

[Curtis, Ira]

## DEATH OF BR. IRA CURTIS

Died, in Auburn, on the 24th ult., IRA CURTIS, Esq., aged 53 years.

Alas! that I am compelled to make this announcement! For some years Br. Curtis had been in a declining state of health; but we had cherished the hope that he might be spared us for a longer time. Divine Providence, however, had otherwise decreed... In the death of Br. Curtis our denomination and our cause have been deprived of one of their most devoted, faithful and useful friends in Central New York, and indeed in the State. All who were acquainted with him, are aware that for several years past, he has devoted much, if not most, of his time in efforts to build up the doctrine of the world's salvation... Did he go on a journey, or even pass through the streets, on his ordinary business, he was never without tracts or papers, or some publication, to put into the hands of those who were strangers to our doctrines... How much good one man can accomplish, when fired with the zeal and devotedness of our departed brother...

...After having been for many years, one of the main, yea, the very chiefest supporters of our cause in Auburn—its prosperity at some periods seeming to depend almost entirely on his individual exertions—he was spared to see it placed on a permanent foundation—to behold a new and spacious church, erected, paid for, and filled with a large and stated congregation—to see new arrangements adopted in regard to pecuniary matters, which relieved him from all labor and care in that respect—and to have all matters connected with our Society and its prospects, in such a shape, as came up to his view of the elements of enduring success—he folded his arms and laid himself down contented in the sleep of death!

His funeral was attended in the new Universalist Church in Auburn, on the Wednesday afternoon succeeding his death. An immense audience filled the large temple in every part. It was composed of the most respectable class in this city, of all parties and denominations, both clergymen and laymen. The Mayor of the city, Judges of Courts, Lawyers, Physicians, Ex-Governor Seward, and a large number of the most prominent members of the community, testified their respect for the memory of the deceased, by their presence... Although open, frank, and out-spoken, in all his opinions and feelings, there was that manly sincerity, that noble independence, that honesty, pertaining to all his ways, that could but win the respect of every man...

...That he was an Honest Man—scrupulously, strictly, rigidly, *honest*—the history of his whole life asserts, and none will even wish to deny... That his virtues far out-balanced his imperfections, this whole community will readily acknowledge!...

...He was brought up in the earlier part of his life, in the belief, and under the influence, of the prevalent doctrines of the day. [He] Possessing a reading and investigating turn of mind, religion and the Bible received much of his attention. Believing the religious doctrines in which he had been educated to be taught in the Bible, he soon began to discover discrepancies and contradictions...which he

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could neither reconcile with the Bible, as a whole, nor with reason, nature or the innate convictions of his own soul... In this state of unbelief, he continued for some time. But about fifteen years since, he experienced a remarkable change in his opinions. Having had his attention turned to the doctrine of God's impartial and universal grace, he commenced reading the Bible with that doctrine in view, and lo! he found in it *another book!*... In other words, he was converted to Christianity under the light and power of the doctrine of *Universal Salvation!* His friends were all aware of the change that came over him! They saw it, the instant it took place... From that day to this, he has been an unshakeable believer in Christianity... His faith was unwavering to the last moment...

Since the funeral of Br. Curtis, his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Curtis, has received the following touching letter of condolence, from Gov. Seward. Although of a private nature, and never designed by the writer for the public eye, yet I have prevailed upon Mrs. C. to allow its publication in connection with this obituary... I trust the author will pardon me for taking this liberty without consulting his feelings.

AUBURN, April 26, 1848

My dear Madam:—I can hardly express to you how much I was shocked upon opening the morning paper, by reading the notice of the death of your respected husband. I felt self-reproached that I had not even known he was ill. Harassed as I am with a thousand cares, I would not that such a man had died amongst us, and I not by his side in his illness, to tender him the assurance of my profound respect and sincere sympathy. But these regrets are unavailing. Permit me to disturb your grief, inconsolable as it must be, long enough to say, that I have lived a quarter of a century in this community, and I never knew among its members, one more just, truthful, trustful, or benevolent. Always under obligations to him, I would have confessed them to him on his death-bed. Since this melancholy pleasure was denied to me, I beg you to accept the tardy acknowledgment due to his memory, from one who knew his worth, and was proud of his friendship.

I am, dear Madam,

Very Respectfully,

Your Humble Servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD

Mrs. Elizabeth Curtis

*Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate*, Utica NY, Fri. 5 May 1848  
(considerably abridged)

Transcribed on 21 May 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY