

Dr. Safford frankly avows that the motive that governed him in preparing this work was to rescue the "greatest theologian and picturesque character" of the Universalist Church from "increasing obscurity," though Mr. Ballou's son had years ago written a biography of his father, and Thomas Whittemore also had published a work of four volumes on the work and career of the celebrated leader. It seems that the previous biographies failed to keep alive the memory of one who had distinguished himself in the "cause" of universal redemption. We do not intimate that the same fate awaits this volume, but we do say that unless a leader has in himself the constituent elements of perpetuity, or his leadership and its results are of fundamental importance, no biography can perpetuate his name beyond a generation, and under such circumstances the most eloquent eulogy sinks to the level of an epitaph. Mr. Ballou made some history which is worth recalling. The son of a Baptist minister, he imbibed the Calvinism of his time, and preached it for many years. That he broke with it was to his credit, but that he espoused a greater error in theology is quite as evident. He was apparently slow in changing his mind, though his strongest trait was intellectual vacillation. His progress in thought does not exhibit regular gradations or traceable processes of evolution, but rather irregular variations from a straight line, and sudden decisions that surprise those who are given to logical methods of inquiry and change. His admirers may not admit this dubious mental condition, as a distinctive trait, but his history evidences it at every turn. In reaching his conclusions respecting future punishment he commences as a Calvinistic believer in it, and his two works, *Notes on the Parables*, and *Treatise on Atonement*, furnish strong arguments in its defense as a scriptural doctrine. Nor did he wholly change when he formulated the theology which the Universalists of his day generally accepted, for he still announced punishment for sin as a truth to be preached and believed. But in his development of the doctrine he attempted to free it of the orthodox interpretation, and so at times he runs into restorationism, and at other times presented it in the most vague and unsatisfactory

manner, leaving it doubtful as to whether sin is wholly punishable in this life, or wholly repaired in the life to come. His theology became the theology of Universalism, though prior to the new leader it had maintained other views of future punishment. The book is interesting because it aims to trace the career of one who passed from the Calvinistic faith to the acceptance of a heresy that, supported by a few honored names in literature, still exerts wherever preached a paralyzing effect on all the holy industries of the Christian Church, and impedes the progress of the religion upon which it professes to found its claims and arguments.

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