

## The Albany Society

BR AUSTIN:—Several articles in the Ambassador of the 2d inst. seem to call for a further statement from us, in explanation of our position, and vindication of our action.

Our brethren, the three Trustees, on behalf of themselves and their seceding brethren, present, in one of those articles, their reasons for the course they have taken, but, even allowing them to present the true state of the case, which we do not, do they amount to a justification if a withdrawal from attendance upon and support of a *Universalist* Society, and exclusive support by them of a union, free, liberal or Unitarian society, whichever it may be?

Even granting that, at a joint meeting called of the two Societies (called, however, for a different expressed object, which was abandoned after the meeting was entered upon, a vote was taken favorably to calling Mr. Mayo to the pastorship of the two, *provided means could be raised for that purpose*, would it not be material also to consider that, at the same time, a joint committee was raised equally from the two Societies to manage the affairs appertaining to this joint pastorship—the first duty devolving upon each branch being to call upon the members of its own Society, to learn what amount could be raised from them for the purpose specified; that, the Universalist branch meeting with less success than they expected, it was mutually resolved by the managers in the affair, whoever they might be, to throw up or set aside this joint committee arrangement, (without consultation with either Society,) and that, thereupon, another subscription was circulated for payment to the *Trustees of the Unitarian Society* of the several amounts, to pay for the services of Mr. Mayo in the *Unitarian Church* for one year; under which arrangement the engagement was made with Mr. Mayo by the *Trustees of the Unitarian Society*? Would it not be material to consider these things, and many others that might be mentioned?

We do not desire notoriety through the papers, nor to excite an embittered state of feeling, but we feel that we are right in this matter, and that, as a Society, we are acting strictly in self-defence [sic]. Those who are anxious or willing to leave a Society, can hardly fail to find reasons or excuses for their conduct; and that this was the condition of most of those who have left us, whether from the depressed condition of the Society, or whatever other cause, we are well convinced; but it seems hardly fair that they should seek to cover their own withdrawal by raising a dust about those who choose to maintain the fight, and especially, by seeking, as they have done, to draw off from their force all whom they could induce, by story or by argument, to follow their lead.

Our seceding friends are now paying, to support their counter-organization, more than double what they have been in the habit of paying to support their own Society—an amount which, with what could have been raised among our remaining members, would have enabled us to support at least respectable preaching in our church, and which, with anything like the zeal they have manifested in their new cause, and which for the most part they never manifested in their old Society, could have attracted to our church, situated as it is at the Capital, and with the prospects that might have then been entertained of its future growth, more than respectable talents in the desk, and would have given the happiest augury of our future success.

The Universalist Society has existed in this city for more than twenty-five years. It has sustained itself through a long period of adversity, or mismanagement, or whatever else it might be termed, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that its members might have learned something from their past errors or mistakes, and that with present management, so long as no *absolute necessity* existed for its extinction, in a growing city of some sixty thousand inhabitants, it might yet hope to live a real life, by the continuance of faithfulness on the part of its members. It stands yet. There are few faithful ones who will not yet surrender the hope that it may yet overcome all discouraging circumstances. And now, brother Austin, what shall we say to you when you give a seeming countenance to this seceding moment? When you have not a word of encouragement for a Society of your own denomination, struggling to retain the breath of life? Have we not heard you cheering the formation of feeble societies, with the only resource of lay

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preaching? Has not that policy become, as it were, a fundamental one in the denomination? And shall a distinctive Universalist Society be allowed to die out without a cheering word to inspire it to further exertion, and that too in the Capital of the State?

We wish, also, to say a word in regard to a statement contained in the extract from the private correspondence inserted in your editorial. The statement is "Can there be any serious objection raised against the course of the three Trustees, and three-fourths of the Universalist Society?" We make the bare remark that those ordinarily considered members by contributing to the support of the Society, have, during the last year, numbered about thirty-seven persons, of which number some fourteen or fifteen have abandoned their own Church and fled to another, the residue remaining with us. We should think, whoever this "enlightened and judicious" lay correspondent may be, a dozen with him must be considerably more than a baker's dozen.

As to the statement contained in the card of the three Trustees, that the "Universalist Society has voted to sell its church" with a view to a union, we have simply to say that this is not so. The Society has had a resolution on its books for the last five or six years to the same effect, when the idea of a union, so far as is known, did not exist in the brain of the most disaffected; and besides the terms of the resolution of sale itself negatives that idea, expressly providing for an investment of any surplus money from a sale till the Society should be able to build a new church; the wish of a change of location being the ruling motive of the sale. So far as is known, there is no present probability of a sale.

We must be permitted to regard as chimerical the "hope" indulged in their card, (!) even if that hope be heightened, in respect to ourselves by the expectation of a little of that *material* pressure or concern alluded to of *an ultimate union of all* "the free religious elements of the city" in one free church Society. We have no faith in such a Society. Universalism is liberal enough for us, and we do not expect to gain anything by abandoning its Society organization. We expect to remain together as long as a quorum exists to do business, and when that time ceases to be, if it ever does, it will be time enough for us to look out for a new Society, or otherwise.

E. MURDOCK  
JAMES PETTIT  
Trustees

JAMES R. SILLIMAN, Clerk  
N. HAWLEY, Treasurer

*The Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, Sat. 23 Feb 1856

Transcribed on 14 Jul 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY