

**A CANDID REVIEW OF TEN LETTERS
CONTAINING REASONS FOR NOT
EMBRACING THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL
SALVATION, BY REV. JOEL HAWES. TO
WHICH ARE ADDED THIRTEEN FRIENDLY
LETTERS TO A CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTRY**

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A Candid Review of Ten Letters Containing Reasons for Not Embracing the Doctrine of Universal Salvation, by Rev. Joel Hawes. To Which Are Added Thirteen Friendly Letters to a Candidate for the Ministry by Russel Canfield

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RUSSEL CANFIELD

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TO A

CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTRY.

—••—

BY RUSSEL CANFIELD.

Hartford :

PRINTED BY AND FOR THE AUTHOR.

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1827.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Review and Letters, originally appeared in the Religious Inquirer, under the signatures which they now bear. As readers of that paper, and others, have thought them worthy of preservation in a more permanent and concentrated form, the writer has been induced to present them to the public in the present dress. They are sent out with the best wishes of the publisher, that their usefulness may equal the frequently expressed belief of his friends, and the friends of free inquiry. He only asks that the reader will examine the facts and arguments by which his principles are sustained, with a determination to receive the truth in the love of it. As to the various statements of facts, from which he has occasionally drawn arguments—the reader will judge for himself. Whatever be the merits or demerits of the composition, and the conduct of the argument, they are exclusively his, and he alone is amenable. If he has erred in his deductions, the error is that of the judgment—not of the heart.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE author of the following pages is not vain enough to suppose that the events of his life are sufficiently important to attract great public attention. He is fully sensible of the difficulties under which a self-biographer labours, and knows that in this species of writing few have attained to mediocrity. But the situation in which he is placed as a polemical writer, under all the disadvantages of circumscribed time, limited opportunities, and an unpopular cause, embolden him to say, that the narrative he is about to give, is both proper and expected. Being reared in the very focus of Calvinism—connected by the ties of consanguinity and other relationship, with a number of the clergy, and measurably dependant on the orthodox for the means of subsistence, what could induce him to leave the religion of his fathers, and to embrace a doctrine which is a sure passport of ridicule and contempt? He had no antipathies to gratify—no family dissensions to alienate his affections—and no church quarrels to cause a re-action. No subtle casuist employed the arts of sophistry to entangle him, nor was he led to embrace his present principles, but by the gradual progress of light shining on the mind from the pages of revelation.

Until the year 1801, I had never heard a universalian preacher, nor read a book of that description, the Bible only excepted. In the summer of that year, I heard Mr. Glover, of Newtown, Conn. and from that time thought the truth of the doctrine at least possible. But the collisions of different sects, the jarring opinions of those who laid equal claims to orthodoxy, and the impressions which were deeply engraven on my mind in boyhood, led finally to doubt the authenticity of the scriptures, and I settled down in Deism. My mind was not indeed *sated* with this sentiment, but it seemed to me a less laborious task to foil those called christians by adverting to the apparent discrepancy of the scriptures, and the real difference in sentiment between those who termed themselves ambassadors of heaven, than to search for truth, where so many great and learned men had sought to little purpose. From 1801, until 1811, I was a professed Deist. To Elder Edward Mitchell, of New York, I owe the suggestion of the first idea which has led to my present sentiment. By a discourse in which he urged the importance of *searching* the scriptures, I was persuaded to follow his directions. By the help of a concordance, corresponding passages were frequently examined, and served as mutual interpreters. This system resulted in the gradual progress of information and comfort. But the system, as taught by Mr. M. was still ambiguous. The denunciation of eternal death or endless misery, to which he gave great credit—the vicarious sacrifice of Christ,—and correspondent doctrines of the Trinity, were all bars in the way of a clear understanding of the *consistency* of the scheme which he advocated. My mind was unable to fathom a system which required the sacrifice of

TO THE PUBLIC.

justice in the salvation of all men. The sentiment which, as I thought, rendered God a mutable being, impaired my confidence in his wisdom and his omniscience; and the necessity of the sufferings and death of Christ, as *Jehovah*, to propitiate *himself*, appeared in any other than a rational light. All the faculties of my mind were called into requisition to reconcile the absurdity of imputing transgression to a righteous person, and punishing him as a sinner, while the wicked escaped the infliction of that discipline which I thought was clearly threatened in the scriptures. During this trial of mind, a friend lent me some of Mr. Ballou's works, and light immediately shone on the understanding. From him I learned, that the mission of Christ was to save men from *deserving*—not from *deserved* punishment. This sentiment is now so well confirmed, that it will never be forgotten, while the light of reason illumines the understanding.

When the letters of Mr. Hawes appeared in the *Observer* and the *Secretary*, I was earnestly invited to review them. Knowing that they were considered by some as unanswerable, and as they embraced a great variety of topics, I was not at first prepared to undertake the work. But frequent solicitations prevailed—the work was accomplished, though under very adverse circumstances. It was well received by the public, and frequent suggestions were offered, as an inducement to publish the whole in a book form. To this step I have finally been induced, and a small impression of only one thousand copies, is now offered to the public for personal. The labour has been great, and several subjects have received less attention than I should be glad to bestow. Every subject of importance, has however, received close attention, and every argument of any weight been fairly quoted, and honestly examined. The publication of the whole of Mr. H's Letters, would add nothing to his arguments, and every person may see that no important statement has been omitted.

I have not dwelt so fully on two of Mr. H's assertions as I originally anticipated; viz. the wide extent of the belief in endless misery, and the various consequences of virtue and vice. Examples could easily be given from history, going to prove conclusively, that a uniform national belief has no necessary connexion with truth. Faith in particular tenets has been effectually established by the sword, and the descendants of those who have thus submitted, have been equally as faithful to the tenets received, as were their conquerors.

To say, as Mr. H. does, that the vicious are equally as happy in this world as the righteous, is so absurd, that it hardly requires a serious refutation. Scripture and experience, are both utterly against it, and the assumption is calculated to lead the mind to infidel principles and licentious conduct.

RUSSEL CANFIELD.

Hartford, June, 1827.

CANDID REVIEW.

NO. 1.

To Rev. Joel Hawes,—Hartford.

SIR—I make no apology for addressing these strictures to you—the substance and style of the letters being too obviously yours to admit a rational doubt concerning their authorship. Without further preface, then, I shall proceed to the investigation of their contents.

On a careful perusal of these letters, I am persuaded the following statements can be fully supported ;

1. They contain assertions, and questions in the affirmative form, as reason and data for argument, which you *do not*, and *cannot* sustain.

2. They exhibit deductions, which, if true, would destroy the very principle for which you contend,

3. They offer as proof of certain tenets, scraps of scripture, in a mutilated form, bearing obvious marks of “handling the word of God deceitfully.”

These you will consider as high charges—they are—and the writer is ready to hazard every thing dear to the human heart on the event of supporting them, in their most literal import and extent.

Your first appeal is to prudence, from which the following is a fair quotation ;

“It is a maxim, the correctness of which you will readily admit, that in every question of duty and hap-

piness, where one side is doubtful, and the other safe, we are bound to take the safe side. Act according to this maxim, and you cannot be a Universalist. Those who believe in a future state of retribution, and endeavour to prepare for it by a life of penitence and faith, will certainly be saved. On this point there is no doubt."

He must indeed be a novice, who does not perceive the second sentence to be a mere assumption of the very ground in debate, which you are bound to support, without depending on the sophistry of a *petitio principii*, and which you *would* support, were your power equal to your design. Why cannot a prudent man be a Universalist? No reason is given—no argument used—nor does creation furnish one.

It is generally understood that you were settled on Calvinistic principles, but you seem now to have taken the very ground for which the Calvinistic Council of Dort burnt *Barneveldt*, a disciple of *James Arminius*. These are your words:

"How then, in such a case, would a prudent man act? He would choose the safe side. He would live and act like those who expect to give account, and endeavour to make sure his salvation on the same grounds on which they expect to be saved."

When penning this, you might not be aware that in a future letter, (the 9th) you would find it necessary to charge the Universalists with having "no *uniform character*."

The next passage worthy of notice is a question put into the affirmative form, as follows:

"Can he then, be in his right mind, who puts to hazard the interests of his soul—who shuns the path which he knows will infallibly conduct him to heaven, and pursues one which, to say the least, may lead him down to hell?"

This quotation contains such a palpable absurdity, and brings a charge so repugnant to our every day's observation, that it requires particular notice. The contemptible hypocrisy which it imputes to Universalists, is the least of its deformities. With what a grace this charge comes from one professing a popular doctrine, always the hot-bed of hypocrites, is left for those to decide, who know the most certain avenues to the human heart. What temptations *are* offered by the doctrine or its defenders—what premiums *can* be offered, save the slander and persecution of the orthodox?

The gross absurdity of this charge, and its utter destitution of truth, are obvious to the youngest capacity. We are charged by you with embracing this doctrine, *knowing* that it is not merely false, but, that it will inevitably lead us down to regions of hopeless, interminable despair, and that its opposite will as infallibly lead to realms of bliss, without alloy, and without end. Dare you say that you know this, or that the assertion is supported by the most distant appearance of probability?

But what principle in the constitution of man leads him to seek remediless woe, in a future world, through the medium of a system, which makes him obnoxious to the derision, and persecution of knaves and fools in this? Where is the charm to work this miracle—this abandonment of desire for happiness, implanted in every man, which breathes the air, or sees the light of heaven? But is it indeed so? has a *Protestant* Clergyman in these enlightened days, the temerity thus to hurl the thunderbolts of damnation on all who refuse to bow the knee at the shrine of his motely system? Are we yet under the dictation of the *holy mother church*, out of which is no salvation?

In this quotation, *works* are the ground of acceptance with God—have you “no uniform character?”