

[Howard, Joseph]

ANOTHER OF THE FATHERS GONE

Departed this life in Columbus, Chenango co., N.Y. on the 7th inst., Mr. JOSEPH HOWARD, in the 84th year of his age. His funeral services were performed at the late residence on the 9th, by the writer, assisted by Rev. C. W. Bailey, and a discourse by special request of the deceased was delivered on the occasion. A numerous concourse of friends and neighbors were in attendance, evincing their respect for the deceased, and their sympathy for the bereaved family, for the visitations of the removing Angel have been severely felt in this nearly depopulated dwelling.—No less than three have been removed in less than one year; leaving a lonely widower with two small daughters, one in her 6th and the other in her 2d year, as its only resident occupants! The first was the mother of the dear children, the next their grandmother [Nancy, on 7 Oct 1850], and the last their grandfather. The deceased leaves five children, one daughter and four sons, one in the far West; the others were all present on the occasion, together with numerous grandchildren and other relatives... The deceased being extensively known in the denomination...—being one of the fathers and pillars of the Universalist Society in the town of his long residence, his name, his character, his virtue, his life and his death belong to the denomination, and should be holden up to public view as a sample of the moral and practical influence of the doctrine he embraced...

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mr. Joseph Howard was one of the pioneers of the county of Chenango; having, while in his minority, removed with his father from the State of Rhode Island in 1794, and settled in a region which, at that time, was a howling wilderness—some seven or eight families about the same time settling within the compass of a township. At the age of twenty-three, having purchased a separate tract of land, and having taken to himself a life companion, he settled down on his own land, and commenced a farm, on which he resided for sixty-four years, and until he closed his earthly pilgrimage. It is worthy of remark that three young men, Nathaniel Spurr, Thomas Spurr and Joseph Howard, settled about the same time, and I believe the same year, on the same road, and within the extreme distance of half a mile, and commenced improvements, made valuable and productive farms, and by their own labor, industry and economy accumulated wealth above the mediocrity of farmers, and finished their earthly course at an advanced age, on the very soil their own hands cleared. And it is equally remarkable that during their whole lives the most perfect harmony characterized their intercourse. They agreed in politics, all were firm believers in the christian doctrine of God's universal, efficient grace, and not a word of discord was ever known to disturb their harmony...

The writer of this first visited their neighborhood in 1805, and from that time maintained an intimate acquaintance with them until he removed from this section in 1830; and has ever since had more or less correspondence with them... They all lived in experimental and practical enjoyment of Universalism, and departed this life under the well-grounded hope of a glorious immortality.

Mr. Howard, like Timothy of old, was from a child acquainted with the scriptures... If not taught by his grandmother and mother, he was carefully

[Howard, Joseph]

instructed by his venerable father, who was an early hearer of, and convert to, the faith of Father [John] Murray when he first visited Rhode Island. His father, Thomas Howard, and himself, were among the very few believers whom I found when I visited Central New-York, and they, in part, composed the Council which organized the first Association in the State of New-York, and there, in 1806, listened to the cheering message of salvation delivered in the forest not two miles from the residence of Br. Howard, by Father [Hosea] Ballou... He was not a man of extensive public notoriety, but was widely known to the denomination of christians to which he attached himself in early life; and wherever known was highly esteemed for his integrity, sobriety and moral worth—the tongue of slander dared not assail him. His life—his whole life—was a practical illustration of the doctrine he professed... As years advanced and the outer man failed, the inner man was renewed day by day—his faith strengthened and his hope brightened...

After his confinement—for his physical weakness confined him to his room for several days—a Baptist clergyman, hearing of the happy state of his mind, made him a visit with other friends, hoping, no doubt, to find he had renounced his long cherished religious opinions. But they found him intellectually and spiritually strong, and able to give them assurance that so far from doubting the truth of the doctrine, his faith in God's universal grace...brightened and strengthened as he approached the close of his mortal race. There was not the shadow of a doubt on his mind... His nurses and watchers would hesitate about leaving him alone, but he would say, "Go and eat your victuals, I am happy enough here."

A mysterious Providence threw it in my way to visit him one week before his translation, to be a witness of his peace of soul and joy in his future prospects, and to receive from him a request to officiate at his funeral...

N. [NATHANIEL] STACY [of Columbus, PA]

Hamilton, N.Y., Aug. 26, 1858

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 4 Sep 1858
[slightly abridged]

Transcribed on 10 Sep 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY