

Reminiscences of Universalism in Central New-York

In the summer of 1818, while visiting in Canandaigua, Ontario Co., N.Y., with an uncle, whose wife was a Calvinistic Baptist, I accidentally learned there would be a Universalist meeting, some three miles distant.

“By no means; you will not go to such a place as that,” she said.

“I will ask my uncle for a horse!”

“And *I* will tell him he ought not to let you have one! I *know* he will not let you go, for he *hates* the Universalists as badly as I do. Besides, Laura, there are *none* who attend such meetings but the meanest of human beings. I would not be willing that a niece of *mine* should go to such a place as that.”

Of course, I did not ask for a horse. This aunt at that time was not acquainted with my parents, who removed into that vicinity in Jan. 1819, and into the village of Canandaigua in 1824. My father kept a public house. It was generally known that we were Universalists; yet during our stay of 2 1/2 years, I did not learn that there was another Universalist residing there, who was willing to be known as such.

In the surrounding country we knew some very firm ones. If my memory serves me, there were but four discourses delivered in that place by Universalist preachers during our residence there. Three were by Rev. O.[Oliver] Ackley, and one by Rev. N. [Nathaniel] Stacy on his return from the Association [meeting] at Parma.

How is it now in Canandaigua? I am happy to learn, by the *Ambassador*, there is contemplation a Universalist meeting-house.

In the spring of 1819, we learned with joy there would be a Universalist meeting some two miles distant. Up to this time, I had not listened to a discourse by a Universalist; notwithstanding I had in 1817 become fully convinced of its truth. In a small school-house situated on what was known as the North Road, in the town of Hopewell, (then Gorham,) we found that humble, faithful pioneer of Universalism, Rev. L.[Liscomb] Knapp, about to dispense the word of life to a small, attentive audience.

He continued to preach there once a month, for a year, I think. A more devoted, humble follower of our Lord, perhaps, we have not had in our ministerial ranks ... I love to think of him in his plain, common sense way of expressing his thoughts. Some ten or twelve years since, his Master called, and he calmly lay his earthly armor by, and went with the heavenly messenger to the home Eternal ... [The page is folded here and the first part of the next sentence is invisible. She is referring to a Universalist conference.] our place of meeting, sufficiently spacious, however, to accommodate the congregation. Three preachers were present. One was that calm, humble, kind-looking Father Morton. Of him, personally, I knew but little. Another was the elder [Levi] Sadler (father of the late Rev. L. [Leonard] L. Sadler). I never after saw him. I think he did not continue to preach any length of time after that. And our (then) very young brother Rev. Pitt Morse was the third. Discourses were preached by all. This meeting was much prized.

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Br. Morse preached on the following Sabbath, in the school-house before mentioned, in Hopewell. On the evening of the same day, he again preached in the dwelling of my father. My school-teacher, a Baptist, attended. The following day he (the teacher) said to me, "You had a meeting at your house last evening! I think the preacher a very talented young man; but I exceedingly regret that he should so abuse his superior abilities, as to use them in so bad a cause as preaching Universalism." Br. Morse continued to preach in that place once a month the ensuing spring and summer. It seems but a short time since I saw him then: so youthful, yet so *earnestly* addressing that small, attentive audience. I met him last, on the afternoon of the last day of the United States Convention in Chicago, in 1857. Oh, how changed! He seemed, comparatively, like a withered leaf. Yet he carried that same kind countenance and intellectual brow. As we were passing from the church, there was one pleasant look of recognition, a cordial shake of the hand, a few kind words spoken; and I was to behold that kind, familiar face no more on earth. His mission in this life is finished, and we trust he has entered, with joy, upon a more glorious career.

Mrs. L. I. T. [Lasira I. Torrey]

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