

Matters in Albany

ALBANY, April 11, 1856

BR. AUSTIN:—You have published two articles in the *Ambassador* of the 5th inst., which the Universalist Society of this city deems that duty to itself requires should be answered. One is a communication from Br. W. S. Balch; the other is an editorial, we presume by yourself.

The Universalist Society here finds itself in a peculiar position. It is defending itself from the crime of being Universalist—of being what you and the other brother named, have taught use to be—of being and preferring to be in that denomination of which yourselves are supporters, and we hope, firm adherents. What else is our crime?

We do not enter into the details of the business which has resulted in fixing Mr. Mayo in the Unitarian pulpit in this city. It is not necessary. Although we hold ourselves justified on the strictest review of all the facts in the case, as a matter of propriety of action, and due protection of our Society interests, yet, after all, the true question as regards this matter of union—a coalescing of two diverse societies—talked of by you and Br. Balch, is one of principle. And is our society to be reproached, because it did not choose to rush headlong into a measure, the propriety of which it did not approve; nay, which it was well convinced if it succeeded, would result in establishing a society in whose permanence it could have no sort of confidence, and would be perilous, to say the least, to the principles of Universalism? For what is Mr. Mayo's society? And what is the society which he recommends in his declaration of independence published in the *Ambassador* of 23d February last? And what is the society recommended by his brother, James Richardson, Jr., a Unitarian divine of Massachusetts, in his circular addressed to the Universalist and Unitarian societies of this city, under date of 27th October last, in which the following language is used: "First, I would suggest the expediency of uniting, if possible, the liberalists of all parties and modes of thought into one organization or body, whether they go under the name of Rational, or Spiritual, Skeptics or Reformers, Unitarians or Universalists." Instead of being an abnegation of all *isms*, (*ism* is sneered at by Mr. Mayo in his article,) it is a combination of them all.

No, our brethren elsewhere may be assured that we stand firmly on our ground; that we understand it. For us there is no surrender. Neither Br. Balch nor Br. Austin, nor Mr. Mayo, (if he entertained any thoughts about us,) nor any, nor all of their confederates need deceive themselves about the possibility of a union. There never was any desire for a union on the part of our society. The vote that was obtained in its favor, such as it was, was obtained through influence—through confidence reposed at that time in those who brought it forward, and without investigation or thought by the society.

And now our greatest concern is to be saved from our friends. Our circumstances are not so desperate as some of them might imagine. We have not been sleeping since our officers last night addressed the public. We have been holding our public services without intermission throughout the winter, and hitherto. The matter of the subscription for our debt, which is vital to us, has been opened here, and some \$1,500 obtained on it, with the prospect of a fair addition to that amount. We have had encouraging tokens from brethren from abroad, and we expect very shortly, to make an appeal to them personally through some suitable agent. We hope to obtain the aid of a brother for this purpose, whose name will be a sufficient warrant with the denomination in our behalf, and will give sufficient evidence of his and our confidence in the success of the effort. We certainly have no reason as yet to despair. We have evidence in the attendance upon our meetings, that honest Universalism is not yet without a hold upon the affections of the people.

Finally, brethren everywhere, hope with us, pray with us, and assuredly God will not leave us without manifest tokens of his favor.

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The above communication has been approved by the society, and is published by their order.

James R. Silliman, *Clerk*

So far as the above places us in the attitude of an enemy to those who still remain in the old Universalist Society, and are laboring to keep it up—so far as it asserts, or even hints, that we have any ill toward them, or have done, or are disposed to do, anything to their detriment—so far as it represents us in any way, shape or form, in deed, or word, or thought, as being opposed to the propagation of our own principles, or the building up of our cause in Albany—so far as it speaks of our viewing it as a crime that they should be Universalists, or wish to remain in the denomination—the article is unjust, ungenerous, and exceedingly unbrotherly. When and where have we said a word, or done an act, that can warrant such insinuations? Our whole feelings and motives are exactly the *reverse* of all this.

As stated in our editorial of the 5th inst., we have taken no part nor side in this unhappy controversy. We have not said a word against those who remain in the Universalist Society, nor condemned their proceedings. Why should we undertake to decide between brethren equally beloved and respected? We found that the Universalists were themselves divided on this subject. Some as good and true brethren as we have ever known, decided to go for the union, and are still zealous in carrying out the project—others equally good and zealous, and equally respected by us, felt it their duty to remain in the old organization. The only effort we have made, was to strive to harmonize the two bodies. Are we to be condemned because we would be a peace-maker, and seek to heal the dissensions between brethren?

And now we say to our brethren who continue in the old organization, that they have no truer friend than we are. If there is any well grounded prospect that a distinctive Universalist Society can be maintained in Albany—if the debt which has so long hung upon them can be liquidated, and there is a probability that they can go on and prosper, and bring up the Society to a condition that shall relieve its friends from the anxiety they have experienced for years in its behalf—we will do all in our power to aid and assist them. No possible turn in the affairs in Albany could give us deeper pleasure.] *Ed. Amb.*

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 19 Apr 1856

Transcribed on 14 Jul 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester NY