

A Lady's Soliloquy

"Well, really, I have been to a Universalist meeting. I wonder what people will say about it. I hope there are not many who know that I have been there, for I shall be almost despised by all my present associates. They have often spoken of that meeting in terms of the utmost contempt; yes, and I have joined with them too. But I have been there and heard for myself. I don't believe the doctrine, but I see nothing in the preaching that looks to me unreasonable; and certainly the preacher fully proved what he preached, from Scripture. I never heard so much of the Bible quoted in a sermon in all my life before.—But, O, I dread to see anyone—I shall feel so *sheepish*. Well, I don't think I shall be seen there again; though, if it were not for the speech of people, and the overwhelming contempt which it would bring upon me from Mr. P___'s church, I should really take pleasure in dropping in once in a while and hearing what appears to me reasonable and consistent, though I do not believe it.

"O, there comes Mrs. H___; she has found out where I've been; she will feel very much disappointed and grieved, for she has frequently said that she would as soon go into a *den of thieves* as to such a meeting. (Jane, put that Universalist Hymn Book out of sight.) How shall I apologize? O, I will tell her that my husband had the curiosity to go *once*, and insisted upon my going with him; and out of respect to *him*, I *reluctantly* consented to go, but don't think I shall do so much *violence* to my own *conscience* and *character* as to comply with his wishes again. I think, under these circumstances, I shall be forgiven for *this* time, at least; and *if* I go again, it shall be in the *evening*, and I will be careful to slip in unobserved and get a seat in some place where I shall not be recognized—for it is very painful to my feelings to be so *hatchelled* and *hammered* as I must be in the present instance, by all my friends and *respectable* associates.

"Why, she has really gone by! I am heartily glad—for I have this time, at least, got rid of telling about a dozen *lies*, as an *apology* for doing no *harm*! But I want to be *respected*, and in order for this I must be a little *hypocritical*. Mrs. H___ told me the other day, that she had much rather *sacrifice* her moral *principle* than her *popularity*—and she said, that she thought it was much better to be a *hypocrite*, respected by the popular classes, than to be a sincere *Christian*, disrespected, persecuted and despised. And she is not the *only* one that has intimated as much. And I suppose that I shall have to follow their rule. But I shall never forget the Universalist sermon. And the sermon was in perfect accordance with the principles laid down in the text which the preacher read, from Job xx.5: 'The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.' O, I wish I was as far from the besetting and widely prevailing sin of *hypocrisy* as I believe I ought to be, to be a good Christian. At all events, if I don't go to that *meeting* any more, my neighbors can't prevent me from *thinking* upon what I *have* heard. And if I am careful to keep my thoughts to myself, they will forgive me for the *past*, and honor me as usual, for the *future*. Yes, I *must* be a *hypocrite*, or *lose my good name and my popularity*—there is no alternative."

Rev. Jacob Chase, from *A Defence of Truth*
(Rochester NY: 1841) pp. 182-184