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A
HISTORICAL SKETCH OF UNIVERSALISM,

IN NORWICH, CONN.

A S E R M O N


DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY IN THAT PLACE, ON
THE 5TH OF MAY, 1844.

By R. O. WILLIAMS, PASTOR.

'Tis from the past we shadow forth the land
Where smiles, long lost, again shall light our way ;
The past shall teach us vices to withstand,
And truth receive and wisdom's voice obey.

K
NORWICH, CONN.

GEO. W. CONCKLIN, PRINTER.
1844.



HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A SERIES OF

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REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES
GEORGE W. BROWN, Director
1907

TO THE READER.

THE following discourse has been written under many disadvantages. The facts presented have been collected with considerable difficulty from the verbal statements of old people in this town, and from other sources that have come within my reach. I have aimed to give an accurate sketch of facts as they have come to my knowledge. Still I may have fallen unconsciously into errors. The mode in which the facts were obtained—the only mode in which they could be obtained—renders it almost impossible to avoid all errors in giving a continuous chain of history. But such as it is, the Discourse is offered to the public, with the hope that its errors, if any, may be freely pointed out, so as to be corrected at some future time. It is respectfully dedicated, generally, to the members of the First Universalist Society in Norwich, and specially, to the Secretary of the Universalist Historical Society, Rev. T. J. Sawyer, of New York.

I take this opportunity to express my obligations to many valued friends of different denominations to whose courtesy and kindness I am indebted for much that is contained in this Discourse. It would be improper—perhaps invidious to mention names. All are remembered with pleasure and gratitude for their kindness.

If I have been so unfortunate as to wound the feelings of any in my sketch, I hope for their indulgence. I have deemed it proper to state facts important and useful to the denomination to which I belong, whether agreeable or disagreeable to any. If I have spoken with severity, of any class of Christians, it should be remembered that there are always exceptions to general rules, and those in the wrong alone are the objects of censure. While I regret that there are many formal professors who degrade the Christian religion, I am happy to acknowledge, that I find some in my intercourse with other sects, whose candor, liberality and truly Christian feeling do honor to the name of Christ. Such instances are truly refreshing amidst the continual turmoils of party strife and sectarian bitterness. I pray God that there may be more such, and that all classes of people may come nearer to each other in spirit and feeling, if they cannot in creeds and theories.

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The following discourse has been written under many disadvantages. The facts presented have been collected with considerable difficulty from the verbal statements of old people in this town, and from other sources that have come within my reach. I have tried to give an accurate statement of facts as they have come to my knowledge. Still I may have fallen occasionally into error. The mode in which the facts were obtained—the only mode in which they could be obtained—renders it almost impossible to avoid all errors in giving a continuous chain of history. But such as it is, the discourse is offered to the public with the hope that its errors may be fairly pointed out, so as to be corrected at some future time. It is respectfully dedicated, generally, to the members of the Universalist Society in Newbury, and especially to the Secretary of the Universalist Historical Society, Rev. E. J. Hawley, of New York.

I take this opportunity to express my obligations to many valued friends of the most benevolent to whose courtesy and kindness I am indebted for much that is contained in this discourse. It would be impossible to hope invitations to mention names. All are remembered with pleasure and gratitude for their kindness.

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THE AUTHOR.

DISCOURSE.

"Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers.—Job, viii, 8.

THE entreaty in this passage, addressed to Job by one of his three friends, may not be inappropriate for the consideration of people in other ages and different circumstances. All of us surely have need enough of the wisdom and instruction to be gained from the generations of our fathers; but, in order to gain that wisdom, we must consult their actions, and make inquiry concerning the events of former times. As a denomination, it is important for us to ascertain those things which relate to the condition and progress of our distinctive views in times past, particularly in our own neighborhood. We have all a common interest in the inheritance left us by our ancestors: and to all, I doubt not, it affords a melancholy pleasure to look back through the dim domains of the past, and ascertain how they lived, thought and felt with reference to the great subject of religion.

Our Puritan forefathers crossed the untravelled expanse of Atlantic waters, and braved the dangers of the ocean, the vicissitudes of the seasons, and the perils of interminable forests, for the sake of enjoying unmolested their own religious opinions. They bore with them and transplanted into a new and virgin soil the severe principles of Calvinistic theology fresh from the author, and enforced by the stern simplicity of Puritan worship. The country was rapidly settled by a devout and pious people. Religion urged them from their youthful homes; and to enjoy and preserve it unimpaired appeared to be their chief concern. A few bold and adventurous spirits, crowded* and oppressed even in their new home, penetrated into this State and settled on the borders of the Connecticut. And from thence, in 1660, by a singular incident regar-

*Trumbull's Hist. of Conn., V. I, p. 58.

ded as a special evidence of divine favor, a settlement was effected in this town under the auspices of a Mohegan chief.*

On the settlement of the State, its ecclesiastical affairs were arranged according to the views and feelings then existing among the people; and, for nearly an hundred years thereafter, remained unchanged in all their essential features. Calvinism, modified indeed by the petty superstitions of the age, held dominion over the common mind. The immigrants, just emerged from the thralldom of Popery, still retained that superstitious reverence for the clergy imposed by the mother church. Consequently, to the clergy were committed chiefly the care and oversight of their souls, and the general concerns of religion. Few took upon themselves the responsibility of thinking in a channel different from the common train of thought, and of consequence, there was little or no diversity of faith—no collision of mind with mind, and no jarring interests or principles to draw out and sharpen the sword of controversy. Heresies, which might occasionally spring up in individual minds, were immediately suppressed, by physical, rather than intellectual or moral force. The whipping post was one of the mildest arguments used to suppress them. The creeds and systems of discipline became a matter of State policy and were sustained by civil enactments. The people were willingly taxed for the support of the clergy, and those taxes were scrupulously exacted, even to the sacrifice of the poor man's cow, or his last bushel of grain.

Nor was religion protected with reference merely to its pecuniary support. Laws were enacted compelling attendance on church services, and imposing fines and other penalties for neglect. Even Legislative resolves were passed, calling upon the "Reverend Elders" to make inquiries concerning the state of religion and "send in to the honorable, the Governor, what they find." And then other laws were added to prevent the profanation of the Sabbath, and especially "the unseasonable meeting of young people on the evening after the Sabbath day and at other times."† Thus the church continued for a long

*In their wars with the Narragansetts, the Mohegans were besieged in their fort on the banks of the Thames, and reduced to great extremity. Informed of their condition, a Mr. Thomas Leffingwell of Saybrook found means to relieve them, and for this service he received from Uncas, the Mohegan chief, a deed of the town of Norwich. This probably strengthened the friendship between the Mohegans and English. Soon afterwards, the deed was confirmed to a company in Saybrook, and Rev. Mr. Fitch, with most of his church removed from that place and settled in this town.

†Trumbull's Hist. of Conn., Vol. II, p. 20, 21. This law seems to have been often put in force. Some years before the war of the revolution, the mother of

time, in the same unbroken current, agitated indeed, by various quarrels and minor difficulties on unimportant points; but its general faith, its mode of worship, clerical influence and even superstitions remained unquestioned and undisturbed.

It was not until about the year 1740, that this deep dream of listless quietude in religion was disturbed, and the people aroused with wonder at the appearance of something new.—This was the great revival that forms so conspicuous a part in the ecclesiastical history of New England, sometimes called, in the expressive language of that age, the “New Light Stir.” It commenced simultaneously in different parts of the country;—in Massachusetts under Rev. Jonathan Edwards then of Northampton—in New Jersey under Rev. George Tennent and others; and was greatly advanced by Rev. George Whitefield, who visited this country during its progress. It spread through the country in a manner which indicated the power of God at work for the accomplishment of wise and benevolent purposes. People were aroused as from a long dream, and looked around in vacant amazement upon the wonders of the scene. All classes were affected with a common feeling of fear and solemnity. The old citadel of Connecticut orthodoxy was shaken to its base and trembled to its topmost stone. Even its celebrated “Platform” was agitated by the internal movement. No one, however, at first entertained fears for the creeds or the interests of religion. But it soon became manifest that this strange work was undermining the long established customs of the church. An alien spirit was silently insinuating itself into the revered institutions of the land, and interrupting the unbroken repose of other years. Standing upon the present point of time to survey the past, the Christian of liberal and comprehensive views, may well ask, whether this revival was not one of the best things for the real interests of religious truth that ever occurred in New England? It surely broke the enchantment of the times, and gave impetus to a spirit of inquiry which subsequent ages have not suppressed. People who had long embraced a mere formal religion, and were embraced by it with open arms, now began to look around, inquire into the reality and think for themselves. Indiscreetly for their own interests, did some of the clergy encourage lay exhortation and public dissections of religious feeling. Others objected. The people, however, soon found

Mr. George Moore, then a girl spent the night, one Saturday night in the spring of the year, at a neighbor's house. Returning early in the morning she loitered by the way to see the ice move down the Shetucket, which was then breaking up. Here she was discovered with others, by a special guardian of the law, and fined in the sum of five shillings.

that they could speak and exhort to good acceptance themselves; and they improved their gifts with little reserve or caution, running even into extravagances of almost every kind. But these were ultimately advantageous to the cause of religion. They served to unveil the follies and formalities of the existing order of things; diminish the mawkish veneration in which that order was held, and show the people their right and ability to think and act for themselves.

Nor was it long before they began to be dissatisfied with the old "standing order," and to withdraw from it and form other churches. Those who seceded were called Separatists. As their numbers increased a deep spirit of inquiry spread through the country. Never had there been a period, in this country, of so much and so varied inquiry on the subject of religion as resulted from that revival.* These things seem to have been divinely ordered for the purpose of preparing the minds of the community for the reception of a new truth from a messenger of universal reconciliation.

The power and fruit of this revival had been greatly manifested in the counties of Windham and New London. Many churches of the Separatists had been formed in various parts. Some of these became Baptist in faith and discipline; but generally they adopted the old doctrinal platforms of the New England churches, and aimed in their reform, only at a higher degree of practical and experimental religion. Churches of this kind were formed at New London, Stonington, Preston, Norwich, Lyme and some other places in this neighborhood.† Besides these there were a few Quakers, and at Groton there appeared a singular sect called Rogerenes.

The controversy between the Separatists and the standing churches, like most other religious controversies, was violent and acrimonious. The former were unsparing in their censures, and severe in their accusations of pride, hypocrisy, and other vices; and, having by such improper charges awakened resentment, doubtless experienced, on that account, much abuse and persecution. As the breach became wider, the standing churches gradually lost their hold on the public mind, fewer superstitions were interposed to arrest inquiry, and the mass of people seemed to enjoy more freedom of thought and of conscience.

At an early period, a church of the Separatists was formed

*See a Sermon on the "Vanity and mischief of presuming on things above our measure," delivered in Norwich in 1774, by Rev. Joseph Huntington, author of "Calvinism Improved."

†Trumbull's History, Vol. II, p. 538.

or a congregation collected in this town, which had its chief seat in the neighborhood of the village now called Bean Hill.* There they held their meetings whenever they could find a kindred spirit to dispense to them the word of life. A Mr. Gamaliel Reynolds, a resident of the town and a mason by trade, but a man of strong though uncultivated mind, usually officiated as their minister. Their numbers were small, and the treatment which they received was not always such as the Christian religion enjoins, or they had a right to expect. The oppression and severity which they experienced made them liberal towards all serious and pious innovators on the established churches. Dr. Lord, however, the pastor of the first church, pursued towards them a wiser policy—treating them with uniform kindness—and thereby secured their attachment in a measure, to himself and his church.

Before the revival already mentioned, an Episcopal society had been organized in this town, under the patronage of the British government. In 1769, a few years before the war of the Revolution, Rev. John Tyler became its priest. About the same time, the church, now called the 2d Congregational society, was under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Judson. Neither the Baptists nor Methodists had any existence in town as a separate society at that time.

Such was the state of religious affairs in Norwich and the towns adjoining, when, in the autumn of 1772, Mr. John Murray, a preacher of universal salvation first made his appearance among the citizens and called their attention to a new and peculiar doctrine. Having been about two years in America and preached in several places south of New York, he had started from that city with a view of going to Newport, R. I. Passing by land through Connecticut, he stopped with a friend at Guilford, where he was invited to deliver his message. Here he met with several gentlemen from Norwich, who had been to New Haven on business and were then on their return.† Among them was Mr. Samuel Post, who invited him to visit this town and speak to the people on the great subject that engaged his attention. On his arrival, a small house of worship, probably the Separatists' meeting house already referred to, was provided for him; but not being sufficiently spacious, the doors of the great meeting house occupied by Dr. Lord were thrown open, and, as he observes, were

*The old school house or academy recently pulled down at that place to make room for another building, is said to have belonged originally to the Separatists, and was used as their place of worship.

†See life of Murray, page 168.

"never afterwards shut against him." Here he delivered his message of love to a large and attentive audience, equally delighted with his matter and his manner. Here he discoursed upon an important point of theology, which, though interwoven with the whole texture of divine revelation, had been allowed no place in the religious platforms of this new country.*

After a short stay he resumed his journey to Newport; but he left behind him a seed that was not soon to perish. He found many warm friends whose hearts were open both to receive his doctrines and minister to his necessities.

His second visit was probably made late in the fall of 1773, on his return from Boston, where he had been for the first time. In July, 1774, he left New York in order to make another visit to Boston, and other important places in New England; and during that journey he came to this place again.—Every succeeding visit increased the number and the attachments of his friends, and extended the influence of his sentiment in the community.† From that time his visits to this town became more and more frequent—as often as once or twice a year for several succeeding years. These gave occasion to many interesting incidents which are still remembered with much pleasure by some of the older inhabitants of the town. On one occasion he had a meeting appointed at the old meeting house of the second Congregational Society, now under the care of Rev. Mr. Bond. When he arrived at the place, he found a large number of people assembled around the house, but the door was shut and no one could find the key to gain admission. Some of his enemies had taken this method to prevent his entering and desecrating the church. Soon, however, a window was raised and a young man lifted in; the door was opened and Mr. Murray mingled with the crowd as they entered, and ere his enemies were aware of his entrance, he had taken possession of the pulpit and commenced his sermon.

But the most important event that occurred in his ministry in this place, was a discussion which he held, about the year

*His first sermon is said to have been delivered from Gen. xlix; 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

†Some evidence of the extent of his influence and the number of his friends may be found in the number of books circulated among them. In 1776, an edition of the Hymns of James and John Rely was published by subscription at Burlington, N. J. A copy of that edition now in town contains, among the names of subscribers, about forty who are set down as residents of this town.—Probably Rely's Union, Dr. Chauncey's anonymous works, and some others of a similar kind had a circulation equally extensive.

1779. with the Rev. Nathaniel Niles,* a gentleman of considerable talents and acquirements who was then a resident of this town. This originated in some doings of the Second Society with reference to Mr. Nathaniel Shipman, father of the present Judge Shipman, who was then a member of that society and even a deacon of the church. It seems that Deacon Shipman had departed, in a measure, from the doctrinal platforms of the church, and imbibed the sentiments of Mr. Murray. For entertaining such heretical views, he was called to an account by the pastor in charge of the second society, who appears to have been less liberal and lenient than either Dr. Lord, or Mr. Strong who had now become his colleague. When the trial of his case was had, he was permitted, singularly enough to be sure, to call on Mr. Murray to assist him in the defence.† After considerable debate, in which Mr. Murray took a conspicuous part, the case seems to have been dropped without any decided action upon it. Mr. Shipman absented himself, in a great measure, from the church and its meetings; and some years afterwards, if I mistake not, he became a Swedenborgian.

Mr. Niles, with perhaps Dr. Lord, appeared at the meeting to assist the church against its delinquent deacon. But not satisfied with the result, he proposed an arrangement with Mr. Murray for a public discussion of the chief question in dispute at another time. A meeting was accordingly held for that purpose, though, probably without any formal adjustment of preliminaries. The discussion was brief, but characterized with much tact, and acuteness of reasoning on both sides; and resulted, whatever might have been its true merits, in secu-

*Mr. Niles was not settled here as a minister but engaged in secular business. He was born in Braintree, Mass., and educated for the ministry. He afterwards came to this town, married a young lady of wealth, a sister of our fellow citizen Simon Lathrop, and then turned his attention to secular pursuits. After the war of the revolution he removed to Fairlee, Vt. Here he became distinguished as a politician and was elected a member of Congress. His popular talents gained him friends, and set him forth as a mark for the shafts of his political enemies. After filling some other stations of honor and trust, he died in 1828 aged 86 years.—*Allen's Dic. of Am. Biography.*

One of the writers of a political and literary satire called the "Echo," originally published in the secular papers in this State, between 1790 and 1800, has the following language with reference to Mr. Niles and his connection with politics,

"In Vermont where the Reverend Niles
To his own State confines his wiles."

†See Mr. Murray's account of this transaction in his *Letters and Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 65. Old people acquainted with the facts say that this was the meeting described in that Letter.

ring a popular influence in favor of Mr. Murray and the cause he had espoused.*

But still dissatisfied, Mr. Niles appears to have been desirous of making another attempt to gain his point. What could not be obtained in open conflict, was sought for by a resort to stratagem. Accordingly, when Mr. Murray had a meeting appointed at the old church of the second society, several of the neighboring clergymen took advantage of the opportunity to attend in order to surprise and silence him. Mr. Niles, if not the instigator of this movement, was at least among the number present. They entered the church and seated themselves in a single pew, where they could look the speaker full in the face. It had been the custom of Mr. Murray to select his subject before entering the church—a custom which he adhered to on this occasion. But when he came and found these clergymen all there, knowing many of them, and suspecting their designs, he dropped the subject which he had chosen, and took for his text the passage in Math. xxiii, 2. "And the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat." And he managed the subject so adroitly to their disadvantage and threw them into such a confusion that no one attempted a reply.

Among the early and steadfast friends of Mr. Murray was Rev. John Tyler, formerly rector of Christs' Church in this city. He has long been claimed, and not without reason, as a believer in the final salvation of all men. Mr. Murray speaks of him in connection with others, as "among the number of those who, if they were not fully with him in sentiment, have uniformly discharged towards him the duty of Christian friends."† He wrote a series of sermons in defence of the doctrine which were afterwards published anonymously, under the title of "*Universal Damnation and Salvation clearly proved by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.*"—They were first published in Boston, without the author's consent, from a manuscript copy "found among the papers of a deceased member of the first Universalist church in that city."‡ In 1815 an edition was published in this town by Gurdon Bill, Esq., now of Ledyard, under a different title. This gentle-

*Some time after the discussion, Mr. Niles met with a Mr. Bellamy, a brother clergyman of Preston, who said he wished he had been present at the time, he would have silenced the brawler. But Mr. Niles shook his head and dryly observed in reply, "I don't know about that—he was the worst fish that ever I handled in my life!"

†See Life of Murray p. 185.

‡See the preface to the edition published in Boston in 1826. It seems that there were two editions published prior to that of Mr. Bill—one in Boston, and

man, before their publication, called on Mr. Tyler to ascertain, from his own mouth, whether the sermons were actually written by him, and contained his views at that time on the subjects discussed. And he received unequivocal assurances that such was the fact. But Mr. Tyler, at this time appeared to manifest an unwillingness to appear before the public as their author, or even as a full believer in the final salvation of all mankind.* In 1809, he delivered a Christmas Sermon, which for its liberal principles, caused some excitement among his parishioners, and was made an occasion for charging him with Universalism. As this his supposed heresy was industriously whispered about to his disadvantage, he was probably induced to publish the sermon with some explanations for the purpose of quieting the fears of his people and stilling the tongue of common gossip. To the printed copy he added a note denying that Universalism is taught in it, but carefully avoiding any denial that he himself was a believer in the doctrine. In this note he professed to think his hearers had based their charges on a misconception of his meaning, in "not distinguishing between *universal Redemption and universal Salvation*." The former, he maintains is taught, both in the Scriptures and by the Liturgy and Creed of the church of England. But he is singularly careful not to say that the latter is *not* taught in the Scriptures, or not believed by himself. He merely affirms that "there is not one sentence of Universalism (i.e. 'universal salvation') in the sermon.† And in this he was correct; for surely no candid churchman could have found fault with it, unless there had been some previous indications of his inclining towards that doctrine. The extreme sensitiveness of the people, therefore, on this occasion, together with his own course, does, of itself afford proof of his faith in the final salvation of all men. But, though such was his faith, and though

the other some years afterwards, in Salem. Mr. Tyler had no connexion with the edition published here, other than to affirm the authenticity of the sermons; nor is it certain that they were ever delivered before his congregation in this city; if so, they must have been delivered prior to the year 1800. They were delivered originally in a town near Boston, probably Salem.

*This edition, entitled "*The Law and the Gospel, clearly demonstrated in six sermons*," was printed from a manuscript copy which Mr. Bill obtained in a neighboring town. He knew not the author at that time, except from rumor which ascribed them to Mr. Tyler; and he went to Mr. T. to ascertain the facts and get permission to place his name in the titlepage as author. But while Mr. T. frankly confessed that he wrote the Sermons, he chose to withhold his name from the public, as its appearance might involve him in a controversy which, in his old age, he wished to avoid. Such, if I have not mistaken him, is the substance of Mr. Bill's statement with reference to this subject.

†See Discourse on the Nativity of Christ, Norwich, 1810.

he had been a strong friend of Mr. Murray and Mr. Winchester, yet, during the latter part of his life, he probably gave but little encouragement to their views. After a faithful and laborious ministry of fifty-four years he died in 1823,* and I may presume that he died, as he had lived, in the belief that all mankind will finally be restored to holiness and happiness.†

During the early part of Mr. Murray's ministry in this town, several gentlemen who had become his followers, and were captivated with his sentiments, made attempts to preach the doctrine. To this they were probably influenced in some measure, by the Separatists' movement which encouraged lay exhortation, and the success of Mr. Murray, who, with no human authority,‡ had entered upon the work of the ministry; but chiefly by the solemn impressions of their own obligations to serve God in promoting what they believed to be truth.§— Among this number was a gentleman named Daniel Hall, who was devout and sincere in his profession, but not possessed of very popular talents as a public speaker. He was not a regular preacher while he believed and patronized the sentiments of Mr. Murray. He merely made an attempt at the ministry of reconciliation; but his success was not equal to his desires, his zeal or his expectations. After preaching a few times, he relinquished his undertaking. But subsequently he changed his views of theology, and became a preacher of the Congregational order.||

The doctrine of universal salvation in this town found a more efficient and steady-minded advocate in Mr. Gamaliel Reynolds already noticed. As he had been connected with the Separatists, and accustomed to thinking for himself, his mind

*The inscription on his tombstone states that, "Having fulfilled his ministry he was ready to depart and be with Christ. His soul took its flight from this vale of misery Jan. 20, 1823, in the 81st year of his age."

†His friends and relatives at the present time, seem disinclined to admit that he was a full believer in *Universal Salvation*, especially towards the close of his life; but the evidences are quite conclusive that such was the fact. He is said to have confessed it a short time before his death to Mr. David Tracy and some others.

‡Mr. Murray, while in town was once asked for his commission to preach, and immediately drawing from his pocket, the Bible, "There," said he, "is my commission; I own no human authority."

§Dea. Cleveland and Wm. Pitt Turner are said to have spoken some in public in favor of Mr. Murray's doctrine. But the former, unsuccessful in his efforts, soon renounced it; and the latter, from eccentricity and the want of piety and perseverance rather than the want of talent was incapacitated for the ministerial profession, or at least did not see fit to pursue it.

||After he became a Congregational preacher, he removed to Long Island—was at Sagharbor for a time, and finally settled over a church on Shelter Island where he died.

was doubtless more easily influenced in favor of the sentiments of Mr. Murray. At what time he embraced the doctrine, I have not been able to ascertain; and there is something indefinite in every one's recollection respecting the length of time that he preached it—the general impression, however, among old people, is, some fifteen or twenty years. He pursued his usual avocations during the week, and on the Sabbath exercised his gift in speaking—sometimes in private dwellings and sometimes in schoolhouses and other places. A small circle of friends usually attended his meetings and listened with devout attention to his discourses. His communications, though often characterized with strength of mind, originality of thought, and striking illustration, were much less graceful and attractive than those of Mr. Murray and others. But his sincerity and piety served to make some amends for his lack in other respects. Mr. Murray speaks of him as a sincere and amiable man, somewhat unacquainted with the doctrine and unpolished in his manner of communicating it.* After he became a Universalist he was called to experience some of the common buffetings of unpopular sects. But these he bore with patience, always contented with his lot, and even met with some happy incidents to cheer and encourage him. Among other things, while he was a Separatist, he enjoyed the friendship of a Mohican preacher named John Cooper, who entertained the same religious sentiments. They both freely applied to each other the title of *brother*. But after Mr. Reynolds had changed his views, his tawny friend came to see him and converse with him on the subject. Mr. R. received him with great cordiality and still applied to him the affectionate appellation of *brother*. After hearing it awhile, Cooper started back and observed with an arch smile, “Not quite so fast, I guess it is not more than *cousin* now!”

Mr. Reynolds was a poor and hard working man; but he lived to a very advanced age and died as he had lived, in the

*The following from Mr. Murray's “Letters and Sketches,” Vol. II, page 345, is said by old people in town to refer to Mr. Reynolds:

“I rejoice much to see our friend R., he did us the favor to preach for us; he is an honest soul and we all love him. But so long has he dwelt among those who are, as yet, unacquainted with God as manifested in the flesh, that although this God in his abundant mercy, hath at length manifested himself to his soul, he can yet hardly speak the language of heaven. If he could conceive more readily and utter with less rapidity, he would be abundantly more useful. But his own soul is greatly refreshed, and whenever he can get the better of himself in word as well as deed, he will be better calculated to hold forth the words of life.”

be for many years afterwards. Mr. Winchester was a popular speaker, a man of peculiar talents and fervent piety, comprehensive in his views, and solemn and impressive in his manner. On this account he was received with great cordiality by those who sympathized with his sentiments. Mr. Tyler particularly, treated him with marked attention and kindness, and allowed him to preach in his church, as he had previously extended the same courtesy to Mr. Murray. He visited this town several times in the course of two or three years previous to his death; and, during that time, an edition of his "Lectures on the Prophecies" was published here.* In 1795, he was invited to deliver an address before the Masonic fraternity on the occasion of celebrating the festival of St. John. This performance was highly spoken of and well received by all classes, and served to render him more popular and increase the number of his friends. He finally went to Hartford where he died in 1797, beloved and respected even by his religious opposers.†

In the year 1796, the posthumous work of Dr. Joseph Huntington, entitled "Calvinism Improved," was published at New London. Dr. Huntington was a native of this town, and had a large circle of friends and relatives here by whom he was much beloved and respected. Consequently, his work, though a source of great mortification to them, was extensively circulated here, and performed its part in advancing the doctrine of universal salvation.

After the death of Mr. Winchester, the doctrine seemed, for a number of years, to take rather a backward movement; at least it did not advance as it had done for some years previous. Several causes contributed to produce this result. Dr. Strong who had now become the sole pastor of the first church, was mild and liberal in his treatment of Mr. Murray's followers, and thereby retained some of them in attendance on his meetings.

* In 1792, Mr. John Trumbull published a pamphlet of 80 pages containing two of these Lectures; and in that pamphlet he gave notice of his intention to publish the whole work, "in monthly numbers, each number to contain two lectures, the whole course comprising eighteen numbers besides the two just published." This intention was carried into execution during the years 1794—5.

The work was issued in four volumes. The name of Thomas Hubbard appears as printer.

† His widow continued in Hartford until the fall after his death; and then she came to this place, where she spent several months in the family of Mr. Simeon Hubbard. She was here probably on business connected with the publication of his Lectures. She afterwards went to Philadelphia, and thence to New York where she kept a boarding house for a time, said, perhaps falsely, to have been not of very good repute. Her subsequent history is involved in obscurity.—See Stone's Biography of Winchester, p. 233.

Mr. Tyler was himself a Universalist, and of consequence many, who were dissatisfied with other churches, went to his meeting, when they had no meeting of their own sentiments.—The liberality extended towards them rendered them easy and less anxious to establish a society of their own views. Meantime Mr. Murray had ceased to visit the place as often as usual, and the separate interest in favor of his sentiments began to disappear. His friends, who were a church-going people, with their families, fell in with other churches, except the few who gathered around Mr. Reynolds ; and, in process of time, they out-grew rather than rejected the doctrine. It is thus that the kindness and sympathy for the sentiment, manifested by other denominations seemed to retard its progress in this town.

To this should be added the fact that no preacher of eminence appeared among them in its defence for many years, to awaken new interest in its favor. The only individual who attempted to preach the doctrine for a long time, was a man named John Foster* ; and he, it appears, had been deposed from the Congregational ministry and proved to be unworthy of his profession. From the death of Mr. Winchester to the adoption of the present constitution of this State in 1818, I find but few traces of any public advocates of the doctrine in this town. It is not to be supposed that all its friends had renounced it ; they had merely become inactive in their efforts to promote it.

Meantime the Baptists and Methodists had respectively organized societies of their own peculiar views. The first systematic organization of a Baptist church in this town, was in the year 1800. From that time, for upwards of twenty years, the church thus formed was under the pastoral care of Elder Sterry. And even prior to 1800, the American Wesleyans had made some converts and ranged themselves into a class chiefly under the fostering care of Elder Bentley ; and this has continued to grow, until it has formed the present Methodist Society in this town.

The rise of these new sects gave a different turn to public

* This Mr. Foster was the son of a Congregational Clergyman in Stafford who himself became a Universalist near the close of his life. After the son had been deposed from the ministry he became a Universalist and preached several times in this town ; once or twice in the Episcopal Church, by the consent of Mr. Tyler. He then extended his labors to the neighboring towns. But his morals were not consistent with the ministerial office, and consequently he was not countenanced after he became known. He, however, settled in town and taught a school with considerable success for a time ; but at length abandoned it for some other pursuit. He finally became intemperate, turned fortune-teller, and died last winter a degraded old man at the age of 90.

thought and raised additional enemies to the doctrine of impartial grace. That doctrine, in the contentions that followed, between these and older sects, came in for a large share of abuse. The opposition was strong and vehement, and people began to be called Universalists as a term of reproach. The Christmas Sermon of Mr. Tyler, already noticed, occasioned some feeling in his church on the subject, but it was soon quieted by his evasive explanation in the appendix to the printed copy. When Mr. Bill in 1815 published his edition of Mr. Tyler's six sermons, it called out new and more vehement opposition to the doctrine and its patrons. Then the bigotry and bitterness of sectarianism were industriously fastened upon the public mind: the young were indoctrinated with the heresy of endless misery, and the fountains of liberality were dried up. Among the few professing a partial faith, who retained the spirit of Christian liberality was Elder Bentley:—who, though a man of strong religious prejudices, and an inveterate hater of what he deemed heresy, still seemed to recognize the common rights of man and even the ties of a universal brotherhood under every variety of faith.

The first clergyman, after this season of spiritual declension, to preach the restitution of all things and arouse the sleeping brotherhood of that faith, seems to have been Rev. Edward Mitchell of New York. On his visiting the place, application was made by his friends for one of the houses of public worship: and that of the Baptists was at length obtained for his accommodation. But Elder Sterry made so great an outcry at this pretended desecration of his pulpit that he seemed to frighten his people, and with some exceptions, filled them with that spirit of bitterness and unrelenting enmity against Universalists and their sentiments which continues to this day, and seems latterly, among a portion of them, to be waxing worse and worse. But while the Baptists were making so much clamor about the occupancy of their church, the new meeting-house of the Methodists, then chiefly under the care of Elder Bentley was opened for the use of Mr. Mitchell.* Here he preached on several occasions to the no small annoyance of some very bigoted Christians of other denominations. Of course he excited new enmities in such minds, and the choicest language of vituperation and slander was fully applied both to him and his friends.—Even Mr. Bentley did not escape reproach for admitting him

* This meeting house stood on what is called Wharf Bridge. It was built in 1816, chiefly through the efforts of Elder Bentley, and was usually called "Elder Bentley's Church."

into the church. But when he was severely censured for his courtesy to Mr, Mitchell, he evinced an independence worthy of the man and the Christian. He replied that Mr. Mitchell's doctrine would not hurt the walls of the church and he was sure he had much rather have such doctrine preached there than old fashioned Calvinism,

The labors of Mr. Mitchell seem to have put new life and vigor into the sleeping believers of universal salvation, and they began to bestir themselves for another effort. Accordingly Rev. Hosea Ballou, 2d, then of Stafford, was invited to visit them a few times. He came for the first time in August, 1817, and preached in the old meeting house of the first society,*—Afterwards he preached several times in town, and sometimes occupied Mr. Bentley's church in the city. Meantime Mr. Mitchell and some other clergymen were making occasional visits to this place until 1820, when Rev. Fayette Mace, then merely a licentiate, came into this region, spent several months itinerating in various towns in this neighborhood, and preached considerably in this town.

Hitherto the doctrine of universal salvation, as manifested in this town, had been decidedly of the Trinitarian cast. All its early advocates adhered to that system and framed their views in adaptation to it. They differed from other christians merely by attaching a little more efficiency to their systems, and to the operations of divine grace—by rejecting endless misery and substituting in its stead the ultimate restoration of all men. They believed that Christ died, instead of sinners, to suffer the full penalty of the divine law, and satisfy the demands of justice, and that the benefits of this vicarious atonement were to be extended to all mankind in their actual pardon and final salvation. Mr. Murray did not indeed admit that there was any outward infliction of punishment in the future world for the sins of this life. He assumed that the unbelievers would be made to suffer for some unknown period in another life—not, however, strictly as an extrinsic punishment—a purgatorial infliction and satisfaction of the divine law, but as the natural result of his unbelief; and that this would continue until he should see his error and turn to God. Mr. Winchester took a somewhat different view. He contended for a long period of purgatorial punishment in a future existence for

* The first time Mr. Ballou preached in Mr. Strong's Church, a clergyman, then living in town, but preaching in a neighboring town, made some remarks in reply to his discourse, which created some interest and to which Mr. Ballou rejoined. "I think," says Mr. B. "his name was Rev. David Austin." Mr. Ballou's last visit here was in 1820.

the sins of this life, by which sinners would be purified, "yet so as by fire." The transition, therefore, was very easy and natural from the stern and useless dogma of endless torment, to the milder sentiment of universal restoration.

Mr. Ballou appears to have been the first clergyman of Unitarian views who ministered to the people in this place. Those views had indeed made their appearance in some degree in this part of the state. A Mr. Sherman, Congregational clergyman at Mansfield, and a Mr. Abbot at Coventry, had respectively been dismissed, the one in 1805, and the other in 1811, for holding Unitarian sentiments. But in this town, the time honored platform of Connecticut orthodoxy does not seem to have been disturbed, on this point, by the introduction of any new opinions. Of course when Unitarianism made its appearance a new field of investigation was to be passed over, and a new ground of opposition was presented. It is not probable that the doctrine of the trinity was agitated to any considerable extent; but its rejection would naturally give tone and direction to the whole current of sermonizing, and fresh energies to the spirit of opposition.

Mr. Mace was succeeded by Rev. Charles Hudson, then a young man just entered upon the ministry of reconciliation.—He came to Preston, [Long Society,] in the spring of 1821. He spent two years in this region, teaching school and preaching in the neighboring towns. During the first year he was employed one fourth of the time in this town.

Towards the close of the ~~same~~ ¹⁸²⁰ year, the present society of Universalists in this town, was organized under the name of the "Society of United Christian Friends in the towns of Norwich, Preston and Groton." The first meeting for consultation was held—to use the language of the old record—"at brother Paul Harvey's in Preston." Of this meeting David Tracy was chosen Moderator, and Gurdon Bill, clerk. A committee, consisting of David Tracy, Gurdon Bill, and H. K. Park, was appointed to draft a constitution, and then the meeting adjourned to Poquetanoc. There the committee reported a constitution which was amended somewhat, and then adopted, and the society was fully organized by the choice of proper officers.

Measures were taken during the next year to build a church. A meeting of the society was held on the 12th of March for the "purpose of devising ways and means." The "ways and means" "devised" at this meeting were simply the appointment of a committee empowered to raise funds by subscription and build the church without further ceremony. At the first meet-

ing in 1822 held on the 10th of Feb., a committee was appointed to take up a subscription for the support of preaching for one year from the first of April following. This subscription seems to have been raised and an engagement was made with Mr. Hudson, to preach a part of the time. In June of the same year the society met again, approved the doings of the committee appointed to build the meeting house, and sanctioned some negotiations which they had made. The house was soon after completed, and on the 21st of July was solemnly dedicated to the worship of the one true "God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." Rev. Edward Mitchell preached the dedication sermon.*

On its completion the society was considerably involved in debt, and was obliged to give a mortgage of the building for the sum of \$900, to Mr. Samuel Odiorne, who had done much towards its erection.† This mortgage afterwards gave great uneasiness to some of the members; but was finally settled by a sort of special providence in their favor. Before its settlement, however, the society appointed a committee to solicit subscriptions in New York, Providence, Boston, and Charlestown.

In the spring of 1822, by the judicious labors of Mr. Hudson, a sabbath school was opened—the first in the order in this State, if not in the United States. It continued with a small number of scholars through the summer—perhaps until the expiration of Mr. Hudson's term of service in this place. It was a source of much good, not only in systematizing the efforts of the society, but in making impressions on the young mind which were to be developed in riper years. Mr. Hudson's labors were blessed in giving a healthy tone and character to the society. They

* Mr. Hudson who was expected to be present, was then at Preston, confined by sickness.

† On the death of Mr. Odiorne, which happened but a few years after the church was completed, his estate went into the possession of those who were opposed to Universalism. But he had requested, before his death, that the bonds against the society should be cancelled, and all claims on it relinquished, designing to present the whole sum as a donation to the society. Some delay occurred and some efforts were doubtless made to prevent the consummation of his dying request. At this time the opponents of Universalism had almost unlimited control over the destinies of the society. They might have taken and sold the church, and thus have paralyzed its efforts, perhaps forever. But a kind Providence ordered otherwise. No effort of persuasion could induce the widow to violate the dying request of her lamented husband. She is said to have spent many days of anxiety and nights of sleepless inquietude, in a conflict of mind between complying with the entreaties of friends, and yielding to the dying voice of her departed. At length she resolved on the latter, and accordingly from her own portion of the estate, she relinquished all claims, and made the society free again.

were closed in April 1823. His farewell sermon which was published breathes a warm and affectionate spirit, and recommends a constant regard for virtue and piety. Happy would it have been for the society, if men of equal worth had succeeded him in his pastoral labors ; and happy if the members themselves had been more faithful and devoted to their divine Master !*

Early in the year 1823, the denomination in this region received a considerable accession in the conversion of Rev. Nehemiah Dodge of New London, who had been a Baptist minister of some distinction. His conversion served, in a measure, to encourage the friends of truth in this town, and call down upon his own head some violent denunciations from his former friends.

Soon after the close of Mr. Hudson's labors, the society held a meeting and resolved "to issue subscriptions in favor of Rev. Zephaniah Crossman." Accordingly, he was invited and his services secured for one fourth part of the time for a year. Towards the close of his engagement, he had been absent for some weeks and returned early in August, 1824. Notice was given that he was to preach on the following Sabbath, and no indication appeared of any change in his views or feelings: The Sabbath came, and he preached in his usual manner ; and at the close of the afternoon discourse, he came out, to the utter astonishment of his hearers, with a formal renunciation of Universalism. The Baptists, to whom he gave himself, were thrown into an ecstasy of joy at this singular step. They were then smarting under the loss of two of their popular preachers, who the year before had become Universalists, viz : Mr. Dodge already mentioned, and Rev. Walter Balfour of Charlestown. It is not surprising, then, that they should be greatly rejoiced, on receiving even a poor return in the defection of Mr. Crossman.† Accordingly an account of the affair was sent to the Christian Secretary, the Baptist paper published at Hartford, full of exultation, and containing some glaring mis-statements of facts, said to have been authorized and approved by Mr. Crossman himself. As a specimen, it was stated that "*for several years past* he had preached in the new Universalist Church in Norwich"—an extension of truth by no means uncommon with that class of Christians when speaking

* After his removal from this region, he became enlisted in politics, was for several years elected a member of the Legislature of Massachusetts, and is now a representative in Congress from that state.

† Mr. Crossman had been a Baptist in the early part of his ministry ; but afterwards renounced his Baptist views and became a Christian. Having some difficulty with this sect through his own misconduct, he left it and professed to

of Universalists. But when the excitement of the event had passed away, it was found that the Universalists had experienced no serious loss, and the Baptists had made no important gain. He was not a man of very great talent, or prudence, or weight of character: and consequently, his defection did little injury to the cause of truth.

In March, 1823, the Methodist meeting house on the wharf bridge was carried away by a freshet — and even swept down the river and thence into the Sound, without being broken to pieces: and thus presented the singular spectacle of a church going to sea!* And while, by this calamity, the Methodists were left destitute of a place of worship, they were permitted the use of the Universalist church, which they occupied occasionally, when not otherwise used, for several months.

It was not until April or May, 1825, that the society obtained the services of another preacher, after the defection of Mr. Crossman. At that time, an arrangement was made with Rev. Zelotes Fuller to preach half of the time for a year. At the expiration of that term his labors were continued by mutual agreement until July 1827. But unfortunately for the interests of the society, his moral character was not above reproach. Whether he was guilty of actual crime, or not, it may be difficult to say: but he did not “avoid the appearance of evil,” nor refrain from giving occasion for unfavorable reports, especially during the latter part of his ministry here. Though a man of some talents, he lacked other qualifications indispensable to the prosperity of the cause. His connection with the society was at length dissolved, with no regret on the part of its best members, except that he had been employed for so long a time.

After the publication of Mr. Balfour’s works, the tone of feeling in the denomination became more favorable to the doctrine which confines all punishment to this life. That doctrine had indeed made some progress at a previous date; but it was not probably inculcated or believed to any extent in this town, un-

be a Universalist. But he soon changed again, without any assignable cause, and went among the Baptists; and he seems after this to have left the ministry altogether. He was a man of very questionable veracity and integrity. He was free to say that he had preached the doctrine of endless misery 24 years, and at the same time did not believe it.

*It was discovered by the captain of a coasting vessel, and excited much surprise, as well as mirth, among his crew—being a kind of craft with which they were not familiar upon the waters. The account of this singular occurrence afterwards called forth a very fine poetical effusion from the pen of J. G. C. Brainard, a poet born in this State. Whether the affair was ever regarded as a divine judgment sent upon the Methodists for their sins, does not appear.

preacher of the restitution, having, at its commencement about eighteen members. Since that time it has increased considerably and still continues its efforts and its influence for the promotion of truth and virtue.

In July of the same year, Rev. Henry Lyon was settled as pastor of the society, and continued his labors until April 1840, when, from causes which it would be scarcely possible to define, he was dismissed. He was a young man of good talent, and irreproachable character; but when the excitement of his first effort was gone, and the society began to grow cool and inactive, the members seemed to think that the proper remedy was to make a change. Societies in our denomination are very apt to pursue this course of policy. If at any time, their affairs are not prosperous, if their success is not equal to their expectations, or if coldness comes over them—and what societies have not their languid seasons?—they seek to cure the evil in the mere excitement of novelty. Some popular speaker is earnestly sought for; and if he cannot be obtained, there is apt to be a dissatisfaction with the minister actually settled, and a continual yearning and sighing for the *beau idéal* that stands in the distance, under the impression that if *he* could be had most wonderful things would follow. There can be no question that this state of feeling is a serious fault which ought to be corrected,

In the summer of 1840. Mr. Lyon was succeeded by the Rev. J. V. Wilson, who, though said to be a little incorrect as a speaker, was a zealous, active and useful minister; but his connexion with the society was as brief as that of his predecessor in office. It was under his ministry, however, and in some measure through his instrumentality, that the new and beautiful church in which the society now worships was erected.—It was completed and dedicated in the fall of 1841: the sermon was delivered by Rev. W. S. Balch, of N. York. In other respects also the labors of Mr. Wilson were successful, particularly in the cause of temperance, of which he was a warm friend and an indefatigable advocate. His connexion with the society was dissolved in the early part of 1842; and in May of the same year your present speaker commenced his labor here.

Such is the brief statement of the introduction and progress of the doctrine of universal salvation in this town. Scarcely any candid mind can review the facts here presented without feeling that there has been a singular interposition of divine providence in its favor. It has moved along quietly and unobtrusively without the aid of wealth, fashion or popular in-

fluence ; all these indeed have been arrayed against it. Its early advocates were poor, humble and unlettered, like the early propagators of Christianity ; and they introduced a system that was new and opposed to the prejudices of the people. But the way seems to have been prepared for its reception by a power and a wisdom from above. From its first appearance to the present time, it has met with stern opposition from the devotees of another faith : but it has, at the same time, been blessed with the smiles of heaven as its only support. Its singular preservation on several occasions, when its enemies seemed to have almost entire control of it destinies, and might have crushed it at a blow, conclusively shows that the hand of God is with it. These things should serve as an encouragement to all the friends of impartial grace to persevere in their labors with united action for the advancement of the doctrine. These indeed furnish assurances, that no difficulties from without can ever extinguish the truth or essentially retard its progress in the world. The only difficulties which we have to fear will be found among ourselves—in a want of unanimity and concert of purpose and action on the great subjects that claim our attention. And here perhaps there may be proper ground for apprehension. This society in times past may have been too changeable in its purposes and inconstant in its modes of operation—too fickle in its friendships and too easily swayed by the clamours of religious opposers, working covertly and craftily against their minister, and thereby against the cause itself. And it should be the solemn inquiry of every member, whether this be a fault at the present time ? If it be so, it should by all means be corrected ; for it is the only vulnerable part of the fortress, through which an enemy can enter and destroy or injure the cause of eternal truth in this town. Steadiness of purpose, concert of action, kindness of admonition, and an affectionate regard for each other's welfare, are the means of our future growth and prosperity. If, in these particulars, as well as others, we are true to ourselves, the Father of mercies will be faithful and constant in his smiles, and his own right arm will be extended to advance the cause of truth in our midst.

With these impressions I close the subject, devoutly praying that the blessing of heaven may rest upon the society and church with which I have the happiness at present to be connected ; and that these may continue to prosper, whatever may be the course of events with reference to myself, until the truth of God shall exert its saving influence upon every heart, and pure religion be enjoyed by all people.

APPENDIX.

UNIVERSALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

Prior to the year 1770, Universalism was but little known in this country. The few who embraced it were mostly obscure individuals, and did not engage zealously in its promulgation. During that year the Rev. John Murray landed upon the shores of New Jersey, and, by a most singular providence, was induced to preach it. He then commenced anew the labors of the ministry in which he continued to the period of his death, in 1816, travelling and preaching in the principal places along the coast from Chesapeake Bay to Piscataqua River. About the same time, two or three humble individuals in the interior of the country, without any concert of action or knowledge of each other, began to proclaim the "restitution of all things."—These continued laboring patiently in the cause they had espoused for some ten years or more, when Rev. Elhanan Winchester, a popular clergyman among the Baptists came out in favor of the sentiment. Shortly afterwards the different advocates of the doctrine having heard of each other, began to take measures to form acquaintances and act more in concert. For this purpose several individuals, both ministers and laymen, zealous in the cause, met together in the year 1785, at Oxford, Mass. Here in behalf of the churches that had been collected in New England and elsewhere, they formed themselves into a Convention or association for mutual assistance and encouragement, under the name of "Independent Christian Universalists." Meetings of this Convention have been held annually from that time to the present. It is now called the "General Convention of Universalists for the United States."

From the organization of this Convention to the commencement of the present century, the doctrine increased as

fast as could be expected. It had much to encounter, and but few advocates in its defence. As late as the year 1810, there were not probably 30 preachers in the denomination in the whole country : but these, though generally uneducated, were very zealous and did much for its promotion. Within the last thirty or forty years, however, a great change has taken place in the condition and prospects of the denomination. The press has been faithfully at work, in co-operation with the humble voice of the ministry for its promotion. It has made some progress in almost every State in the Union ; but has increased much more rapidly at the North than at the South. It finds its most congenial soil among a people of intelligence and virtue. It commends itself to the understanding and the heart ; and where there is the greatest amount of ignorance and wickedness, it has most to encounter and of course makes the least progress. The ignorance of the great mass of people at the South, the looseness of their morals, and the institution of slavery are all favorable to the growth and prevalence of endless misery. That doctrine lives and riots in the midst of such influences, while the doctrine of the Restitution grows pale and languid.

Within the last fifteen years, the latter sentiment has advanced more rapidly than at any previous date. In 1830, there were nearly three hundred societies in the denomination in this country, and less than two hundred preachers. But accurate statistics of a recent date, show that, within the United States, there are now near seven hundred preachers actively engaged in proclaiming the restitution of all things as an essential part of Christian theology. And setting aside the Dunkers and all *secret believers* among other sects, there are very near a thousand societies which enjoy the ministrations of the gospel, either constantly or occasionally. Besides the General Convention already mentioned, there are State Conventions formed in fourteen States : and connected with these are near seventy Associations held annually. Within the limits of each and all these Associations are more or less clergymen settled and societies located which are there represented.

Of the preachers already mentioned, above sixty who are now advocating the salvation of all men are converts from the clergy of other denominations. We hear much said, and great exultation made, when a single preacher of Universalism happens to renounce his doctrine and go over to the opposite faith. But it so common a thing for preachers of other sects to re-

nounce their faith in endless misery and embrace Universalism that but little is said or thought of it. We can now number among us clergymen who have come from the Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians, *Christians*, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians: and these too were in good standing with their respective denominations when they left to unite with us. Occasionally the denomination loses some of its preachers by renunciation or otherwise: but the accessions far exceed the losses,—so much so that for the last fifteen years the increase has been above three hundred per cent. And the same increase and prosperity have been enjoyed in the number and standing of societies. Their character, influence and means of sustaining themselves and supporting the gospel have improved in the same proportion. And we humbly hope that in fervent piety and sterling virtue, the denomination has made equal progress.—These facts show that it has been greatly blessed, with the favor of God and the smiles of his love. We have certainly no reason to complain, but every inducement to thank God and take courage in prosecuting the great work before us.

C.

