

Universalism in Jamestown, N. Y.

Jamestown, N. Y., July 6th, 1859

Br. Austin:—By way of keeping my promise good, I hastily write a few lines... Some little time after my last, Br. Reynolds, on account of ill health, was compelled to abandon his work here, much to the regret of our Society and loss to community. His stay with us had not been long, but of profit; and the impetus given to the cause by his good example and sound, logical preaching will remain as a guiding star in our advance. He has here very many substantial friends, who earnestly pray that his health may be restored, and he be enabled to perform the duties of the ministry in which he is so much engaged.

After it was determined that Br. Reynolds could not longer remain with us, we set ourselves about finding someone else, resolving in the meantime to keep up our meetings—and have nearly every Sabbath had reading service in the forenoon. This mode of service seemed not agreeable to some; but those who felt interested in sustaining a Universalist Society gave it their support... [C]onsidering all things our meetings have been quite well sustained and our Sabbath School kept up. On Sunday last we recommenced with brightened armour. Br. Forrester of Erie, Penn., preached to us three discourses, and will remain here at least six Sundays, and perhaps a year or more. With his eloquence and fine talents we cannot but succeed.

Speaking of Mr. Forrester reminds me of an incident which occurred here when he first preached to us, one year ago last winter. The husband of a certain Presbyterian lady of our village attended one of his evening meetings, and on returning home remarked to his wife—“What a fine prayer Mr. Forrester makes.” “What,” said she in astonishment, “Universalists pray?” “Yes,” replied the husband, “he made one of the best prayers to-night I ever heard.” The idea of Universalists praying aroused the wife’s curiosity, for she had been taught in another school where election, total depravity, infant damnation, etc. were cherished doctrines. She resolved at once to attend one of Mr. F.’s meetings, and witness the astonishing fact, if true, that “Universalists pray.” She went accordingly, and not only verified the statement of her husband, but from that moment the dry scales of orthodoxy began to drop from her eyes, and the goodness of a common Father appeared to her in a new light... and she became, and ever since has continued, a regular attendant at our church. You can well imagine the effect of such an event among her old friends, ..., and visits to her mansion by the Presbyterians are of frequent occurrence—so much so that neighbors felt anxious about the matter, because such a thing had not before been known for a long time... The wife was of too good sense to be either deceived by fallacy, or deterred from duty by stigmas upon Universalism or threats of eternal damnation. It is due to her kind heart and sound judgment, to say that she withstood all importunities, and is now rejoicing in Universalism, and is not only convinced that “Universalists pray,” but that they entertain the only true religion by which to live and to die.

Liberality [a byline: no name given]

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, 30 Jul 1859