

THE GRANDEST RECREATION

Quillen Hamilton Shinn was Universalism's greatest missionary. For decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries he was constantly traveling and preaching and organizing churches throughout the North and the West and the South.

Once, on a trip to the White Mountains, he wrote, "I am not on a pleasure trip wholly; the grandest recreation I get is working to spread our faith. Every liberal thinker in all this region is my parishioner. I own the mountains. Upon entering a new place the first impulse is to find if any Universalists are there. Missionary work! I can no more keep it out of a pleasure excursion than I can keep Universalism out of my sermons.

"Since I entered the ministry, twelve years ago, I have never spent an idle Sunday. If on a vacation, wherever I am, I hold a meeting in a hall or Union Church or schoolhouse or grove. Or, if there is a vacant Universalist Church, one that is now closed, its rusty door hinges turn in response to my command, and its windows are raised to let in once more the pure air and light. 'But we have no funds,' the parties usually write. I answer, 'I don't want any funds. All I ask is open your church.' And it is opened."

On another occasion, Shinn wrote, "I see not why one ever thinks of being a Universalist minister unless he is willing to go wherever called or enter every field where souls are hungry for his message. I may not have enough of this spirit, but this I know, I hardly ever pass a schoolhouse without thinking there is somebody in this neighborhood who never heard our doctrine; how I would love to preach in that schoolhouse and make at least one soul happier. This is what I conceive to be the missionary spirit."

"The time has arrived to go forth in church extension and missionary activity. If we have been recreant in the past, let it not be thus in the future. Other denominations, not so able as ours, have missionaries, agents for their literature and superintendents to advise and cheer, organizing the people, planting and fostering churches. We must do the same."

Is not Shinn's spirit, his urge to give effective voice to his faith, an example that may profit us today?

Ref: William H. McGlaflin, D.D., *Faith with Power: A Life Story of Quillen Hamilton Shinn, D.D.* (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1912), pp. 214-215, 243-246.

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