilege of sending an equal number of ministers and laymen, as delegates; and this body will be, when assembled, a *general bond of union* between the respective Associations in the state, and the *source, centre, and medium of religious intelligence and advice*. Its authority with Associations is simply *advisory or recommendatory*. It has the right of withdrawing fellowship from Associations; and Associations have the right of withdrawing from *its* fellowship; so that the door into it, and out of it, is of the same width. But it is presumed there will never be occasion of disfellowship between the Convention and the Associations, because the Associations, by their representatives or delegates *constitute* the Convention.

We submit the revised constitution to the serious consideration and candid investigation of the respective Associations of the state, desiring their approval and concurrence in its adoption; or if any of them should discover in it any defects, or particular items, susceptible of further improvement, that they would instruct their delegates to express the same at the next annual session of this body. For we desire all the assistance, counsel and wisdom that can be obtained on the subject, and a free expression of the wishes of all concerned. Let all things be done decently and in order. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory. May there exist no strife among us for the mastery; for one is our Master, even Christ; and let us therefore know no other but him. May the same mind be in us that was in him. May his example be our aim, and his laws and precepts our guide. May his meekness and his grace dwell in us richly. May no individual or associated body give any offence or provocation to others, except to provoke one another to emulation and good works.

Let ministers be faithful to the people of their charge, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. Let Churches and Societies be faithful to fulfill their engagements and discharge all their duties to their ministers and all their members. Let Associations strive to promote not only their own good, but the good and prosperity of sister Associations. Let the bond of fellowship, kindness and good will be extended, and let us do good to all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of the faithful.

To the believers in the Abrahamic faith we say, brethren, let us go on our way rejoicing. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us beyond our most sanguine expectations; and we trust he will still continue to help us, if we are faithful

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in doing our duty. There are now nine Associations of Universalists in the state of New York alone; and there are many fields within our borders, white and ready for the harvest, into which the sickle has not yet been thrust. Let us then rise in the strength of the Lord, go forth into the field of labor clad with the panoply of heaven, and with zeal and faithfulness proclaim is salvation to the ends of the earth, exemplifying its holy influence in our lives and conversation. And while the enemy may revile, and attempt to reproach us, with "want of zeal and engageness in the cause of religion," merely because we do not go to the same lengths that they do in extravagance and enthusiasm, in 'chambering and wantonness,' let us give them no occasion to say we are lacking in that zeal which is according to knowledge, and in the practical exemplification of all those moral virtues and christian graces that adorn the disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, and render him useful and happy in the world.

To those who are enemies to the truth, as it is in Jesus, we say, why oppose that religion which bears the impress of the Divinity, the image of Jehovah's love to the world, which is the only source of peace and true happiness in this life, and alone can open a bright vista, through the dark portals of death, to the sure Paradise of God above? Cease then to oppose your own happiness and true interests; come to Jesus who is the life, light and salvation of the world, and he will give you rest. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?

To those who are ignorant of the truth and groping in darkness, and to the careless and indifferent we say, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is life eternal that they may know the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Come taste and see, for the Lord is gracious.

And now may grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, be abundantly multiplied to each and every one herein addressed, and to all the purchased possession, now henceforth and forever. Amen.

By order, and in behalf of the Convention.

DOLPHUS SKINNER, CLERK.

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