

[Ackley, Oliver]

DEATH OF REV. OLIVER ACKLEY

Departed this life on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> ult., at 3 o'clock, at his residence in the village of Orleans, Ontario co., N. Y., Rev. O. Ackley, in the 70<sup>th</sup> year of his age. Between seven and eight weeks since, he arose one morning apparently out of the usual state of his health; but having some business abroad, in accordance with his habits of industry and his benevolent perseverance in the discharge of every duty to his family and society, and contrary to the earnest remonstrance of his wife, he harnessed his horse and drove to the appointed place. His physical condition was immediately discovered—he was seized with a paralysis which gradually rendered his left limbs wholly helpless, in a moderate degree affected his speech, and apparently produced an intellectual stupor, but by no means depriving him of reason. In this condition he was conveyed home, and placed upon his bed from which he never afterwards arose! Everything was done for his relief that the skill of the physician, conjugal affection, and filial piety could suggest, and that his numerous sympathizing friends could perform; all of which was evidently appreciated by him, and very thankfully received but all proved of no avail to arrest that sentence against mortal man—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The writer of this, though for many years residing in a distant part of the country, in the State of Pennsylvania, was providentially thrown in this section a few weeks after the attack, and enjoyed the privilege of visiting him several times. I found him suffering very considerably, but patient and resigned—his faith lively and his hope strong. Although from my imperfection of hearing I could not understand all he wished to say, yet there were seasons when his voice was sufficiently strong for me to hear, and he could always give me the assurance of his faith, hope, charity, and patient resignation. I remarked that he could adopt the language of the Apostle—"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." He shook his head, but remarked, or gave me to understand, that he could "wait all the days of his appointed time, till his change came."

A little before his departure he took an affectionate leave of his family, and the time soon arrived when He who holds the keys of death unlocked the prison door and bade the freed spirit rise to the enjoyment of immortal life.

His funeral obsequies were attended Thursday, July 1<sup>st</sup>. The services were performed in the Baptist church in the village. The writer, Br. J[ohn] M. Austin, Br. A[sa] Saxe, and Rev. Mr. Wader, pastor of the Baptist church, were present, and each took part in the solemnization of the occasion. The house was crowded to its fullest capacity, and the deep interest manifested, the profound and solemn attention given by the crowded audience bore ample testimony to their respect for the deceased and their sympathy with the bereaved family.

## [Ackley, Oliver]

### Brief Biographical Sketch

Mr. Ackley, it appears by record, was born in the State of Connecticut, in January 1789. At an early day his father removed from that State into Hamilton, Madison Co., N. Y., where Oliver grew up to manhood, and where he received all the literary education he ever obtained. The country was new. No laws existed in the State of New-York for the establishment and regulation of common schools, and no literary institution was then established in that section of the country. But such was his industry and perseverance, that before his majority he obtained a sufficient education to become a common school teacher. And such was the integrity of his character, and his known qualifications for the transaction of business, that he was chosen to civil office in society, and promoted to military office in society, and he served a short campaign as a military officer in the service of his country at Sackett's Harbor, in the fall of 1814.

In June, 1805, I first visited that section of country and commenced preaching in Hamilton. And on that or the following year at farthest, I noticed Oliver Ackley, then a young man in his minority, a very constant attendant at my meetings. I marked his serious attention and the manifestly deep interest he felt in the doctrine of God's Universal grace. God had given him an understanding to receive and a heart to feel and appreciate the glorious truths of the Gospel. I soon formed a familiar acquaintance with him, and a bond of sympathy and union was soon contracted which never knew intermission nor abatement until the shaft of death has separated us for a short season. I was called to solemnize his marriage with his first wife [Polly Gardner]—an excellent woman, with whom he happily lived until she was removed from him by the messenger of death, about seven years ago, and raised a large family of very respectable children, most of whom survive, and have had the melancholy pleasure of seeing a beloved father finish his course with joy, and beholding his mortal remains deposited in their last resting place.

Although Mr. Ackley's understanding was thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrine, and he gave his support and all his influence to its propagation, his heart was never imbued with its living spirit until the extraordinary awakening in our Society and vicinity in the year 1817—a circumstantial account of which may be found in the Memoirs of my Life... He now made a public profession, received baptism under my hand, and united with the church.

He had a natural talent for public speaking, and he was faithful to improve it at our Conferences, and was soon solicited to visit different neighborhoods and adjacent towns, and hold meetings; and he was soon under regular engagements. I have no data at hand by which I can determine the date of his letter of fellowship, but it was probably about 1819. And shortly afterwards, a meeting and a council were called in the town of Eaton, Madison co., where he was employing part of his time, for his ordination; and if memory well serves me, Br. S[tephen] R. Smith preached on the occasion.

Mr. Ackley continued to itinerate and preach in that section of country with universal acceptance and great success, until somewhere around the year 1825,

[Ackley, Oliver]

when he removed his family into what we then called the Genesee country, and settled for a season in the town of Hopewell. Since that time he has traveled much in Western N. Y., and zealously, faithfully and successfully devoted his time and talents to the promulgation of that truth which constituted the ground of his hope, the sun of his life and the joy of his soul, until the infirmities of age admonished him to moderate his zeal, and circumscribe the field of his labor to narrower limits.

But his benevolent soul has forbidden him to be indifferent to the needs of humanity—the sufferings of the poor, the groans of the sick and distressed, the tears of the bereaved and afflicted, have always excited his warmest sympathy. He has ever been the uniform friend of the indigent, the sympathizing companion of the sick bed, and the comforter of the mourner; and he has continued to hold himself in readiness to attend the calls of the suffering within the compass of his ability, either to administer material aid or spiritual consolation. He has been, for many years, extensively known in this section of the country; and his humility, his honesty and integrity, his benevolence and charity have become almost proverbial. He has conspicuously illustrated the practical influence of the religion he professed in his daily life and conversation.

After the departure of his first wife, and remaining in widowed loneliness for a few years, he married a second wife; and she has truly proved a companion in faith, in hope, in zeal—a partner of his cares, his labors, his joys and his sorrows. She married him with all the tenderness of conjugal affection, bathed his fevered brow, smoothed his pillow, and cheered and comforted him to the close of his passage to his final goal.

It is the second time she has been left in widowhood, but she is not without a stay and a comforter. She enjoys the presence of that God who has promised to be the husband of the widow. May God sanctify this bereavement, and fit and prepare her for all her further duties and trials of life.

N. [Rev. Nathaniel] Stacy

Geneva, July 2d.

*Christian Ambassador*, Auburn NY, Sat. 17 Jul 1858  
[a Universalist newspaper]

Transcribed on 9 Jan 2007 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY