

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

## DR. ISAAC MORGAN ATWOOD

The death of Isaac Morgan Atwood occurred at Washington, D.C. at two o'clock Friday afternoon.

Dr. Atwood was well known throughout northern New York. For the past six years he had been pastor of the Universalist Church in Canton, but resigned last spring, and only a few weeks ago removed to Washington, D.C. with his wife, where he purposed to make his future home. The particulars of his death are unknown here yet, but he is known to have been suffering from hardening of the arteries and death is supposed to have been due to that disease. His death comes as a complete surprise to his friends in Canton, for while he was 79 years of age last March, yet when he last appeared on the streets of Canton, he was erect in his carriage and elastic in his step. He had also retained his mental faculties unimpaired. He was always a most logical thinker and wrote most clearly and spoke with much eloquence and force. Probably no man in the Universalist church has exercised so large an influence over the denomination in this section of the state as Dr. I. M. Atwood.

He was born at Pembroke, N.Y., March 28, 1838, his parents being Orsamus Isaac and Nancy Shearer Atwood. He was educated at Royalton academy and Lockport High school, and prepared for sophomore entrance at Yale. He received the degree of M. A. from St. Lawrence University in 1871; the degree of D.D. from Tufts in 1879; and L.L.D. from Buchtel in 1905.

He married Almira Church of Clarendon, N.Y., Oct. 29, 1861. He was ordained to the Universalist ministry in 1861, and held pastorates as follows: Churchville, Clifton Springs, [and] Watertown, N Y.; Portland, Me.; Chelsea and Cambridge, Mass. He was editor of the Christian Leader, an official organ of Universalist church, from 1867 to 1872. He was president of the Canton Theological School from 1879 to 1899, when it was put under the general head of the university. Under his leadership the seminary attained a high rank as a training school for Universalist ministers. He resigned the presidency of the Theological school to become the general superintendent of the Universalist denomination in the United States and Canada. He was also several years secretary of the Universalist general conference. From 1905 to 1912, he was associate editor of the Universalist Leader of Boston, Mass.

He was a member of the Religious Education Association, the American Social Science Association, and of the Phi Delta Kappa fraternity.

He was the author of many books and pamphlets, among them being: "Have We Outgrown Christianity?," 1870; "Latest Word of Universalism," 1879; "Walks About Zion," 1880; "Episcopacy," 1885; "Revelation," 1893;

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

"Balance Sheet of Biblical Criticism," 1896; "A System of Christian Doctrines," 1900.

He leaves surviving his widow, one son, Dr. John Murray Atwood, Dean and Craig, professor of Biblical Languages and Literature of the Theological School of St. Lawrence university at Canton, and three daughters, Miss Nora Atwood, superintendent of the kindergarten department of the Montclair Normal school at Montclair, N.J.; Mrs. Williston Manley of Canton, and Miss Alice Atwood, a librarian in the Agricultural department at Washington, D C. He also leaves nine grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Nearly six years ago, Dr. and Mrs. Atwood celebrated their 50th marriage anniversary at their home in Canton. At that time all their children were living and were there. Shortly afterwards, a daughter, Mrs. A. B. Church, died.

The remains were brought to Canton and the funeral was held from the Universalist church on Tuesday afternoon at 2:30.

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[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

ISAAC MORGAN ATWOOD, D.D.

A whole denomination mourns.

Rev. Isaac Morgan Atwood, D.D., because of his long and prominent service in our church, was as well known within and beyond our circles, as any Universalist clergyman. A faithful and efficient minister, a teacher of rare gifts and devotion, a competent and consecrated officer of the General Convention, he influenced for good the entire life of his church.

Especially note-worthy was his work at the Canton Theological School. During the twenty years that he was president of that institution, he put the stamp of his thought and ideal upon nearly two hundred ministers. When we consider what it means to influence for right thought and right conduct even one man who is to go out and be a leader and preacher, we must bow in reverence before one who has touched with blessing and power ten score men during their formative years. Very largely Dr. Atwood has influenced, directly and indirectly, the course of Universalist development.

He died at his home in Washington, D. C., at three o'clock Friday afternoon, October 26, aged 79 years. At the request of many friends brief services were held in the Washington Universalist church Sunday morning, conducted by Rev. William Couden, acting minister, assisted by his father, Dr. H. H. Couden, the blind chaplain of the House, a close friend of Dr. Atwood, and Rev. L. G. Powers, former chief statistician of the Census Bureau.

The funeral was held on Tuesday afternoon, October 30th, in the Canton church, which he had helped to build and in which he had ministered during the closing years of his life. A profusion of beautiful flowers testified to the love of friends present and friends absent. The addresses were given by Rev. J. M. Payson, D.D., Rev. L. S. Collister, D.D., and Rev. Richard Sykes, D.D., while Rev. C. H. Murch, Rev. H.P. [Herbert Philbrook] Morrell, Rev. G. E. Huntley, D.D., and Rev. H. W. [Henry Westbrook] Reed, D.D., assisted in the services. Interment was at Fairview cemetery in Canton.

Dr. Atwood resigned his pastorate of the Universalist church in Canton last February, to take effect May first, which time would terminate his sixth year as pastor of this church. He was prompted to take this action because of the consciousness of gradually failing health, and on September 15th he and his wife left Canton to take up their home in Washington where they were to reside with their daughter, Miss Alice C. Atwood, trusting that a warmer climate would prove beneficial to him. During his last few weeks in Canton he failed rapidly but continued to attend to the many affairs connected with moving and left with the hope of all that the surroundings of his new home would prove invigorating. Arriving at Washington he failed to

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

recover, but not until two days before his death was he confined to his bed nor was his case considered immediately critical, and even to the last his physicians expressed the hope that he might rally. Death came unexpectedly and easily; so unexpectedly that there was no opportunity to telephone to his daughter Miss Alice, who was at her post in the government employment, in the department of agriculture. Miss Nora, who had gone on from New Jersey the night before, and Mrs. Atwood, were present.

The story of Dr. Atwood's life, of his early struggles, of his wonderful energy and enthusiasm and convictions, of his high ideals, of his successes, will never be written as they might be. He was a modest man and seldom talked of self. Urged to write his life's story he steadily smiled and failed to respond. What accurate history there is will be found in his little pocket diary which was faithfully written up every night. Certain facts are known that give an insight into the kind of man he was, his early battles for knowledge and his remarkable maturity of thought when still almost a child.

He was born in Pembroke [Pembroke], N.Y., March 24, 1838. His parents, Orsamus Isaac and Nancy Shearer Atwood, were poor and could do little for their children. At the age of eleven years Dr. Atwood bound himself out to work on a farm for one year. His total remuneration was his board and lodging and one wagon load of potatoes, which was given to his parents. At twelve the always present desire for education impelled him to leave the farm and the next four years must have been years of intense struggle. During that time he earned his own living and snatched such learning as he could from the Lockport Academy and from and from the long hours of the night when his only light was a candle. He lived with relatives so far as possible and turned his hand to anything that offered either board and lodging or remuneration. He worked in a tavern, tending bar, looking after the stable, sweeping. He drove mules on the [Erie] canal. Short of stature, he was strong, sturdy, eager and untiring. At the age of sixteen after only four years of hard earned education, he began to teach, for a college education was his goal and some money was a necessity. During those two years he studied yet the harder and labored and saved, and in two years, or at the age of eighteen, he was prepared to enter as a Sophomore in the classical course at Yale University. In those days the men who entered even the freshman class were usually twenty and they had money and leisure and time for schooling and preparation under capable teachers. Constant and unremitting study by the dim light of a candle had seriously affected Dr. Atwood's eyesight, a trouble from which he always suffered. With his goal in sight he suddenly realized that his parents needed every assistance possible and with the characteristic self sacrifice of the man and thoughtfulness of others, a characteristic manifested on all occasions throughout a long life, he

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

gave to them his carefully saved earnings and abandoned his contemplated course at Yale, deciding that what learning he had obtained must be struggled for without the aid of teachers, and he turned his efforts in another direction. He became a teacher in a private school in Corfu, N.Y., residing much of the time with a Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Porter, who later became benefactors of St. Lawrence University and founded the commercial school at Clinton Liberal Institute. His parents were Baptists but in Corfu he came into close association with many Universalists and was so impressed with their belief that at the age of nineteen years he entered the Universalist ministry, for those were the days when a diploma from a Theological college was not necessary. His life became not only one of constant employment, but one of study, which was continued even to within a few weeks of his death.

He married Alma Church in Clarendon, N.Y., October 29, 1861, fifty-six years ago Monday of this week. Five children were born to them, the late Mrs. A. B. Church of Akron, O., Miss Nora Atwood of Montclair, N.J., Mrs. Williston Manley of Canton, Rev. J. M. Atwood, D.D., Dean and Craig Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature at St. Lawrence and Miss Alice Atwood of Washington, D. C. Dr. and Mrs. Atwood celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in Canton six years ago, the entire family being present. Since that time both Dr. and Mrs. A. B. Church have died.

Dr. Atwood was ordained to the Universalist ministry at Clifton Springs in 1861, where years later his son was also ordained. He held pastorates at Churchville, Clifton Springs, and Watertown, N.Y. He was pastor at Portland, Me., at the time of the great fire. He also held pastorates at Chelsea, Brocton and Cambridge, Mass. He moved to Canton from Cambridge in 1879 and became President of the Theological School of St. Lawrence University, a position he held for twenty years. He was general superintendent of Universalist churches in the United States and Canada 1898-1906, moving from Canton to Rochester in 1899. He was secretary of the Universalist general convention 1905-12, when he resigned and moved to Canton, accepting the pastorate of the First Universalist church here, feeling that these labors here would conclude his public work, and with the avowed intention of resigning as soon as he felt that the time had come when he could not give of his very best, unhampered by physical or mental ailments. Two years ago, realizing that the years were encroaching, he began to plan to retire, a thing he carried into effect this summer with the thought that some years were still to remain for him for study and a quiet life relieved from pressing responsibilities.

Besides being a much loved pastor wherever he was, and besides holding important offices in the denomination he loved, he was active in other fields.

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

He was the editor of The Universalist at Boston 1867-72, managing editor of the Christian Leader in New York, 1872-74, and an associate editor of the Universalist Leader 1874-1908. He was the editor of "Briefs," short utterances and opinions on general current affairs that attracted very general attention, and were widely read and very generally quoted and commented on by the press. During his past five years in Canton, besides acting as pastor he also acted as Professor of Theology and Philosophy at St. Lawrence University.

He has been at all times a writer. Among other things he wrote "Have We Outgrown Christianity?" in 1870; "Latest Words of Universalism," 1879; "Walks About Zion," 1880; "Episcopacy," 1885; "Revelation," 1893; Balance Sheet of Biblical Criticism," 1896; "A System of Christian Doctrines," 1900. He also wrote many articles for magazines, encyclopedias, etc.

Dr. Atwood was given the honorary degrees of M.A. by St. Lawrence; of D.D. by Tufts; of LL.D. by Buchtel. He was a member of the Religious Education Association, Social Science Association, Phi Beta Kappa and of the Reform, Economic and Universalist Clubs. In 1910 he attended the Congress of Liberal Religions in Berlin as a representative of the Universalist church and delivered an address there that was translated and printed in different papers on the continent.

His life among men spoke for itself. To a brilliant mind, steadfastness of purpose, high ideals, strong convictions, he added an abounding love for mankind, a liberality of thought, and an untiring unselfishness, a joy in living, a wonderful optimism, and above all others an all pervading love for his religion, to which he consecrated his life and energies. He hardly knew until recently what it meant to be sick. When St. Lawrence was raising its first fifty thousand dollar endowment he threw himself with all his soul into the effort. He subscribed far beyond his means. He travelled far and near at his own expense raising funds. He showed the same enthusiasm at the time of the erection of the Universalist church at Canton. The calls upon his time and thought and purse were many. No one in want, mentally or financially, ever left him, without receiving timely aid. He was public spirited in the truest sense. His power in speaking, his clearness of thought and command of language, were very marked. He got a great joy out of life. His laugh was contagious. He was a most devoted husband and father. The stern realities, his boyhood fights for things higher up, seemed to make him but better able to enjoy accomplishment. The early desire to obtain, intellectually, never left him, nor did the determination to make the most of the things he had obtained ever leave him. A rare type of man has closed his earthly career. Mankind has been enriched by his living. He was an inspiration to thousands.

[Atwood, Isaac Morgan]

He is survived by his widow, by the children mentioned above and by two brothers, Adelbert Atwood, M.D., of Brooklyn, and Daniel Atwood of Tenafly, New Jersey and by one sister, Mrs. Esther Holbrook, of Lockport, H.Y.

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