

was the great thing to be gained by a profession of Universalism. In the congregations with which I have had an acquaintance, I never found a family that observed the reading of the Bible as an act of devotion, or had regular family worship. And I have never found settled religious principle among those calling themselves Universalists. Not only have I never found devout reverence springing from the system, but none can live in it. I have observed it a fact invariably occurring, that, when a Universalist becomes serious and thoughtful he will at once leave the Universalist meeting. And when a pious man embraces that system, he will abandon his habits of devotion in changing his faith. Men peculiar for their habits of private and family prayer, and for a serious study of the Bible, if they embrace Universalism, become at once as peculiar for the neglect of these religious duties.

The great purpose of those who unite in Universalist societies, is not to make themselves better, and to throw around themselves new restraints; it is not that the Sabbath may be the better observed, and men reformed, and made holy. But the great purpose is to put down Orthodoxy. All preaching that gives satisfaction tends to this, and all effort is directed to this point. If a minister, in place of preaching against religion, preaches against the sins of his people, he is at once censured as having "travelled out of the record."

Few make the daily reading of the Bible their dependence; few rely on its teachings for the support of Universalism. All its believers place great reliance upon the periodicals devoted to Universalism to defend the system, and to explain away difficult texts. I have long been of opinion, that no people, not even the Catholics, take their opinions so much upon trust as do the Universalists. Every where I have found a looseness of principle, or a disposition to ridicule serious things, that shocked my mind. Men seemed to value Universalism for the license it gave; for its power to cast off restraint, and remove from the conscience the sanctions of religion. When settled in Salem, I once attempted to persuade a member of my congregation to join the church. He declined. I urged him to do so, on the ground that for many years he had been a professed Universalist, and, as such, believed that all had a right to commune. His reply was emphatic: "For me to join your church would be carrying the joke a little too far!"

The fact that many of my ministerial associates professed to have little confidence in the truth of the system, or in its good moral tendency, was another source of difficulty. In private and social meetings, ministers do confess to each other that there are objections to Universalism that they cannot remove. I have heard old men point out the sophistry of an argument used in defence of the system by a young man, and then employ the same argument, when preaching on the same subject.