

[Minden (Fort Plain), Montgomery Co.]

*Dear Ambassador:—*

Permit me a small place in your paper, for a brief history of the Universalist Society in this place from 1832 to 1859. Prior to 1832, the doctrine of Universalism was but little known or preached. In 1832, the present Society was formed, and the Church erected, since which time its march has been onward and upward. The late Father Potter was the first settled minister, and continued his labors with the Society for some time, fearlessly proclaiming a "world's salvation." He has gone home to realize the faith he preached. Long will his precepts and example be cherished by all those that listened to his sound doctrines, and words of comfort.

The following named clergymen succeeded him in the order stated, to wit: Jesse Bushnell, L.[Lewis] C. Browne, H.[Henry] Belding, H.[Henry] Lyon, J.[John] D. Hicks, H.[Henry] B. Soule, A.[Alfred] C. Barray, H.[Henry] L. Hayward, G.[George] W. Gage, A.[Aaron] B. Grosh, and C. E. Hewes, the present settled minister, all of whom have contributed to the permanency of the Society.

Occasionally, the Society has had the pleasure and benefit of the soul-cheering eloquence of Rev.'s S.[Stephen] R. Smith, D.[Dolphus] Skinner, A.[Abel] C. Thomas, I.[Isaac] D. Williamson, E.[Edwin] H. Chapin, J.[John] M. Austin, and others. Long will they be remembered.

In that early day, Father Potter planted the banner of Universal Salvation on the walls of truth, and the issue was taken between that doctrine and Endless Misery; and now, in 1859, the same banner floats in triumph over the errors of 1832.

Fathers Potter, Smith and Skinner were the early advocates of Universalism in this place and vicinity, and the seed they sowed has taken root in the hearts of men, and many have become firm believers in a world's salvation. The doctrine of endless misery is scarcely believed by any sound mind, and very seldom preached in the glowing colors (as in former days) of a "Hell Fire and Brimstone..."

What a change has taken hold of the "sober second thought" of the christian community, upon such doctrines as "endless misery" and "infant damnation." What a change! May these dogmas never return to disturb the peaceful mind in the faith of God and the salvation of all mankind. But for the preaching of Universalism, the mind would have remained in utter darkness. Happy is the thought that the time is fast approaching when the world will believe in one Father, one Saviour and one destiny!

Br. Hewes has labored with the Society nearly two years, and is doing a good work. His congregation is large, and the church is filled to overflowing. He is demolishing the walls of an "endless hell," ... deals roughly with the old creeds, and strips bigotry of its garb... He labors hard, and lectures or preaches nearly every day and night in this place and vicinity. For twenty

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miles around, he is doing much good, and is well received wherever he goes. With his eloquent and convincing arguments, he awakens the dormant spirit upon the subject of the destiny of man, which can not help but result in the embrace of the doctrine of Universal Salvation. The Sabbath School and Bible Class are well conducted and largely attended, and has never been more successful. The Ladies' Social Circle is in a flourishing condition, and its influence is being felt in the Society and community.

The cause therefore is prospering, and Universalism in Fort Plain is a fixed institution. The Society is out of debt [and] has good preaching, fine singing, and large congregations. The cause in 1832 was an infant—in 1859 it is a grown man, free to think and act for itself. Under all these blessings what more can we ask but the continuation of the Divine favor.

F.

*Fort Plain, March 21, 1859*

*Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, 2 Apr 1859*

Transcribed on 4 Jan 2007 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY