

MINUTES of the Proceedings of the Universalist
Convention of the State of New York for 1845

Met in the village of Cortland, Cortland county, May 28th. The Convention was called to order by Br. J. [Job] Potter.

United in prayer with Br. E. M. Woolley, after which Br. T. J. [Thomas Jefferson] Sawyer was chosen Moderator, Br. J. A. [Joseph Aikin] Aspinwall, Clerk, and Br. E. M. Woolley, Assistant Clerk.

The roll of Delegates being then called, the following persons appeared and took their seats, viz.

Allegany Association, E. H. Van Campen, Ministerial.

Black River Association, P. [Pitt] Morse, H. [Harvey] Boughton, Ministerial; B. Thayer, J. E. Scott, Laymen.

Cayuga Association, J. [James] M. Peebles, A. G. Clark, M.; Ira Curtis, H. Holden, L.

Central, J. [John] H. Stuart [Stewart], E. M. Woolley, M.; N. Mayo, J. H. Harter, L.

Chenango, W. M. [William Miilins] DeLong, J. T. [John Temple] Goodrich, M.; L. Gross, Eli Tarbell, L.

Hudson River, J. A. Aspinwall, M.

Mohawk River, D. [Dolphus] Skinner, M.; C. [Caleb] Budlong, L.

New York, T. J. Sawyer, M.; W. E. Bailey, G. [Gerhardus] L. Demarest, L.

Niagara, L. L. Spaulding, M.

Otsego, J. J. [James Harvey] Tuttle, J. Douglass, M.; W. Parks, L.

St. Lawrence, W. [William] H. Waggoner, J. Potter, M.; W. Thatcher, L.

Steuben, N. [Nathan] Sawyer, M.

Ontario, D. Kinyon, L. Cook, L.

Genesee, D. H. Strickland,, E. W. Locke, M.

Received the Genesee Association into the fellowship of this Convention by the request made through its delegates.

Voted that delegates not residing at present within the Associations from which they received their appointments, be received, nevertheless, as members of this body to represent the Associations appointing them.

The minutes of the last session of this Convention were read and approved.

The Trustees of the New York Universalist Relief Fund made their annual report, whereupon

Resolved, That the report made to this body by the Trustees of the "Universalist Relief Fund," given by the late C. [Cornelius] Harsen, be accepted, and that the same, together with the Treasurer's report thereon, be published with the minutes of this Convention.

Resolved, That the sum of fifty dollars be granted to the widow of the late Isaac Whitnall; and the same sum of fifty dollars be also granted to the widow of the late W. [William] I. Reese, provided the Trustees of the Relief

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Fund, on examination, shall find that the brethren named were in fellowship with this Convention at the time of their decease.

Resolved, That Br. S. R. [Stephen Rensselaer] Smith, for Mrs. Reese, and Br. M. [Moses] B. Smith, for Mrs. Whitnall, be and hereby are authorised, to draw on the Trustees of said Relief Fund for the sums above voted, (provided said Trustees shall deem the appropriations in accordance with the design of the donor,) and make a report of their doings at the next session of this Convention.

Appointed the following committees:—

Brs. J. Potter, J. T. Goodrich and L. L. Spaulding, on adjournment.

Brs. P. Morse, D. Skinner and J. Douglass, to designate a person to preach the next occasional sermon.

Brs. W. M. Delong, G. L. Demarest, and N. Sawyer, to select delegates to the United States Convention.

Adjourned to 7 o'clock evening.

Evening Session. The committee appointed for that purpose nominated the following persons as delegates to the United States Convention: viz: Brs. O. [Obadiah] Whiston, T. J. Sawyer, J. A. Aspinwall, and J. [Jacob] Chase, Clergymen. Brs. W. A. Conant, New York; L. Philleo, Albany; Josiah Barber, Auburn; Geo. H. Roberts, Rochester; L. Barker, Clinton; D. Mack, Canton, Laymen, with power to appoint substitutes and fill vacancies. Nominations accepted and confirmed.

The committee on fellowship and ordination for the last year reported that no request had come before them; accepted.

Appointed Brs. Morse, Potter and Skinner a committee to take into consideration the report made to the United States Convention in September last, upon the subject of a uniform organization, and report thereon. Adjourned to Thursday morning.

Met Thursday morning—united in prayer with Br. Whiston.

The following resolutions were introduced, discussed and adopted.

Resolved, That, in the opinion of this council, it is the duty of Universalists in every town in the State to assemble together every Sabbath for Divine worship, even where they are unable to sustain preaching; and that such services regularly conducted by worthy laymen, with such aids as may readily be obtained, will tend very materially to the prosperity of Universalism in this State and to the ultimate increase of regularly organized societies.

Resolved, That the interests of our denomination imperatively require the establishment of Universalist Sunday Schools in every part of the State where practicable.

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Resolved, That the circulation of Tracts explanatory and in defence of the doctrine of Universalism is highly useful, and that his body recommend the series of tracts published by the New York Universalist Missionary Society for that purpose.

Resolved, That the thanks of this body be tendered to Br. D. S. Morey, for his excellent occasional sermon, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

The committee appointed to report on the subject of reorganization, reported the following preamble and resolutions, which, after some discussion, were adopted.

Whereas, the subject of a reorganization of the denomination of Universalists in the United States and in the several states has been agitated for some time past, and a report made to the last General Convention, by Br. T. J. Sawyer, recommending specific changes and alterations in the organization and power of the several Conventions and bodies of our denomination, therefore

Resolved, That this Convention approve of the general principles of the plan proposed in said report, and that the delegates appointed by this body to attend the next session of the General Convention be instructed to use their influence in said body to carry out the general principles of said report, and effect an organization of our denomination in accordance therewith.

Resolved, That the subject be recommended to the consideration of, and approval by the several Associations composing this body, and that the Standing Clerks of the Associations severally be requested to signify their approval, or any specific amendments thereto which the several Associations may desire in relation to the plan proposed in said report, to the delegates appointed to the General Convention, as soon as may be after their several sessions for the current year.

Whereas, the Stockholders of the Clinton Liberal Institute have made known their desires, through Br. D. S. Morey, to have this Convention take the superintendency of said Institution, therefore,

Resolved, unanimously, that this Convention appoint a committee of five with full powers to confer with the proprietors of said Institution, on the subject, and report through the Universalist periodicals of this State, as soon as practicable. Accordingly,

Appointed Brs. T. J. Sawyer, D. Skinner, S. R. Smith, P. Morse, and J. T. Goodrich, said committee.

Appointed Brs. D. Skinner, S. R. Smith and J. Potter, a committee on ordination.

Appointed Brs. E. M. Woolley, P. Morse and T. J. Sawyer, a committee of correspondence.

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Services were also held in Homer, and sermons preached by Br. Hayward on Wednesday evening, and Br. Skinner on Thursday evening, and also (we believe) at McLean, by Br. N. Brown, on Wednesday evening.

The public services, throughout, were well and numerous attended, listened to with deep interest and devotion, and were generally of that interesting and elevated character calculated to do good and to leave a favorable impression on the heart. The singing was good and apparently performed with the spirit and the understanding. The society in Cortland, at present enjoying the labors of Br. C. S. Brown, has a beautiful and commodious church, and appears to be in a prosperous condition at the present time. The houses and hands and hearts of the brethren here were all open for the reception, entertainment and comfort of the members and visitors [sic] of the Convention during its session. And we doubt not that much good was done in and for the cause of truth by the interesting meeting which has just been had at Cortland, and that it will long be remembered with pleasing and grateful reflections by all who were present.

The business of the Council was generally transacted with unanimity and propriety. Several interesting and important topics, as will be seen by the minutes, were introduced, discussed and acted upon. Where freedom of opinion and discussion is allowed, as in the case in all our public bodies, differences of opinion on some subjects will often be found to exist; nay, they are unavoidable. But though differences of opinion were found to exist in our Convention on several subjects, and particularly on that of reorganizing our denomination, we are happy to believe there was no difference of *motive* or *feeling* in relation to the good of our cause. We hope this subject will be duly considered, candidly discussed and judiciously acted upon by the respective Associations of Universalists throughout the State.

An interesting report from the Trustees of the Universalist Relief Fund, was received and read, which will follow or accompany the minutes of the Convention. It will be seen by it, that the generous charity of the late venerated Harsen has been effectually applied to relieve the distresses of one destitute family of a deceased brother in the ministry, and that applications have been made in behalf of two or more whose cases were referred to the Convention. Not having the necessary documents present to determine whether the granting of said requests would come within the design and letter of the will of the donor of the fund, the Convention, (desirous that the solicited charity might be bestowed, if consistent therewith,) referred it back to the Trustees to determine.

The proposition from the proprietors of the "Clinton Liberal Institute" for the Convention to take the superintendency thereof, was met by the appointment of a committee to confer with them on the subject, and we can

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not but hope the measure may result in good, both to the institution and to the denomination at large.

The cause of Universalism, is less prosperous in some parts of the State than we could desire; but still it is progressive—its course is onward and upward; and may our united prayers and efforts be employed, and the blessing of God accompany them, to give it free course, that it may run and be glorified—that every obstacle and stumbling block may be removed out of the way—that enlightened zeal and persevering efforts on the part of all who profess this holy faith may every where prevail, and send its gladdening influences through the whole community, and ultimately over the vast family of the ransomed children of God.

D. S. [Dolphus Skinner]

☞ The Report of the Trustees and Treasurer of the "Relief Fund" will be published next week.

Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate, Utica NY, Fri. 6 Jun 1845

REPORT

Of the Trustees of the New York Universalist Relief Fund for 1845

To the Council of the New York State Convention of Universalists, to be convened in Cortland, Cortland county, N.Y., Wednesday, May 28th, 1845.

The Trustees of "The New York Universalist Relief Fund," beg leave respectfully to

REPORT

That in accordance with the action of the Convention, at its last session, the Board assembled in the city of New York, on the 23d day of November, 1844, and organized by the appointment of

JACOB HARSEN, *President*

ABNER CHICHESTER, *Treasurer*, and

PHILO PRICE, *Secretary*

The first business before the Board, was the instructions from the last Convention, to pay over the sum of *Fifty Dollars* from the Relief Fund, to the widow of the late Rev. C. B. Brown; and although it was thought that the action of the Convention, by the strict terms of the Bequest, was premature, yet the Board, feeling that the applicant was deserving, and especially needy at the time, and not wishing to delay the benefits intended in this public gratuity by the revered Donor, and so promptly seconded by the Convention,

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deemed itself justified in approving the action of the Convention, in the appropriation; and accordingly authorized a Draft upon the Treasurer for the amount, which amount has since been paid, as will be seen by the Treasurer's Report transmitted herewith.

And here the Board beg to explain, by calling the attention of the Convention to the peculiar terms of this bequest, by the late Cornelius Harsen. An Extract from his late Will and Testament, may be found in the communication from his Executor, embodied in the Proceedings of the last Convention. A correct interpretation of the terms, it is believed, will show that no appropriation can properly be made from the Fund, except through the recommendation of the Board. The Trustees are, in fact, a Committee to whom all applications are to be made, and who are to investigate the claims of the applicants, and to report thereon to the Convention, at its successive sessions, for its approval or rejection. It seems to this Board to have been peculiarly the design of the Donor, to guard this fund, by every possible means, against any hasty or injudicious drafts upon it, and all local or partial applications, by giving time, and making it the solemn duty of the Board, to investigate carefully all applications for its benefits; and even then, to require the congregated wisdom of the denomination, in annual council assembled, to pass upon their decision, ere the sacred deposit could be approached. And the Board would respectfully, but earnestly, press upon the Convention the importance of calling public attention to this feature of the Bequest, in their Annual Communication to the Universalist public, that no unnecessary delay may arise, in dispensing the designed charity, through informal applications.

The Board beg leave further to state, that since the last session of the Convention, they have received two applications for aid from the Fund—one from Mrs. Reese, widow of the late Rev. W. I. Reese; and the other from Rev. M. B. Smith, on behalf of the widow of the late Rev. Isaac Whitnall. They have endeavored carefully to investigate these applications, and have come to the conclusion that both are properly within the intention of this public charity; and they would therefore recommend to the Convention to authorize Rev. Stephen R. Smith, of Buffalo, to draw on the Treasurer of the Universalist Relief Fund, for the sum of *Fifty Dollars*, to be by him appropriated for the benefit of Mrs. Reese, in such manner as he may deem most advantageous to her; and also that Rev. M. B. Smith, or some other suitable individual, if found more convenient, be authorized to draw on said Treasurer, for a like sum of *Fifty Dollars*, to be applied, as he may judge best, for the benefit of Mrs. Whitnall; each to report his doings herein to the next Convention.

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By reference to the communication of the Executor of the late Cornelius Harsen's estate, as embodied in the proceedings of the last session of the Convention, it will be seen that the principal of the Fund could not be paid over at present, for reasons therein stated, but that legal interest on the amount was tendered the Convention, From the 10th of July, 1844, until such times as the real estate involved could be sold in accordance with the terms of the Will. The Convention having failed to instruct, as to the time of receiving the interest, the Board, in accordance with a suggestion of the Executor, resolved to receive it quarterly, until otherwise instructed by the Convention.

The income from the Fund, it will be seen, is One Hundred and Five dollars per Quarter, making Four Hundred and Twenty Dollars per annum, which can be appropriated, in the language of the Bequest—"to the relief, uses and benefit, of the sick and infirm Clergymen of the Universalist Faith, and of the Widows and Orphans of deceased Universalist Clergymen, who previous to their death were in fellowship with the Universalist Convention of the State of New York"—a sum which, though small, is capable of dispensing great good among the proper objects of this charity, within the State, if judiciously appropriated. The present state of the Treasury will be seen from the Treasurer's Report, transmitted herewith.

The Board can not close their First Annual Report to the Convention, without congratulating that Body upon the *foundation*, thus laid, for a great Denominational charity—a charity which enables them so fully—literally in fact—to carry out one great feature of "pure and undefiled religion"—that is, of "visiting the widow and fatherless in their afflictions," and affording them substantial aid. They can not but ardently hope, that this may prove only the dawn of a great and benevolent work; that the attention of other charitable brethren may be directed to the subject, and the Fund be so increased, that finally, all who have faithfully labored in the ministry of reconciliation, may, in the hour of sickness, or in the decline of life, have one certain source to which they may look for aid, in time of need; and that the widows and orphans, also, of these that have laid down their lives in this field of labor, may, through long succeeding years, find in this Fund a perfect guaranty against absolute want. No matter how small the bequest—One Thousand, Five Hundred, or even One Hundred Dollars, securely invested, will be yielding a certain sum for distribution. And surely there is ability enough in this State to raise a Fund, the proceeds of which shall be adequate to all our present and prospective wants. Who can fully estimate the good to be accomplished in this work—the relief to be imparted to many a suffering Gospel laborer; the joy and consolation to be carried to widowed and sorrowing hearts, and the tears to be wiped from orphans eyes?

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The Board can not believe that this subject will be passed lightly over by the denomination in this State. It was one in which the founder of the Relief Fund took great interest. For many years of the latter part of his life, was very near to his heart, and the denomination can hardly show stronger gratitude for his liberal bequest, than in efforts to carry out his wishes, by increasing the Fund. The question of what particular action, if any, is needed, the Board would leave to the wisdom of the Convention. Their allusion to the subject is merely suggestive, as guardians of the Fund.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

Per order of the Board,

JACOB HARSEN, *President*

PHILO PRICE, Secretary
New York, May 20, 1845

Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate, Utica NY, Fri. 13 Jun 1845

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