

[Stacy, Nathaniel Michael]

THE LATE REV. N. STACY

At the ripe old age of 89, Rev. Nathaniel Stacy departed this life in Columbus, Pa. He came from a Universalist community. His parents were natives of Gloucester, Mass., and had been hearers under the preaching of John Murray. He was born in New Salem, now Franklin county, Mass., to which place his parents had removed. Here parents and son often heard Universalism from the lips of Caleb Rich, Zephaniah Lathe and Thomas Barnes. Nathaniel Stacy thus took an early start in the glorious cause to which his life was truly consecrated. He had little education, and was a self-made man; but zeal, in some measure, made up for this serious lack. Under the instruction of Hosea Ballou, he made some preparation for the ministry, into which he entered at the opening of the present century. He combined the labors of teacher and preacher, traveling in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and at a later period itinerating in this State [NY]. It was his mission to cast the seed upon the waters. He was a missionary. He felt that the command, "Go preach the Gospel to every creature" was addressed to *him*. And very much of the Universalism that has taken a stronghold in Western New York is due to his heroic labors. We saw Father Stacy but once—this was at the Rochester Convention. We gather the few facts we have compiled from his *Memoir*—as interesting a book as our pioneer literature gives. We are much disappointed that no one in the neighborhood, and so knowing the facts, has responded to or call, and furnished our readers with the facts relating to his illness and decease. We still look for such a communication. The *Star [in the West]* appears to have some information, and says:

It becomes our duty to record the death of the aged Father in our Israel, Rev. Nathaniel Stacy. He died on Sunday, the 5th inst., at the residence of his son-in-law O[zro] A. Smith, Esq. [husband of his daughter Charlotte], in Columbus, Penn., aged ninety years. His illness was short and painless, and his death calm, peaceful and triumphant. Few men have lived longer or more useful lives, and few have passed away so gently into the great Father's arms. While life was long, death was not unkind; and when at last the inevitable hour came, it found him ready to depart. With the burden and infirmities of ninety years resting upon him, and unwavering faith to give comfort in the hour of death, we may suppose that the call was not unwelcome, and that the summons of the mysterious herald was cheerfully and trustfully obeyed...

*Christian Ambassador*, New York, NY, Sat. 25 Apr 1868  
[a Universalist newspaper]

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Biographical Record

Rev. Nathaniel Stacy, the oldest minister in the denomination, died in Columbus, Pennsylvania, April 4th [5th, 1868], aged 89 years. A native of New Salem, Massachusetts, his early education was such as the common school of that time afforded, though he subsequently passed a few terms in the Academy, always making great progress in proportion to time and advantages. In the winter of 1799, while teaching school in Vermont and boarding with a Baptist clergyman, his mind became much exercised on religious subjects, which led him to a patient study of the Bible, and in no long time to a firm faith in the doctrine of Universal Salvation. During the autumn of the same year he met and heard Hosea Ballou, at Woodstock. After serving short apprenticeships as school-teacher, news-agent, clerk and clock-maker, he was induced by the persuasions of Mr. Ballou to begin a course of study under his direction with the view of entering the Universalist ministry. This was in October, 1802—and in the day of small things for our cause; consequently Mr. Stacy's advantages were far from good. But under the force of the same persuasion that had prevailed on him to take up the study, he was "compelled" to preach his first sermon the following month, in Dana, Massachusetts. In January, 1803, he went again to Vermont and preached during the winter in Moretown, Bolton, Essex, Jericho and Montpelier. Subsequently he journeyed to Connecticut and preached in several places in that State. He was present at the adoption of the "Confession" in Winchester, New Hampshire, in 1803. Passing the next two years in teaching school and itinerating in Massachusetts and Vermont, he set out for the State of New York in 1805, holding meetings in Whitehall, Canajoharie, and many places in the counties of Otsego, Oneida and Madison. In January, 1806, he removed to Brookfield, New York. After two years he settled in Hamilton, Madison County, where his family continued to reside for twenty years, though he himself was constantly doing the work of an evangelist over nearly the whole length and breadth of the great State of New York, making several excursions into adjoining states. In the Spring of 1830 he removed to Columbus, Pennsylvania, where he resided, with the exception of a few comparatively brief intervals, up to the time of his death—among these, however, should be mentioned a "visit" of five years at Ann Arbor, Michigan. In December, 1848, he concluded his 'Memoirs' on which he had been engaged for several years, stating that, up to that time, he had preached more or less in ten different States, delivering 4,749 discourses; had officiated at 368 funerals and solemnized 228 marriages. Since then his active ministry has ceased, though he continued to labor as strength and opportunity afforded, down almost to the close of his life.

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Father Stacy was one of the most indefatigable missionaries we ever had; and the history of his labors for forty years is in good part the history of Universalism in New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. He suffered many and great persecutions and privations in all that time—often of the most trying and inexcusable kind—but his great amiability and beautiful trust threw over them all a halo of triumph and glory. Troubled on every side, he was seldom distressed; often perplexed, he was never in despair; persecuted without stint and without mercy, he knew that he could not be forsaken. How cheerful was his temper, how kind his heart, how tranquil his philosophy and how unfaltering his faith, all know who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. No man ever went down into the vale of years more at peace with all the world and more happy in the abundance of his love and trust toward God, than Father Stacy. He loved the cause for which he had labored long and faithfully, with all the ardor of youth in the extremity of age. Every young minister was to him a new token that the Lord was blessing Zion; and the patriarch's heart went out to him with cordial fervor. He had no jealousies. He was not wont to harbor suspicions. He was almost destitute of ambition, in the common and worldly sense.

Nathaniel Stacy was not a great man, nor a man of much learning; but he was a man who performed a vast amount of labor in the spirit of a pure and sincere Christian, and in so thorough and acceptable a manner as to leave a blessed influence not only on his own time, but on generations following.

His last days were calm and tranquil. Peacefully he passed away to the better land, leaving only pleasant memories to his surviving friends. His aged widow lingers, patiently waiting to follow him.

*The Universalist Companion*, Boston MA, 1869, pp. 87-9

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