

**SKINNER'S REVIEW OF HATFIELD. SEVEN
SERMONS: DELIVERED IN THE ORCHARD-
STREET UNIVERSALIST CHURCH,
IN THE WINTER OF 1847, IN REPLY TO
REV. E. F. HATFIELD'S ATTACK UPON
UNIVERSALISTS AND UNIVERSALISM**

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OK

BY O. A. SKINNER,

Pastor of the Orchard-Street Society.

NEW YORK;

C. L. STICKNEY, 140 FULTON-STREET.

Second Floor.

1847.

P R E F A C E .

Rev. E. F. HATFIELD has, for many years, been Pastor of a Presbyterian Church in this city. Ever since his settlement here, he has been a violent opposer of Universalism. He made frequent attacks upon Br. T. J. SAWYER, and sought in various ways to counteract the influence of his ministry.

I had not been here many months before I received information, that Mr. Hatfield purposed to make another attack upon Universalism. The evening was appointed for the work. My arrangements being such that I could not attend, I procured reports of the sermon. Judging from these, and the accounts given by several gentlemen who heard it, I concluded that it was one of the most bitter, unfair and unjust sermons ever delivered. I felt, therefore, a great desire to see it, and accordingly addressed Mr. Hatfield the following note:

NEW YORK, Dec. 8th 1846,

Rev. Mr. Hatfield:

DEAR SIR—I have been informed by several gentlemen who attended your Church on Sunday evening last, that in your sermon you declared Universalism to be a system of lies, and Universalists as a body to be grossly immoral. I have no wish, sir, to preach a doctrine that is false, or that produces an injurious influence—it is my desire to know the truth and to preach it. I should, therefore, esteem it a great favor if you would loan me the sermon, that I may see the proofs which you have against Universalism, and the facts by which you justify yourself in asserting that Universalists are

grossly immoral. Should you see fit to loan it, I will give it a candid perusal. I feel extremely anxious to read it, because according to the reports which have been given me, it must have been one of the severest sermons ever preached against Universalism and Universalists. Should you prefer to read it to me, I will call on any day this week, and at any hour you will specify, to hear it. Or should you prefer to repeat it in my Pulpit, it shall bear your service at any time you will name.

An early answer will greatly oblige me. With feelings of kindness, I am &c., O. A. SKINNER.

To this no answer has been received.

Soon after the delivery of his first sermon, Mr. Hatfield preached another, on the Rich Man and Lazarus. By the request of many of the leading men of my Society, I preached the following sermons in reply to Mr. H. By their request and the request of the Society's Board of Trustees, I have consented to their publication.

I am not fond of disputation, but when my religion is assailed, and my people are traduced, I feel bound to speak in their defence. I should be glad to live in peace with all men; but I should consider myself unworthy my station, did I not always defend truth and the scandalised, when attacked by one having power to do them injury. THE AUTHOR.

REVIEW.

SERMON I.

Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. 1sa. lxx. 3.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS.

In all ages of the world, there have been those who esteemed themselves righteous, and despised others. They have claimed to be patterns of purity and piety, and considered themselves as examples to be followed by all men. Such persons have usually a very large share of vanity, and have the highest estimate of their talents, attainments and opinions. But while they place an extravagant estimate upon themselves, they place a very low estimate upon all others; and while they are blind to their own failings and sins, they have a sharp eye for the failings and sins of others. They see themselves with an eye that can see only excellencies; and which magnifies small excellencies into those the most praiseworthy; but others they see with quite a different eye—one which can see only faults and sins, and which magnifies every fault and sin into something very offensive and aggravating. In their pride of themselves, and their contempt of others, they will move about with a haughty and consequential air, which says to all, *we are holier than you.*

The self-righteous are also usually exceedingly wise. They know all things. They are paragons of wisdom. None can teach them. Any one who differs from them is ignorant, stupid, ill-bred. No matter what his advantages, or how faithfully those advantages may have been improved, he is denounced as one destitute of knowledge, unfit to teach the simplest elements of religion. But *they* have all divine knowledge. They know the meaning of all Scripture, understand all mysteries, and can decide all questions however abstruse and difficult. Where the wisest theologians have hesitated, and pronounced the way dark, they are confident, and declare the way plain and clear. Sometimes the most ignorant men think they know the most.

The self-righteous are also usually very denunciatory. Regarding themselves as perfect, they think all who differ from them are inexcusable, wilfully blind. To hear them denounce all of an opposite creed, one would suppose that they had a heart of entire gall, in which, if there was ever a drop of mercy, it was so long since wrung out, that none of its divine savor is left. Every epithet indicating vileness, they apply to those of an opposite creed, however sincerely that creed may be believed. They call them unbelievers, liars, thieves, libertines, drunkards, and everything else which denotes a careless, thoughtless, graceless, prayerless, reckless heart. One not well versed in human nature would conclude that they would never dare utter such wholesale and terrible denunciations, if they were not conscious of being pre-eminently holy—that nothing but a clear sense of a high degree of holiness could enable them to speak out so boldly.

Such forget how the old Scribes and Pharisees spoke of the Savior, and that they charged him with having a *devil*. And such must be ignorant of the fact, that some of the most vile hearted wretches who ever stood in a pulpit, increased their cry against heretics, just in proportion as they advanced in sin. There are none so much interested in-crying stop thief, as the thief himself; for he knows that the more he cries, the greater is his chance of escape. The experience of the last few years has taught us that we have great reason to suspect the purity of a man who is especially bitter against Universalism, for those who have been the most bitter have exceeded all others in the greatness of their sins. A vindictive hostility to those called heretics is no proof of goodness.

This self-righteousness was the prevailing righteousness in the days of Christ. Those possessing it were his greatest enemies. They slandered him—they persecuted him—they put him to a cruel and ignominious death.

This righteousness bears no resemblance to christian righteousness. That is modest, and never takes a trumpet to sound its own praises, or proclaim to the world its closet prayers. That is honest, and never utters foul slanders to crush those of a different faith. That is kind, and never assails any with an unrelenting bitterness. Though it rebukes sharply, it never seeks to justify an undue severity, by false charges or over-drawn pictures.

There is hardly any fault which can render a minister so odious as self-righteousness. It makes him exclusive, illiberal, unjust, abusive, unfair. As a denomination we have been more traduced

and misrepresented and wronged by this class of ministers, than by all others. They are not numerous. The great body of intelligent clergymen of all sects, treat us with a good degree of courtesy, fairness, and liberality. They do not believe with us, and they say so. They think our doctrine wrong, and they give their reasons for so thinking. We do not complain of this—we think it perfectly right and fair. What we complain of is, gross and scandalous misrepresentation—the opposition of that snarling, conceited, arrogant class of men who seem to love abuse, and who think that no weapons are too bad for exterminating heretics !

MR. HATFIELD THE UNPROVOKED AGGRESSOR.

I will not say how well the foregoing portraits of the self-righteous is suited to the gentleman who a few Sunday evenings ago, in a neighboring church, denounced us in a more unsparing manner, than we were ever before denounced. With that gentleman I have no personal acquaintance ; and as he declined an interview I proposed, I conclude that he is determined I never shall have.

Judging him by a book he has published against Universalism, and by the several reports given me of his recent philippic, his ideas of honesty, justice, fairness and candor, are entirely different from those prevalent among Universalists. What prompted him to the course he took I know not. Certain it is, that I had not attacked him. On the contrary I was quietly pursuing my own way, as a minister of Christ. I was preaching the doctrines and duties which I found in the Bible, urging them upon the