

[Whitnall, Isaac]

DEATH OF REV. ISAAC WHITNALL

Brethren, I write in a season of affliction, and under those emotions of sympathy and feelings of sorrow which the wise Creator, in his providence, has sown in our bosoms, when dearest earthly friends are conveyed to the mansions of the tomb. The cheerful society of one who has fought the good fight, who has labored for twenty-one years in the defence of that dear cause in which we are mutually engaged, and in which his whole soul was alive, till the fatal moment he left this world for the untried realities of another, is no more—no more our counselor and fellow-laborer in the ministry of universal reconciliation. Br. Isaac Whitnall, the friend of suffering humanity, whose memory is embalmed in the hearts of all his acquaintances, and who has undeviatingly braved the scorn and reproach of an unbelieving world to bear the sweet message of peace and consolation to the lost and alienated children of God, departed this life on Sunday morning, the 26th ult., in the 52d year of his age. The complaint which terminated his life was beyond the reach of medical assistance. The large artery which runs from the heart, at a short distance from its entrance, was considerably contracted, and nearly filled with a hard bony substance. This prevented the natural circulation of the blood, and had caused, occasionally for some months past, severe pains, particularly when walking. They gradually became more frequent, and produced a serious apprehension that they might prove fatal. Accordingly, Br. W. gave directions to his friends concerning his property, funeral and burial. He spoke on these subjects with the same cheerfulness and freedom as any other, and was as punctual to his appointments as they were to arrive.

About a week before his death, on leaving his family to fulfill his appointment in this town (Royalton), he indicated that he might not see them again, and gave them some advice. As the pains did not attack him until the evening of Sunday, he was enabled to preach two discourses, which were his last. On Wednesday he came into this neighborhood, when I visited him and found him, by turns, in great distress, though far more cheerful than any other person present. He conversed much concerning religious principles, and argued, in his usual decided and conclusive manner, the salvation of all. On Thursday the pains of the body were more frequent and intense. In the midst of these, however, he would often thank God that he did not believe in endless misery, and said he had not feared death so much in twenty years as he now feared one of these severe turns of pain. That evening he took some medicine, which afforded him temporary relief on Friday, and on Saturday morning he came out into the door-yard and conversed some minutes with me, and expressed an anxiety to attend his

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appointment six miles distant; but after some dissuasion he said, "well, I think I had not better go, on the whole." Early this evening the pains came on, and he expired about one o'clock Sunday morning, leaving an affectionate wife and nine children, together with numerous friends and acquaintances, to lament the loss of his society and friendship.

During this period he was sensible of the approach of death, often expressing his faith in universal salvation, sometimes in parables, and at others in direct terms, and wished the world to know that he was not afraid to die a Universalist. His sudden exit prevented his wife and family from witnessing his death, as they were residing in Barre.

Br. Whitnall was a native of Canterbury, on the isle of Great Britain. At the early age of fourteen he enlisted in the British naval service for five years, under Lord Nelson. He was in several battles, particularly the sanguinary conflict of Trafalgar. Hence, he observed, just before his death, that he had closed the eyes of his countrymen, slain in battle, and that he could now close his own (lifting his hands to his head), with the same composure he had theirs. On leaving the service, he attached himself to the Baptist church, and shortly after began to preach under their encouragement, to such acceptance that they subsequently ordained him to the work of the ministry. He continued to preach to this denomination for several years after his arrival in America till he united with the Universalists; and what is very remarkable, the Baptists have never expelled him from their order. Such is a brief history of the life of this benevolent and good man. He is gone—honor be to his memory and peace to his ashes. On Monday, the 27th, the writer tendered the consolations of the Gospel to mourning friends and weeping congregation, as expressed in Luke ii:29-32, and on Wednesday following, Br. [John] Flagler delivered a discourse to the mourners in the Universalist society in Barre (the place of Br. Whitnall's residence for the last four years), from 2 Tim. iv:7, 8 to a large and attentive audience.

Charles Hammond

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