

**A STATEMENT OF FACTS,
IN RELATION TO THE CALL
AND INSTALLATION OF
THE REV. MARK TUCKER**

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JOSEPH LYMAN

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Law School

It is believed, by some individuals of Northampton, that their motives have been misunderstood, and that their conduct has been in some instances misrepresented. To present every thing in a fair light, and to let all those interested have an opportunity to judge of what has been done, they publish the following statement.

Northampton, October, 1824.

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STATEMENT OF FACTS.

In the early part of January, 1824, Mr. Tucker came to this town, to preach as a candidate. Within a fortnight after he came, Mr. Howe called on him and had a long conversation with him. Mr. Howe stated to him, that he differed from him in religious opinions and was desirous to avoid any division in the Society; but, that he, and some others, had made up their minds, that they never would concur in the settlement of any person as a Colleague, unless upon the principles of Christian liberty and perfect toleration. That in former years, it was sufficient, that a man was settled and known as a Christian minister (if his life and conversation were such as became his station) to entitle him to all the courtesies and civilities of Christian intercourse. That for a few years past, a different course had been pursued. The Clergy had assumed the right to sit in judgment on their fellow mortals, to institute a scrutiny into the private sentiments entertained by them, and to decide upon their correctness. This circumstance had led the members of this association to refuse to make any exchanges with neighboring Unitarians. Mr. Howe informed him that Unitarian ministers, of regular standing and unexceptionable morals had been suffered to attend meeting here through the day, without receiving any invitation to preach.

Mr. Tucker said, he had heard something of the difficulties which had existed, and expressed his decided disapprobation of the course, (which he had been informed) his predecessor, Mr. S. P. Williams, had pursued here. Mr. Tucker said, he thought he should have no difficulty in relation to the subject. That he should not undertake to decide who were, or who were not Christians. That he had long lived among, and had intercourse with, Christians of different denominations, but that he had avoided all difficulty by putting them all on the same footing.

Mr. Howe then asked him, if he should be willing to exchange with, or invite to preach, the Minister of the Brattle Street Church. He said, he was not prepared to give a direct answer to the question. That its decision must involve a variety of considerations, which must all be attended to, before a direct answer could be given. "If I should be settled here, (continued he) Mr. Williams would be the elder pastor, and I should consider him as having a right to control the desk, and he might be unwilling."

Mr. Howe told him he did not ask what he *would* do, in any particular case, but what *he should be willing* to do. Mr. Tucker replied, "I do not know that I can give you a better view of my sentiments on this subject, than to tell you, that I think as Dr. Nott does. He was invited to settle in Park Street Church, and declined the invitation, *because that Church would not suffer him to EXCHANGE with the other ministers in Boston.*"

To Mr. Hinckley he made the same statement, in the same way, in more than one instance; and when he was told that an attempt would probably be made by the association, or other individuals in the vicinity, and perhaps by a few persons in his own society, to influence his conduct in this respect, he asked, "What have the association to do with this subject? Are not your churches independent?" He was told they were, entirely so, yet this sort of influence had

been exercised, with effect heretofore, and would doubtless be attempted again. He said he should not suffer himself to be influenced by any such considerations.

To Mr. Joseph Lyman, he stated "*that he should pursue such a course here in relation to invitations and exchanges, as would satisfy the expectations of all.*" When informed of the difficulty which might be made by some of the more zealous clergy of the vicinity, he replied that "they could be managed;" though he said he apprehended more trouble from them than from the Liberal party. Mr. Lyman told him of the conduct which had been pursued towards Mr. Willard, by this association, and particularly, that on one occasion, Mr. Williams had agreed to exchange with Mr. Willard, and the day for the purpose was fixed, when Mr. Williams was prevented from fulfilling his engagement by the interference of his clerical brethren. He was told also of the resolution entered into by them, not only refusing to exchange with Mr. Willard, but refusing to exchange with those, who should exchange with him.

With Dr. Flint he had repeated conversations on this subject, in which he was uniformly told, that the only terms upon which he could expect the votes of the Liberal party for his settlement, were those of perfect toleration. That EXCHANGES with Unitarian ministers would be insisted on, and that the doors of the pulpit must be opened. The sentiments expressed to Dr. Flint were uniformly the same as those expressed to the other gentlemen alluded to. A short time before the town meeting, a very particular conversation took place between him and Dr. Flint, in which Dr. Flint told Mr. Tucker, that the subject of *exchanges* was much talked of abroad, in reference to his settlement, and people were anxious to know what he intended to do. That enquiries were often made, and he wished to know what he might say from *him* upon that subject. "*I know,*" said Mr. Tucker,

“what you and your friends want, and if I should be settled here, you may rest assured they shall not be disappointed.” He then added, “If there was a single member of my society, who was anxious to hear any particular minister, in regular standing and of good character, I would gratify him; and if I could not do it in any other way, I would take my horse and chaise and fetch him.”

On Friday evening, previous to the town meeting, an interview was had between several of the Liberal party, and some of the Orthodox, to see if any arrangement could be made on the subject of exchanges. Mr. J. H. Lyman made some remarks on the subject, and concluded by saying, that he should have no objection, that Unitarian ministers, who happened to be here, and who had not rendered themselves obnoxious by their actions or writings, should be occasionally invited to preach. He was explicitly told, that it would be no satisfaction to the Liberal party, to have an Unitarian minister occasionally *smuggled* into the pulpit. That it was the principle we were contending for, and not an idle ceremony, or a childish gratification.

Mr. Bates said, he was willing exchanges should be made, but he thought the subject ought to be left entirely with the minister, and he was willing to leave it with him. That he was satisfied the Liberal party would gain every thing they desired, if they were only quiet. That Mr. Tucker was a man of liberal feelings, and would naturally bring his people to coincide with him; but to bring the subject before the town, and make it the theme of public discussion, would be thrusting a fire-brand into a magazine of powder. That, though he was willing himself, that the course we desired should be pursued, and he believed many of the Church were of the same sentiment, yet some of them, he knew, would not listen to the proposition, for a moment, in the present state of their feelings, and he thought a majority of the

Church would not agree to it. That their prejudices on this subject might be overcome, and the opinion and reasoning of Mr. Tucker might have this effect; but if the subject were started now, they might pledge themselves in such a way as to make any change hopeless.

The other gentlemen present, expressed their willingness, that the course we desired should be pursued, and regretted that a different one had ever been adopted, but they all concurred in the opinion, that it was inexpedient that any thing should be done at this time.

We should probably have adopted the advice of our Orthodox friends, (which we could not doubt was sincerely given) and have rested satisfied, from what had been said and done, that our wishes would have been fulfilled; but, we recollected, that in two instances, in the old county of Hampshire, the friends of Liberal Christianity had been disappointed upon this subject. From the declarations and assurances of their ministers, while candidates for settlement, they thought they might expect, that they would make exchanges with Unitarians after settlement. In one instance, exchanges had actually been made, while the individual was a candidate, and the excuse for refusing to continue this practice afterwards was, that it would give offence to a portion of the church, who had conscientious scruples on the subject.

We thought it our duty therefore, to appeal to the town upon the subject. The following vote and preamble were prepared for this purpose:

“Whereas it is provided by the Constitution of this Commonwealth, that every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably and as good subjects, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and that no subordination of any one sect to another shall be established by law, the object of which provision is, to secure an equality of rights,

so far as may be to every citizen of this Commonwealth: And whereas, it is well known, that there are many members of this society, whose religious sentiments differ from those of their present pastor, but who are desirous to preserve "the spirit of unity in the bond of peace," and are willing to concur in the settlement of a colleague, whose religious sentiments are different from their own, if it can be done consistently with the duty they owe themselves as Christian freemen: And, whereas, for several years past, respectable, devout, and regularly ordained congregational ministers, who differ in sentiment from our pastor, have not been invited to preach in our pulpit, which has been a subject of deep regret to many individuals of this society:

Now, therefore, for the purpose of satisfying the members aforesaid, that we recognize them as Christian brethren—that we do not consider them as differing so essentially from us in their views of the doctrines of christianity as to render it improper for us to continue to join in the performance of those acts of religious worship, which are enjoined upon us by our holy religion—to shew them that we respect the rights of a minority, while we claim to exercise the power of a majority—to preserve the unity of this society, (which has continued without interruption, from the first settlement of the country,) by preventing any divisions from springing up among us:—

VOTED, That it is the wish of this society, that the colleague who may be settled with us, in pursuance of the vote passed in November last, do not refuse to *exchange* with, or to suffer to preach in the desk, any pious, moral, congregational minister, on account of any difference from him in religious sentiment."

After the town meeting was opened, a motion was made to give Mr. Tucker a call, by Mr. D. S. Whitney. Mr. Howe stated to the town, that he had in-