

**AN EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE
OF UNIVERSALISM: IN A SERIES
OF SERMONS DELIVERED IN THE
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH,
BALTIMORE, MD.**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649054855

An Exposition and Defence of Universalism: In a Series of Sermons Delivered in the
Universalist Church, Baltimore, MD. by I. D. Williamson

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BY REV I. D. WILLIAMSON.

NEW YORK.

P. PRICE, 130 FULTON-STREET.

Between Nassau-street and Broadway.

1840.

P R E F A C E .

THE circumstances which drew out the following discourses, are rather local, than general. The author is the only public advocate of a world's salvation, in a city of one hundred thousand souls. His sentiments are frequently attacked, and as often misrepresented, both in the pulpit and from the press. For this cause he felt himself called upon to lay before his congregation, and the public, so far as they were willing to hear, a plain and explicit statement of his faith, and the reasons on which that faith was founded. He had no intention of giving these labors to the public through the press, but prepared them for the pulpit alone. He commenced their delivery; and it was soon discovered, that they attracted more attention than his most sanguine anticipations had led him to expect. The large house in which they were delivered became crowded to overflowing, and a general desire was expressed that they might be issued from the press. In accordance with this desire and the advice of friends, the author has consented to present them to the public in their present form, with scarcely a revision from the original copy.

He is aware that there are already many able works upon the same subject before the public, in comparison

with which, any effort of his pen must be feeble. But it is hoped, that the attention which has been given these lectures, in that portion of the Master's vineyard where the author resides, will secure for them there, a more general circulation than could be obtained for any other work upon the same subject. It is hoped, also, that they may be the means of adding something to the general good, by strengthening the faith of the believers who are scattered abroad, and presenting to the minds of those "who are of the contrary part," a feeble effort to explain and establish the doctrines of those who rejoice in the great salvation.

For the style and manner of his sermons, he makes no apology, his aim has been to be understood, and to convince, rather than please the ear with well sounded periods or flights of fancy; and as for his errors, if he has advanced any, let the reader and the public give them no quarters. "If this work be of man, it will come to naught, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." "Whosoever readeth let him understand," and if the doctrines here taught shall be proved false, none will be more ready to abandon them than the public's

humble servant

THE AUTHOR.

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AN
EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE
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UNIVERSALISM.

SERMON I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean." Acts xvii. 19, 20.

The hearer will undoubtedly recognise this, as the language of certain philosophers of Athens, addressed to the Apostle Paul. At Thessalonica, the Jews raised a tumult and drove him out of the city. Departing thence, he went to Berea, and there preached the good word of the kingdom, with great success. Thither, however, the Jews followed him, and, "stirred up the people against him," until he was no longer safe in that city. Accordingly, he departed, and went to Athens, and there waited for his companions, Silas and Timothy to join him. He was now in the midst of the most opulent and powerful city of Greece—a city, distinguished alike for the military talents, learning and eloquence of its inhabitants. *There*, the schools, professors and philosophers of Greece, were congregated,

and there, temples and altars were reared to every false God of whose name the people had heard. The historian informs us, that "Paul's spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the whole city given to idolatry, therefore, disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with devout persons, and in the market, daily, with such as met him." In these disputations, he encountered certain of the Epicureans and Stoics, and they brought him to Areopagus, the place where they held their courts of justice, and there, they addressed him in the language of the text. "May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean; for they spent their time in nothing else, but to tell, or to hear some new thing."

I cannot forbear the remark here, that although these inquirers were actuated by nothing better than an idle curiosity, in making this request, yet their conduct was far more commendable, than that of those who condemn a man and his religion, without first giving him a hearing in his own behalf. Paul gladly embraced the opportunity thus afforded him of entering upon a defence of the gospel. He preached to them, "God that made the world, and all that dwell therein," pointed out to them the folly of their idolatrous practices, and appealed to them in behalf of Jesus and the resurrection, with such energy and power, that "some believed," and others said, "we will hear thee again of this matter."

I presume the hearer has already anticipated the use the speaker intends to make of this text. He stands before you, the advocate and the *only public advocate* in this large city, and even in this State, of the doctrine of impartial and efficient grace—a doctrine, which to some of his hearers, may be both new and strange. He