

## Universalism in Jamestown, N. Y.

Jamestown, N.Y. Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1859

Br. Austin:—For a number of years past, the Universalist friends of this locality have been stirring in their feeble way, to extend the gospel salvation, but obstacle after obstacle have presented themselves, and for a time they seemed to impede our march. Still in the midst of all this conflict, a progress steady and sure has been visible to the observer. Orthodoxy has been armed with its most fiery weapons, and the “wailings and gnashing of teeth” but plainly indicate the workings of almighty truth in its ranks. The saying “whom the gods would destroy, they must first make mad” has been and is now being verily exemplified among the old schools. No means at their command to obstruct our way has been left untouched. Churches have been closed against us, and that even on funeral occasions. We have been interrupted in the midst of public worship, by denunciation of the Bishop through his ministry, and notices for Universalist preaching have been compared to theatrical publications, and so proclaimed from orthodox pulpits in this village. In fine, everything mean and hateful which the Devil could suggest for them has been used to stay the progress of Universalism in this community.

But that Hand of love which ever guides his truth and protects his people has been our shield and our strength[.] [A]nd notwithstanding the heated wrath of ministerial vengeance, and the repeated sentence of eternal woe upon all who believe that God who has willed all to be saved will execute his command, and make the mission of Christ on earth “glad tidings of great joy” to the whole world, still the cause of true religion has been onward, and the shackles of human creeds, the terrors of future torment and threatenings of God’s eternal vengeance upon his children, have gradually given way, and the effulgence of the Saviour’s love seems to inspire many with confidence in the Father of the world.

Our village is situated at the foot of Chautauque [sic] Lake, and numbers about 3000 souls. We are surrounded by a healthful, thriving and prosperous community, whose fields abound with the riches of providence, industrious, truth-loving and generally of ample means. And though most of them may be bound down by the spell of orthodoxy, they possess the elements necessary to acquire truth, and Universal Salvation seems rapidly gaining ground.

We have been blessed with Universalist preaching for more than a year, and at almost all times have had crowded houses. Br. Forrester, of Erie, Penn., broke the ground here, and continued his services for some time. He was succeeded by Br. I[ssac] George of this county, who labored for a longtime and with success. Amid the “great awakenings” of the past year, many have been led to seek the truth. New ideas have been suggested, and undiscovered truths brought to light... Encouragements were of such a

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nature that a Universalist society was duly organized here last spring, and Rev. E. W. [Ethan Winchester] Reynolds, late of Buffalo, N. Y., was engaged to preside over us for the term of one year at least. And fortunate indeed did we deem ourselves in securing the services of so able and worthy a man. A Sabbath School has been organized, and we number about sixty scholars, which to us seems encouraging. Our place of worship is the Academy Hall which has been fitted up, and will serve well until we can acquire strength enough to build a church, which time is not far distant, we hope. With such a pastor and other encouragements we feel strong hope [and] strong faith in our enterprise; and nourished with manna from heaven, intimidation, disrobed of terror, will flee before us like chaff before the wind.

Liberality [a byline: no name given]

*Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, 2 Jun 1859

Transcribed on 4 Jun 2003 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY