

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
NEW-YORK STATE CONVENTION.—1835

1. The New-York State Convention of Universalists met, according to adjournment, at Cooperstown, on Wednesday, May 27th, 1835; and after uniting in prayer with Br. Menzies Rayner, proceeded to organize the Council by appointing the following officers: Hon. WILLIAM BERRY, Moderator; Br. *I D.* [Isaac Dowd] *Williamson*, Clerk; and Br. *C. F.* [Clement Fall] *Le Fevre*, Assistant Clerk.

2. Appointed Brs. Job Potter, A. B. [Aaron Bort] Grosh and Seth Doubleday, jr., a committee to arrange the order of public services on the present occasion.

3. Appointed Brs. D.[Dolphus] Skinner, T.J.[Thomas Jefferson] Whitcomb and J. Britton, jr., a committee to receive requests for letters of fellowship and ordination, and report to this body during its present session.

4. The committee of general correspondence reported, That no cause of complaint had been presented to them during the past year. Report accepted.

5. Brs. S. R. [Stephen Rensselaer] Smith, P. [Pitt] Morse, and T. J. [Thomas Jefferson] Sawyer were appointed a committee of correspondence for the ensuing year.

6. Appointed Brs. J. Potter, I.D. Williamson and S.[Stephen] Van Schaack a committee to nominate delegates for the United States Convention.

7. The following resolution was adopted:—

Whereas, it is known to this body that the brethren composing the Hudson River Association have appointed an extra session for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of a division of that body; and

Whereas, it has been intimated to this Convention, that an expression of its opinion upon the subject would be desirable by the said Association; therefore,

Resolved, That this Convention recommend a division of said Association, in such a manner as to form two Associations in the country now embraced in its territorial limits.

8. Adjourned to Thursday morning.

*Thursday morning.*—9. Met, according to adjournment, and opened by prayer, from Br. A. B. Grosh.

10. A request from the Chautauque Association to be received into the fellowship of this Convention having been presented through Br. M. B. [Maxcey Barton] Newell. Voted, that said request be granted.

11. Appointed the following delegates to represent this body in the United States Convention at the next session, to be held in Hartford, Conn., on the third Wednesday and Thursday in September, 1835, with power to appoint substitutes, in case they, or either [any] of them, should be unable to attend. *Ministering brethren*—C.F. Le Fevre, S.R. Smith, G.W. [George Washington] Montgomery and D. Skinner.—*Lay delegates*—Col. C.

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[Cornelius] Harsen, New-York, S. [Stephen] Van Schaack, Albany; Hon. W. Berry, Homer; E. J. Stebbins, Clinton; I. [Imley] Prescott, Geneva; A. G. Moore, Buffalo.

12. The committee appointed to receive requests for fellowship and ordination, reported in favor of granting letters of fellowship to Brs. Maxcey B. Newell and Gustavus S. Ames. Report accepted.

13. Voted, That when this Convention adjourn, it adjourn to meet at Auburn, Cayuga county, N.Y.

14. Received requests from the Universalist societies in Albany and Oxford, N.Y., each petitioning that this Convention meet with them in the year 1837, or as soon thereafter as possible.

15. Appointed Br. Job Potter to deliver the occasional sermon at the next meeting of this body, Br. I. D. Williamson, substitute.

16. Appointed Br. D. Skinner to prepare the minutes of this Convention for the press, and publish them in the Magazine and Advocate, accompanied with a Circular; and that they be copied into all the Universalist papers on this State.

17. The following preambles and resolutions were adopted:—

1. Whereas the general and long established custom of wearing mourning apparel on account of the loss of friends and relatives, is often attended with great inconvenience, and an expense frequently oppressive and grievous to be borne, especially by the poor; and whereas the custom can neither benefit the dead or the living; therefore,

*Resolved*, That this Convention consider the wearing of mourning apparel unnecessary, and would recommend the general discontinuance of the custom.

2. Whereas the General Convention of Universalists, at its session in 1815, passed a resolution disapproving of the use of ardent spirits as an article of refreshment, which resolution has been confirmed by various public bodies of our order, at various periods, since then—and whereas the expression of the opinion of the Convention may have some beneficial tendency on this subject—therefore,

*Resolved*, That we consider the use of ardent spirits, by persons in a state of health, to be attended with many great moral and physical evils to all classes of society, and we therefore recommend a discontinuance of a practice so unnecessary and deleterious.

3. *Resolved*, That the person who shall deliver the closing address in the services of this afternoon, be instructed, in the name of this Council, to tender to the brethren in this place, the grateful thanks of this Convention for that kindness with which we have been received, and the liberality with which they have administered to our wants.

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18. Adjourned at the close of the afternoon service, to meet at Auburn, as by a former vote.

W. BERRY, *Moderator*

I. D. Williamson, Clerk

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C. F. Le Fevre, Assistant Clerk

ORDER OF PUBLIC SERVICES.

*Wednesday morning.*—Prayer, by Br. G. [George] Messinger. Sermon, by Br. D. Skinner, Rom. xii:12-14. Benediction, by Br. D. Skinner.

*Afternoon.*—Prayer, by Br. J. [Jacob] Whitney. First Sermon, by Br. C. F. Le Fevre, Gal. iv:24. Second Sermon, by Br. E. M. [Edwin Mott] Woolley, Matt. xi:28-30. Benediction, by Br. J. Potter.

*Evening.*—Prayer, by Br. G. Sanderson. Sermon, by Br. I. D. Williamson, Ps. xi:4. Benediction, by Br. I. D. Williamson.

*Thursday morning.*—Prayer, by Br. L. C. [Lewis Cresaba] Browne. Sermon, by Br. S. [Savillion] W. Fuller, 1 Cor. xiii:13. Benediction, by Br. S. W. Fuller.

*Afternoon.*—Prayer, by Br. A. B. Grosh. Sermon and Addresses, by Br. Menzies Rayner, Text, John ii:10. Concluding prayer, by Br. I. D. Williamson. Benediction, by Br. M. Rayner.

*Evening.*—Prayer, by Br. T. J. Whitcomb. Sermon, by Br. A. B. Grosh, Luke xvii:18. Benediction, by Br. A. B. Grosh.

LAY DELEGATES PRESENT

Charles Smith, Seth Doubleday, jr., Henry Cook, Esq., S. Van Schaack, Hin. Wm. Berry, Nathan French, B. [Bezaleel] Thayer

CLERICAL DELEGATES PRESENT

D. Skinner, J. Britton, L. C. Browne, Job Potter, C. F. Le Fevre, T. J. Whitcomb, I. D. Williamson, G. Messinger, jr., C. S. [Charles Starr] Brown, O. [Obadiah] Whiston.

VISITING CLERGY

Menzies Rayner, G. Sanderson, A. B. Grosh, J. Whitney, G. S. Ames, Jesse Bushnell, E. M. Woolley, A. K. Marsh, Aaron Kinne, S. W. Fuller, M. B. Newell, H. Gifford, A. [Alfred] C. Barray, W. [William] H. Waggoner.

CIRCULAR

To the respective Associations, societies and believers in fellowship with this body—and to all believers in the Gospel which God preached unto Abraham, confirmed unto Isaac, renewed unto Jacob, and reiterated by all his holy prophets, which are scattered up and down the earth—and to all the fraternity of Adam's numerous race, the children of one common

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Father, the subjects of one all-comprehensive and all-redeeming grace, and the equal heirs of one common immortality; the Universalist Convention of the State of New-York sendeth Christian salutations of peace and good will.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN—Our kind Father and common Benefactor has granted us another holy and happy convocation—another season of joy and refreshing from his presence—another opportunity of meeting with each other from various parts of his earthly heritage—another time of the interchange of kindred sentiments and fraternal affections, of entering his courts with thanksgiving and his gates with praise, and of commingling our gratitude and devotions at a common altar of love and good will.

Our season has been one of great harmony and happiness. No dissensions—not a discordant note disturbed our Council or our devotions. We were received and entertained by the brethren and sisters at Cooperstown with great hospitality and kindness. Their affectionate attentions to our wants will long be cherished in grateful remembrance. The season was pleasant, the weather delightful, the congregations for public worship, large, orderly, devout, the singing thrillingly touching and good, and the performances in the pulpit in general, dignified, solemn, appropriate and effective. The season will long be remembered as one of peculiar satisfaction and enjoyment, and we trust of much spiritual good to individuals and the cause.

Between twenty and thirty ministering brethren were present, two of whom, young men of promising talents and piety, received letters of fellowship as preachers of the everlasting Gospel. There were two resolutions passed by the Convention, which are deemed of considerable importance in their moral bearing on society. The one relates to the custom of wearing mourning apparel, and the other to the use of ardent spirits as a drink.

The first is not intended to reprove nor to wound the feelings of those who have hitherto adhered to, or still continue the practice of wearing mourning apparel on account of the loss of friends and kindred; but to encourage those who feel the custom which *fashion* has hitherto imposed on them to be a burden grievous to be borne; to disregard a long established fashion, that can do no good, and is frequently grievously oppressive, especially to the poor, by the countenance of a large and respectable public religious body. Those who have so often witnessed the house of mourning turned literally into a milliner's shop; and the sanctuary of private grief and heart-felt sorrow invaded by the ruthless tyrant, *fashion*, and the perpetual topic of the "newest fashions and best style" of mourning dresses, and the bustle of procuring the materials and laborers to make them up, when most the inmates seek retirement and rest from fatiguing and anxious cares, and

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to indulge in private the flowing tear of sorrow—those who have seen the forlorn widow and her bereaved orphans, at a time when protracted sickness, the expense of nursing and medical attendance, and the thousand untold drafts on their pecuniary resources at such times, have rendered them least able to bear the burden; while perhaps the only means of subsistence has been removed by the death of the husband and father, paying out their last farthing for mourning dresses, and perhaps incurring a debt which requires years of hard labor to discharge—those, we say, who have witnessed these things will, we trust, appreciate our motives in the adoption of this resolution. And we do hope and fervently pray that it may have its due weight throughout the denomination, and community generally, until this useless and oppressive fashion shall be done away.

The resolution on the use of ardent spirits as a drink, is no new measure. It is the same as that adopted by the General Convention of Universalists in 1814 or 1815, long before a Temperance society is known to have existed in the world. It goes to show what are, and what have always been, the views of the great body of Universalists on the subject; and is now introduced and again brought before the public, with a vow of keeping it constantly before Universalists and the world, that its intention, spirit and admonition may be continually heeded in the life and practice of our denomination, at least.

There is another topic on which we desire to say a few words. We allude to the attendance of delegate appointed to the annual meetings of this body by the respective Associations composing it. By a reference to the list of delegates appointed, and an examination of the names of those who attended, it will be seen that many who were appointed did not attend, especially from the North and the West. In several instances, we know that their attendance was impossible, and in such cases, no other excuse is necessary but the impracticability of the thing. But we have reason to believe that in other instances, and these not a few, no such excuse can be given, and that ether disinclination or indifference was the cause of non-attendance. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be."—Though our Council was very respectable for the numbers, and many visiting brethren were present, yet we desired to see all the delegates present, who were appointed, and to have each Association duly represented. But from several of them not a single delegate was present. We think the appointment of delegates should not be a mere matter of *form*; but Associations should appoint such as will either *promise*, or at all events be *likely* to attend; that each one so appointed should feel it his duty to attend; and that where unforeseen events occur to prevent their attendance, they should in every instance appoint a substitute to take their place. The Convention is designed as a bond of union for the Universalist Associations throughout the State, the same as each association is designed as a bond of union for all

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the societies within its boundaries; and the same as the United States Convention is the bond of union for all the State Conventions of Universalists in America. And not a link of this great chain should be broken or out of its place.

Brethren, the Minutes and Circular of our body are before you. May God give all of us wisdom and understanding, zeal and fidelity, to pursue that which is right and good, and eschew all evil. We congratulate you on the past progress and present prosperity of our holy cause. We have much to encourage us—to enliven and cheer our hearts and strengthen our hands. Peace reigns through our Israel, and harmony dwells in our borders. The fields of Zion are white already for the harvest; let us thrust in our sharp sickles and reap. The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers few. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers into his vineyard; and may none of us stand idle in the market places, but be up and doing; buckle on the armor of light, and go forth manfully into the field of labor. And he who has promised that we shall come again in the evening, bringing our sheaves and rejoicing, will be faithful to perform his promise.

By order, and in behalf of the Convention,

D. SKINNER

*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, Utica NY, Sat. 13 Jun 1835

Transcribed with notes added on 28 Oct 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY