

UNIVERSALISM IN STEUBEN COUNTY

Br. Skinner¹—Having been denied the pleasure of attending our Association, a brief account of my labors, and the situation of our cause in this region, may not be improper, nor altogether uninteresting to your readers.

I have been in this county about eighteen months; during which time I have preached, generally, every Sabbath, and sometimes in the week time. During the first year, however, my want of health prevented me from being as useful in the good cause, as the circumstances required. But through the mercy of a kind providence, my health has been restored, and with it, an increased desire for the spread of the truth as it is in Jesus.

I am at present laboring in the towns of South Dansville, Howard, and Cohocton, alternately. In S. Dansville, there is a respectable society of Universalists, of some years standing, gathered by Mr. D. Upson, whose zealous labors in the gospel of Reconciliation, will not soon be forgotten. This Society is in a very flourishing condition. Their exact numbers I have not as yet ascertained, but our congregations are large and attentive; and there appears to be much excitement among the people of other religious opinions. Some respectable people of other denominations are beginning to shake off the shackles of tradition, and examine the subject for themselves, "to see if these things be so." Last week, I spent four days in this place, visiting and meeting the brethren and sisters of the Society, and truly did I enjoy a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." Seldom have I enjoyed a period so full of rich and exhilarating comfort. Our people appeared to be "all of one mind;" and the love of God, manifested in his Son Jesus Christ, was the principal topic of conversation. Their christian liberality, in behalf of myself and family, on this occasion, will long be cherished with grateful remembrance.

In the town of Howard, our people are not quite so numerous; yet even here, we have a goodly number, who believe in the "grace of God that bringeth salvation."

I have preached in this place, once a month for about eighteen months, and generally to respectable and attentive auditors. Our cause is not progressing so rapidly here as in many other places, owing, doubtless, to the powerful opposition exerted against it by a numerous and well disciplined Orthodox phalanx.

We have, within the town of Howard, one Presbyterian preacher, three Baptists, one Unitarian, and five or six Methodist preachers, all of whom are actively engaged in promulgating the doctrine of eternal vengeance, and striving to pull down the doctrine of God's impartial love.

Consequently, Universalism is extremely unpopular; and I conceive that there are many in this town who would gladly attend our meetings, and make a public profession of Universalism, were it not for fear of censure, and the question, "are ye also Nazarinnes?" Yet, even here, some are found "enquiring the way to Zion, with their faces turned thitherward." There appears to be, of late, an increased attention to the cause of liberal christianity—and I cannot but hope, that God will soon make bare his arm, in turning many from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.

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Our people here, are in general, substantial and well informed, exhibiting the fruits of the doctrine they profess.

At Cohocton (Liberty Corners,) our regular congregations are large and attentive. I commenced laboring among them about the first of May last. Universalism is a new thing here; I believe that not more than two or three discourses had ever been delivered here, by ministers of that order, till the commencement of my labors among them. There is a Presbyterian church here, who have a settled minister; and I am told that great excitement prevails among them, lest the doctrine of God's impartial love should take roots within their borders. But the standard of the Redeemer is planted among them; God has lighted a candle here, which the people are determined not to conceal under a bushel. A spirit of free inquiry prevails to a great extent. The friends of liberal christianity are seeking salvation from devouring priestcraft, and I verily believe the time is not far distant, when they shall become conspicuous, as a christian society.

May God speed the work of grace, till the glorious light of the gospel of his son, shall illuminate every dark corner of the earth, and all the family of man shall see of the salvation of God.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

A. H. Curtis

Howard, Steuben Co., Nov. 25, 1830

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[a Universalist weekly newspaper]

¹Rev. Dolphus Skinnier, editor and proprietor of the paper

Transcribed on 28 Oct 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY