

Jemima Wilkinson first settled about the year 1790 at Milo, in this county, near the Seneca Lake, and subsequently removed to this place. Their settlement at Milo was at that time the largest in the whole Genesee country, numbering about forty families. A highly intelligent gentleman, who visited them many years since, in the season of their greatest prosperity, describes them as being distinguished for their frugality, honesty, and industry, living retired from the world, and devoting much of their time to religious exercises. The "Universal Friend" he represented as having been beautiful and dignified in her person, but illiterate in her conversation, and so ignorant of worldly concerns as scarcely to be enabled to understand a common newspaper. Her memory, however, was retentive, and her knowledge of the Bible truly wonderful. Many of the extravagances of which she is said to have been guilty, may be attributed to the high-wrought enthusiasm so often seen among religionists of her stamp at the present day.

"Jemima Wilkinson, or the 'Universal Friend,' was born in Cumberland, Rhode Island, about the year 1753. She was educated among the Friends. Recovering from an apparent suspension of life which she experienced when about twenty-three years of age, during a fit of sickness, she gave out that she had been raised from the dead, and claimed to be invested with divine attributes and authority to instruct mankind in religion. It is also said, she pretended to foretell future events, to discern the secrets of the heart, and to have the power of healing diseases; and if any person who made application to her was not healed, she attributed it to a want of *faith*. She asserted that those who refused to believe these exalted things concerning her, will be in the state of the unbelieving Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves; and she told her hearers that that was the eleventh hour, and the last call of mercy that ever should be granted to them; for she heard an inquiry in Heaven saying, 'Who will go and preach to a dying world?' and she said she answered, 'Here am I—send me'; and that she left the realms of light and glory and the company of the heavenly hosts, who are continually praising and worshipping God, in order to descend upon earth, and pass through many sufferings and trials for the happiness of mankind. She professed to be able to work miracles, and offered to demonstrate it by walking on the water in imitation of our Saviour; accordingly a frame was constructed for the purpose on the banks of the Seneca Lake, at Rapelyca's ferry, 10 miles south of Dresden. At the appointed time, having approached within a few hundred yards of the lake shore, she alighted from an elegant carriage, and the road being strewn by her followers with white handkerchiefs. She walked to the platform, and having announced her intention of walking across the lake on the water, she stepped ankle deep into the clear element, when suddenly pausing she addressed the multitude, inquiring whether or not they had *faith* that she could pass over, for if otherwise she could not; and on receiving an affirmative answer returned to her carriage, declaring as they believed in her power it was unnecessary to display it. She died in 1819."

The following description of Jemima's personal appearance is from the Freeman's Journal, published at Philadelphia, in 1787:—

"There are now in this city a number of the disciples of a certain JEMIMA WILKINSON, a native Rhode Island, a person who professes that 'she is Christ come again in the flesh a second time without sin unto salvation;' though it should be noticed that her followers do not admit she is a woman, as a female Messiah appears an incongruity, and they therefore of consequence deny her name, and appear to resent it as an affront when she is called Jemima Wilkinson, and declare in the most solemn manner they know no such person. Some of the society when asked to explain themselves, do it in the following manner, 'that the names of persons most properly belong to the soul; but when a person dies and the soul leaves the body, the body can no more be called by its former name. Now some years ago, there was a person called Jemima Wilkinson, but she died, and her soul went to heaven; after which the Divine Spirit re-animated that same body, and it arose from the dead; now this Divine inhabitant is Christ Jesus our Lord, the friend of all mankind, and gives the name to the body to which he is united, and therefore body and spirit

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