

PROCEEDINGS OF THE N. Y. STATE CONVENTION, 1849

The Delegates to this Convention assembled at Richfield Springs, May 30th, and were called to order by Rev. Job Potter, Moderator of the last Convention, who called upon Rev. Mr. Balch to offer prayers. The roll of Delegates was then made out, and Rev. Wm. S. Balch elected *Moderator*, and Rev. J. T. [John Temple] Goodrich, *Clerk*.

Rev. J.M.[John Mather] Austin, from the "Committee on Correspondence," presented a Report concerning charges preferred against the Buffalo Association, by the First Universalist society in Buffalo, which was referred to Rev. T. J. [Thomas Jefferson] Sawyer, Mr. G. L. Demarest, and Rev. D. [Dolphus] Skinner, who subsequently presented the following Report and Resolutions, which, after mature deliberation, were adopted:

TO THE NEW YORK STATE CONVENTION OF UNIVERSALISTS:—

The Special Committee, to whom was referred the Report of your Committee of Correspondence, on the charges against the Buffalo Association of Universalists, preferred by the First Universalist Society of Buffalo, with the accompanying documents beg leave respectfully to report:

That it was proved, and admitted, before your Committee of Correspondence, that the Buffalo Association received into its fellowship the Second Universalist Society of Buffalo, while said Society employed a minister who had been, as was known, previously suspended from fellowship by the rightful authority of said Association.

In justification of this proceeding, the Buffalo Association, by its Committee, pleaded that the said Second Society had employed the clergyman referred to while he was in good standing, and that it could not dissolve its connection with him previous to its application for the fellowship of the Association.

Taking for granted that the Second Society could not legally dissolve its connection with its minister, even under the then existing circumstances, it does not appear to your Committee that the action of the Buffalo Association in the case was either correct or proper. There does not appear to have been any immediate necessity for the admission of the said Society into fellowship, and no injury could have occurred to the said Society, if it had not been received into the Association until a future session.

But the testimony taken before your Committee of Correspondence, shows conclusively that the said Society had no disposition, even if it had possessed legal power, to dissolve its connection with its minister, duly and regularly suspended from fellowship. On the contrary, the said Society, at a meeting held two months previous to the session of the Buffalo Association, the proceedings of which were published in a daily paper of the city of Buffalo, did expressly declare that it regarded the decision of the Committee of Discipline, whether censuring or approving of the conduct of its minister, as a matter of perfect indifference, and that, in either case, it would

resolutely and cheerfully stand by and defend the accused. It is thus fully proved, to the satisfaction of this Committee, that the said Second Society was unwilling to abide by the action of our ecclesiastical bodies, so far as reference might be had to its minister.

It further appears by the Report of your Committee of Correspondence, that the Buffalo Association, at its last Annual Meeting, after hearing the Report of its Committee of Discipline, who had investigated charges against, and suspended from fellowship a minister subject to its jurisdiction, refused to enter into an examination of said charges; and that, instead of [either] confirming or reversing the action of its Committee of Discipline, the said Association, without such examination, suspended all proceedings in the case.

The Association, by its Committee, justify this proceeding on the ground that the party entering the original complaint before its Committee of Discipline did not, as is alleged, labor with the accused minister according to the Master's injunction in Matt. xviii, 15-17. It however appears that attempts to do this had in good faith been made and repulsed. But your Committee are of the opinion that, even if that course had not been pursued, it forms no justification of the proceeding referred to. Christians having merely personal disputes ought to make earnest, faithful, and persevering attempts at reconciliation, before inviting public action in relation thereto; and to disputes of this nature our Saviour doubtless had reference. But it does not follow that charges of criminal conduct, or offences against the moral law or the public welfare, ought to be, or can be treated in this manner. In the present instance, it matters not whether the original parties, accusing and accused, were "reconciled" or not; there still remained a charge of immorality, injurious, if not properly refuted or subjected to discipline, to our denomination and the cause of religion. Your Committee are satisfied that the Buffalo Association ought to have duly examined and considered the Report of its Committee of Discipline, and taken such action thereon as justice and the cause of truth require.

Your Committee recommend the adoption of the following Resolutions:

Resolved, That no Society can voluntarily engage or retain, for its minister, an individual under ecclesiastical censure or suspended from the fellowship of the denomination, without expressing thereby a contempt for our duly constituted bodies and authorities, and a disregard of the welfare and prosperity of our denomination, which of themselves furnish adequate cause for the suspension or rejection of said Society from fellowship.

Resolved, That in admitting the Second Universalist Society of Buffalo into its fellowship, while the said Society voluntarily retained for its minister an individual under ecclesiastical censure and suspended from fellowship, the Buffalo Association, in the opinion of this Convention, committed an error;

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and that so much of its proceedings as relate to the admission of said Society are therefore declared null and void.

Resolved, That the action of the said Buffalo Association, in refusing to consider the Report of its Committee of Discipline on charges of immorality preferred against one of its members, upon which charges said Committee had suspended the accused from fellowship; and the further action of said Association in suspending the whole complaint against the party accused, and suspended by its own authorized Committee, without a direct vote upon the action of said Committee, are irregular and void.

Resolved, That the Clerk of this Convention forward to the Standing Clerk of the Buffalo Association a copy of the above Resolutions, with the fraternal salutations of this Convention, and instructions that it revise its proceedings in the premises in accordance with the spirit of the said resolutions.

All which is respectfully submitted,

THOS. J. SAWYER
D. SKINNER
G. L. DEMAREST

Richfield Springs, May 30, 1849

The Annual Report of the Trustees and Treasurer of the N.Y. Universalist Relief Fund, was received, read, and referred to Rev. J. M. Austin, and Messrs. E. B. Vedder and D. Kenyon, who reported that they found it correct in every particular, and recommended its adoption, together with resolutions authorizing said Trustees to make the appropriations therein recommended. Adopted, and the Resolutions passed.

Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the New York Universalist Relief Fund.

To the Council of the New York State Convention of Universalists to be convened at Richfield Springs, Otsego County, N.Y., on Wednesday, May 30, 1849.

The Trustees of the New York Universalist Relief Fund, since their last Annual Report to the Convention, have received six applications for aid.

The first application is made by Br. Walter Mumford, in behalf of Julius Savillion Fuller, the orphan child of the Rev. Joseph Eaton, late of the Chautauque Association. His youth and destitute condition claim the continued attention of the Board. They therefore recommend the payment of fifty dollars,—same as last year,—to the order of Walter Mumford, to be applied to the support of said orphan child.

The second is the personal application of Mrs. Polly Hayward, widow of the Rev. Isaac Hayward, late of the Otsego Association. Mrs. Hayward received aid from the fund by a vote of the Convention, in May, 1847. Her wants are now more urgent, as certified to the Board, being deprived of the

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aid of a daughter, who is now enfeebled by disease. They would, therefore, recommend the appropriation of one hundred dollars for her benefit, payable to the order of Dr. E. Darwin Hayward, of Columbus, Chenango Co., N.Y., in two equal instalments; in the months of June and November, 1849.

The third application is from the Rev. Pitt Morse, in behalf of Mrs. Clarinda Wilcox, widow of the Rev. Oliver Wilcox, late of the Black River Association. Her situation, and that of her dependent family, are in no respect improved since the donation voted by the Convention in May, 1847. The Board, therefore, recommend the appropriation of one hundred dollars for her benefit, and that the Treasurer of the Fund be authorized to pay the same to the order of the Rev. Pitt Morse, in two equal instalments, in the months of June and November, 1849.

The fourth is the personal application of Mrs. Abigail Morton, widow of the Rev. Calvin Morton, late of the Allegany Association. Mrs. Morton renews her request, made the last year, which was then informal, and being unaccompanied with the necessary certificates, it did not receive the favorable consideration of the Board. The Trustees are now furnished with the requisite information by the Rev. G. [Gideon] S. Gowdy, and believing her to be in every respect entitled to aid, they would suggest that the sum of one hundred dollars, in two equal instalments, in the months of June and November, be paid to her order, or that of any person whom the Convention may designate.

The fifth is the application of the Rev. J. B. Sax, of Willink, N.Y., in behalf of the Rev. Samuel A. Skeelee, of Cowlesville, N.Y. Br. Skeelee is represented as having been a faithful servant in the ministry of reconciliation; of unsullied character; and now in fellowship with the Buffalo Association; and that sickness in his family, and infirmity from his advanced age, entitle him to aid from the fund. The Board recommend the payment of one hundred dollars, to his order, in two equal instalments, in June and November, 1849.

The sixth is the personal application of Mrs. Mary Freeman, widow of the late Rev. John Freeman, late of East Hamilton, N.Y., who died in November, 1833. Mrs. Freeman now resides in the State of Illinois, and from her statement "is possessed of a small farm, and some comforts and conveniences," though in a degree less than desired. From the increasing calls for aid, and the limited means at their disposal, together with the destitute and helpless condition of those having the most imperative claim on their sympathy, the Board are constrained to report adverse to an application, which, under other circumstances, would receive their favorable consideration.

These, if approved by the Convention, will comprise all the demands on the fund to be paid, as suggested, in June, out of the balance now in the

treasury, together with so much of the interest to accrue during the year, as shall be sufficient to meet the drafts to be presented in November next.

The Treasurer's Report, herewith transmitted, shows an unexpended balance of two hundred and sixty-three dollars and thirty-seven cents, which, with interest to be collected, will place at the disposal of the Trustees the sum of four hundred and seventy-three dollars for the current year, leaving the sum of two hundred and ten dollars to be collected in 1850, and before the next session of the Convention, to meet the first payment of any appropriations then to be made. The Trustees acknowledge, as noticed in the Treasurer's report, the receipt of sixty dollars from the Central Association, and have applied it to the principal of the fund as directed. Agreeably to the suggestion of the Board and the instruction of the last State Convention, the sum of one thousand dollars, consisting of unexpended interest and sums donated by societies and individuals, has been added to the fund. The vote of the Convention directed this sum to be invested in Stock of the State of New York, but it was deemed advisable to change the proposed security to that of the six per cent stock of the State of Ohio, from the inducement of its being purchasable at a less rate. The desirableness of the investment is already proved, by the fact that there is a present gain on the purchase of at least thirty dollars. If approved by the Convention, this change of investment will require their sanction.

The Board would reiterate the statement made in the last annual Report, that this additional investment did not result from a parsimonious desire to augment the fund by abridging its beneficent operation, but as the consequence of the limited number of calls for aid—owing to the diminished necessities of the beneficiaries of the trust, or to a want of information that renewed annual application was necessary. The last State Convention promptly acted on the suggestion of the Board, and gave an amplified notice of the requirements of the founder, and our duty as guardians of the trust. Of this action the present Report shows the beneficial result. Applications have been made, as noticed in this and previous Reports, which from an informality in the request, and the want of the necessary vouchers of a claim on the fund, have been, though with reluctance, rejected; and from no other motives than a discreet adherence to the terms of the bequest, and a prudent management of the trust committed to our charge. The value of this eleemosynary aid to sick and infirm clergymen, and the widows and orphans of deceased clergymen of the Universalist faith, is most feelingly exhibited by the thankful evidences communicated to the Board, and should incite to some extended plan by which this beneficent charity could be increased, but with little personal effort or sacrifice on the part of the clergy and the laymen of our denominational faith.

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To you, Brethren of the Convention, the Trustees appeal, with the hope that you will devise a system of contribution to the principal of the "Relief Fund," which, though easy in its operation, would rapidly enlarge the capacity and usefulness of this aid to the sick and disabled of the living, and to the helpless and destitute survivors of the dead.

Respectfully submitted,
By order of the Board,
JACOB HARSEN, *President*

New York, May 30, 1849

[The account of Abner Chichester, Treasurer of the New York Universalist Relief Fund, is omitted here.]

The Annual Sermon was preached by Rev. J. M. Austin, a copy of which was requested for publication. So much of it as referred to Education, was referred to Brs. J. A. [Joseph Aikin] Aspinwall, J. R. [James Riley] Johnson, and Job Potter, who subsequently made a Report, which was adopted, and the Resolutions passed.

(So much of the doings of the Convention as relate to the Clinton Institute, are, for the present, withheld on the "responsibility" of Br. Sawyer.—Eds.)

Revs. T. J. Sawyer, S. [Shaler] J. Hillyer, and J. R. Johnson, were appointed a Committee of Correspondence. Brs. J. A. Aspinwall, C. Roberts, J. T. Goodrich, and Job Potter, and Messrs. G. H. [George Henry] Roberts, Rochester, G. E. Baker, Williamsburgh, B. [Benjamin] Caryl, Buffalo, A. Mudge, Cortland, R. G. Moulton, Alexandria, and Geo. Allen, Newark, Delegates to the United States Convention, and Rev. Wm. S. Balch to preach the next Annual Sermon. The town of Victor, Ontario Co., was selected as the place for the next session of the Convention.

Revs. T. J. Sawyer, D. Skinner, and J. M. Austin were appointed a Committee to consider the sphere of duties of individuals who preach as Universalists, but who are not ordained nor in fellowship: to report to the next Convention.

The following Resolution was passed:

Resolved, That the Standing Clerk of this Convention be instructed to communicate with the Standing Clerks of the several Associations in this State, to ascertain what rule or rules on Fellowship have been adopted by their Associations, and the names of the ministers in the fellowship thereof.

The thanks of the Convention were voted to the friends at Richfield Springs, for their hospitality, and to [?] and members of the Presbyterian Church in that place, for the use of their house of worship for the sessions of the Council, and other religious exercises, on the last day of our [?].

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Instructed the Clerk to publish so much of the proceedings as may be interesting to the public.

After uniting in thanks to Almighty God with Br. Potter, adjourned to meet in Victor on the last Wednesday in May, 1850.

WM. S. BALCH, *Moderator*

J. T. GOODRICH, *Clerk*

Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate, New York NY, Fri. 22 Jun 1849

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