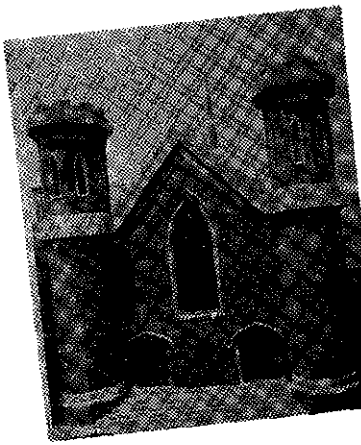
# Free and Untrammelled



# FREE AND UNTRAMMELED

The Story of

The Church of the Reconciliation

Utica, New York

This is the story of a group of people who chose the liberal faith many years ago, and of how these people and their successors fared in this place ever since. Throughout the years, the members of this church have been grocers, clerks, salesmen, engineers, owners, workers, housewives, lawyers, teachers, accountants and many other things with their lives touched deeply, surely and invisibly by freedom of belief.

Emphasis is necessarily on early Universalism, since this church was one century old before it became Unitarian too. Even so, federation in 1926 places it among the first churches to anticipate a national consolidation in 1960.

Ever reappearing, the challenge of liberal religion comes to each one in his own time.

Eleanor D. Hassett

December, 1961

## FOREWORD

This brief history is the result of many happy hours spent poring over old books, records, letters and documents. Since it was started just for my own interest, only when I started to write did the gaps in background material reveal themselves, and only then did the words stubbornly refuse to act as I wished.

The criterion for including anything was my own interest, with the appendix serving as a safety valve. This had to be severly edited, lest it contain three times as many pages! No one realizes more than myself how incomplete these pages are and how many injustices have been done. My wish for the next historian is that everyone who has memories of this church will record them. My thanks go to all who shared their recollections, enccuragement, criticisms and to those who read early drafts. Especially, I wish to thank Mrs. Robert Crosby and Mrs. Jay Carncross for their expert needling.

Since I have a personal aversion to pages sprinkled with "ibid.","viz." ,"op. cit." and many many small numbers, I have given references for the quoted material only. I hope historians will forgive me, and ordinary readers be grateful.

The purpose of a local history should be both to inform and to entertain. I hope it fulfills this wish.

# CHAPTER I

Too many people of religiously liberal thought regard anything in the past as dead weight. For those whose faces are turned only toward the future, it is enough that liberal churches exist without any consideration of how or why such organizations came into being. A few people in liberal churches take the attitude that anything in the past is sacrosanct -- and what they know of it is glorified beyond recognition. Probably the truest picture of a religious liberal is one who is so busy in the present, there has been no time to investigate the past. All three types of people can "learn by looking backward, live by looking forward."

Above all, it must be remembered that any church and its members are a part of overlapping spheres -- of the city and regional life, a small part of the larger denomination, and a tiny part of the national and international life. Since many of the people who will be reading these words may know little of the local history, some of this will be included. Like many of the Biblical chapters, we must begin with a few "begats". It is unfair and grossly incomplete to pretend that the Universalist Society in Utica sprang into being full fashioned in 1825; it was the result of many years' development. Two streams must be traced up to that date -- one of the place and the other of the philosophy.

Among the settlers in the New England area, Calvinism of the Massachusetts Bay variety was the state religion; this was the belief that men, women and even babies were condemned to everlasting hellfire. Surcease for a limited number of souls could be obtained only by the whim of an implacable God. Jonathan Edwards, of Northampton, Mass., exemplified this type of religious fanaticism with such sermons as "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Against such rigid and terrifying theology a few small voices were heard.

In Pennsylvania, Dr.George de Benneville, pioneer physician, preached the universal salvation of all souls. In Massachusetts, Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew of Boston, opposed Edwards' fanaticisms. One of the most interesting men of this period was the Reverend John Murray, who preached along the Atlantic seaboard, travelling hundreds of miles; he also served as a chaplain in the Revolutionary Army of General Greene. Mr.Murray's ideas of universal rather than partial salvation were quite well obscured -- he preached for several years in this country before some of his listeners discovered that he was heretical! After the Revolution, he settled in Gloucester, Mass., to lead a congregation of liberal thinkers there -- the nucleus of the first Universalist church in America. From the pulpit of the Gloucester church, John Murray led and won the fight for legal recognition for the Universalists; this meant freedom from taxation for the support of the state-recognized churches.

Organized Universalism was a strictly American movement, starting as a rebellion against the spiritual excesses of the revival movements which were sweeping the country. In its early form, it was emotional to extremes. The Universalist

Church of America started at Oxford, Massachusetts, in 1785. Those who joined the new movement were poor and uneducated -- the people sometimes described as the "Salt of the earth". Five years later, a national meeting in Philadelphia attracted representatives from churches in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. An attempt to draft a profession of faith failed; one correspondent complained that "the brethren in this place are averse to system, and generally walk as it seemeth right to every man".

The earliest statement of belief to be generally adopted was framed in 1803 at Winchester, New Hampshire. One of the ministers at that meeting describes the circumstances well.[1]

> "...It became absolutely necessary, to save Universalists in New England, and particularly in New Hampshire, from clerical oppression. In those days, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists were denominated the Standing Order; and they had a legal right to tax every individual in the parish, for the support of the clergy; and the only remedy the individual had to avoid paying such a tax to them, was to join some other sect, and bring a certificate from them to the Standing Order, that he had joined that society, and actually paid taxes to them. This had been done in one or more cases; but nevertheless, the Standing Order proceeded to collect the tax. Resistance was made and the case was finally carried up to the Supreme Court, which decided that there was no such order known as the Universalists, for they had no creed or profession of faith to distinguish them from the Standing Order; and they were consequently, compelled to pay taxes to them. Our brethren were afraid of creeds. They had read, seen and experienced, as they supposed, the distracting, illiberal, and persecuting effects of human creeds; and they wished to avoid the vortex of that whirlpool into which they had seen so many drawn to inevitable destruction...But what should be done?... A committee presented one so unobjectionable, that it was difficult to find where the most fastidious could object to it, or how it could lead to division.. ...Probably the longest and warmest debate ensued that had ever been known in that deliberative body. ...The confession was adopted without alteration, the opposition yielding."

The Universalist Church ever since that time also adopted the famous liberty clause: "neither this nor any other form of words shall be imposed as a creedal test."

One of the ministers who favored the adoption of the Winchester Confession was the great Hosea Ballou, son of an uneducated Baptist preacher in a tiny Vermont settlement. Ballou himself first attended school at the age of eighteen. His abundant endowments of wit and common sense however, made him one of the most effective preachers of his day; he was the first to elaborate a sound intellectual basis for liberalism with the publication of the "Treatise on the Atonement" in 1805. His theology was frankly unitarian; it has influenced liberal

religion to the present day and it anticipated conclusions of the Unitarian William Ellery Channing and the Congregationalist Horace Bushnell.

At the time of the European settlement on the Atlantic coast, the Mohawk Valley was the home of the Iroquois nation, organized in the 16th century by Dakawida and Hiawatha. In the New England area, there were only weak Algonquin tribes; the Iroquois in contrast ruled from Hudson Bay to the Carolinas at the height of their power. With this tremendous area, easy communication became a necessity. Two important trails crossed the Mohawk River in the vicinity of the overhead-bridge on Genesee Street. Genesee Street itself follows the old Indian east-west trail across New York State. The Adirondacks to the north were used as a hunting preserve; no tribes lived in this immediate area, since it was recognized that the climate was bad for lung diseases.

The Iroquois nation had begun disintegrating when the first white settlers came into central New York. To the east of what is now Utica, German Palatine immigrants farmed the vicinity of Frankfort and German Flats (Herkimer.) The Mohawk River formed a natural route to the west; at Little Falls where the only important natural obstruction occurred, locks were built around the falls at an early date. The first white settlers in the immediate area lived on the north side of the river on land that had been deeded to Governor William Cosby. (The Indians called this place Yah-nun-da-sis, meaning "around the hill".) These people were driven out by raiding parties of Mohawk Indians during the Revolution. To the west was a small American garrison at Fort Stanwyx (Rome). When the English began a three-pronged attack to divide New York state, the force that was to proceed east from Oswego under St.Leger was delayed many weeks at Fort Starwyx; and defeated at Oriskany Bluffs by Nicholas Herkimer and his hastily recruited army of farm boys. The slaughter on both sides was so terrible that no attempt was made to bury the bodies, and the area was avoided for many years. Also the terrible carnage obscured the fact that this was indeed a victory -- for many years it was looked upon as a defeat; finally military strategists pointed out that had St.Leger's forces been able to join forces with General Burgoyne, the outcome at Saratoga and of the entire Revolution might have been different. One of the sidelights of this action was that the American flag was first flown in battle at Fort Stanwyx.

The American Revolution not only set brother against brother among the white population; it split the Iroquois confederation. Most of the tribes remained loyal to the British, and the infamous Cherry Valley massacres were by British-led Indian bands. When the Loyalists lost the war, they made their escape to Canada through the Adirondack mountains, following the middle branch of the Moose River, better known to us as the Fulton chain of lakes.

At the end of the war, the first settler was Hugh White, who made his home a few miles west of the Mohawk River crossing. For many years, all of New York State west of a line drawn from

Canada to Pennsylvania through the ford was known as Whitestown. By 1800 there were many settlers, and Congregational churches had been founded at Sauquoit, Clinton and New Hartford by Jonathan Edwards, son of the revivalist. Calvinism was predominant in the area, since practically all of the immigrants came from New England. In Utica itself, the early residents built cabins on the south side of the river (many years later, the ford was filled in and covered with the tracks of the New York Central Railroad.) Other immigrants came from Wales; they built their own churches. The early Welsh Baptist church evolved into our neighbor, Tabernacle Baptist. The Welsh Congregational Church has continued as Bethesda Congregational; services are still conducted in Welsh as well as English.

The Holland Land Company, formed for the exploitation of the area to the north, built the largest hotel west of New York City in 1797. "York House" was the center of many fashionable balls, which began at the comfortable hour of 7 p.m. until some ultra fashionables created a sensation by coming as late as 7:30! The building, at the corner of Whitesboro and Hotel Streets, still stands today, housing a wholesale grocery business.

In the area developed by the Holland Land Company, a group of hardy Dutch liberals established the Reformed Christian Church in the village of Barneveld in 1803. This was the first Unitarian church west of the Hudson River, and the only Unitarian church in North America with roots directly in continental Socialism. Other Unitarian groups in this county were short lived.

## CHAPTER II

In 1805, residents in the vicinity of Bagg's Tavern (Moses Bagg, keeper) close to the Mohawk River crossing, petitioned the Legislature in Albany for a village charter. (Appendix)

With the granting of the village petition, residents gathered at the tavern; the name Utica was drawn from a hat. The older towns of New Hartford and Whitesboro possessed more promise and superior social advantages; legal business for the county was transacted at Rome and Whitesboro. However, many emigrants to the wildly expanding west came to the new village by boat, using the locks of the Western Navigation Company at Little Falls; here, the boats were sold and wagons purchased for the westward journey to Ohio or Michigan. With the building of the turnpike to the Seneca country, the formation of banks, and the erection of some water-powered mills, Utica grew rapidly as a transportation center.

The area was served not only by settled churches, but by circuit riders of many denominations. Theologian Hosea Ballou came to the area at least once on a preaching circuit. His service in 1807 or 1808 is described in the biography of Stephen Smith, who rode in from the town of Floyd to hear the service:[2]

> "It was during one of these annual visitations that the writer of these pages heard, for the first time, the message of universal grace. By what means the intelligence that Mr.Hosea Ballou would preach on the following Sunday in a place fifteen miles distant, could have been conveyed to a very young man, who did not then know a single Universalist in the world, is not remembered. He went however, and heard a discourse, in the morning, from Zech. 6:13; and, for the first time in his life, felt that he had listened to a sermon that involved neither an absurdity nor a contradiction. The congregation was not large, and occupied a school-house in the present city of Utica,then a meagre and muddy village. A larger congregation was anticipated in the afternoon, and arrangements were made for the service in the open air, under some trees, on the bank of the Mohawk River. There, in due time, a large auditory assembled, and listened to one of Mr. Ballou's best discourses, from Deut. 33; part of the 16th with the 17th verse. It was a glorious day, early in June. The silence of Sunday was around us; the bright blue heavens above us, partly veiled by the branches of a few scattering oaks; the clear, quiet river at our side; the ruddy and healthy preacher, in all vigor of manhood, before us, and pleading the cause of God and humanity with a group of most attentive hearers. Such a scene is not to be forgotten; and altogether, it was one, in every respect, calculated to make the most favorable, as well as the most lasting impressions.."

Mr.Smith,thus introduced to Universalism,continued his inquiries and studies. He became one of the more influential

ministers of New York State, serving many pulpits until his death in 1850.

Universalism in this area owes much more to Nathaniel Stacy than to any other person. Stacy was the son of a Gloucester fisherman who had been among John Murray's hearers in that village. Turning farmer, the father had moved inland, away from Universalist contacts, so that his children were baptized and trained in the Congregational faith. However, as itinerant preachers began to penetrate the farming country, both elder Stacys reaffirmed their Universalist faith. Their third son Nathaniel was a diminutive child who was apprenticed to a blacksmith at fourteen rather than being allowed to obtain such education as he could. However, his health failed. During his illness, his thoughts of death and future life reflected his orthodox upbringing:[3]

> "...I thought much of death, and underwent many fearful apprehensions in regard to futurity. I knew that I was a sinner--I had been taught so, and I felt the conviction of its truth....But how to obtain deliverance, I knew not. I wished to be religious; but religion was gloomy and forbidding--it was not desirable to live by; we only needed it when we came to die. It would spoil our happiness in life; but without it we could not be happy after death....I was born totally depraved, and must have a radical change of nature before I could be permitted to trust my own judgment in religion or spiritual things...."

Fortunately, Brother Stacy became acquainted with Hosea Ballou, who persuaded him first of the hope and joy to be found in a universalist interpretation of the Bible, and secondly, to become a preacher of the doctrine of everlasting grace. Stacy taught school when necessary to obtain funds to carry on his preaching -- this was a usual occurrence among ministers of all denominations. Journeying into New York State, he helped organize the First Universalist Society of Whitestown, actually in the village of New Hartford. (Appendix) Ten years later a small church was built, probably at the intersection of French Road and Genesee Street, now within the city limits of Utica. The remains of the old burying ground, half of which was used by the Society, are near the corner. Scheduled preaching in the New Hartford church reached interested people in many of the surrounding communities, including Utica. One of the ministers was Stephen Smith, another was Paul Dean, successor to John Murray in Boston, and still another was Abner Kneeland, who carried his liberal views to agnosticism and was jailed for refusing to take an oath of loyalty. The Society was eventually weakened by spawning societies at Utica, Litchfield, Clinton and Marshall; the doors were closed in 1845 and the building sold to the Presbyterians. About forty years later, it had fallen into such decay, it was torn down. Other organized Universalist societies in Oneida County included one at Rome, which existed until 1912, and one at Trenton Falls, but there were many preaching stations supplied with weekday discourses and occasional Sunday services. Other noteworthy arrangements were made for preaching -- for example, in the town of Russia, Herkimer County, Universalists had the use

of the community meeting house on the fifth Sunday of any month in which occurred five Sabbaths.

In spite of his small stature and poor health in adolescence, Brother Stacy lived a long and fruitful life. His wife and eight children lived at Hamilton, New York, while he travelled throughout the state. However, after twenty-five years, during an upsurge of anti-Masonic fervor, Brother Stacy (a Mason like most of the Universalist preachers) was estranged from the congregation, and moved to Columbus, Pennsylvania. He has left a candid and delightful autobiography from which much of the early Universalist effort in this area is known.

The "meagre and muddy village" of Utica must have looked much like a strip city, at its beginning. All of the houses and shops were along Genesee, Broad or Whitesboro Streets. Even several years later the mud at Charlotte and Elizabeth Streets was so deep that cows were often mired for several days! However, recognition of the importance of Utica as a transportation center came when the first section of the Erie Canal was built between Rome and Utica in 1817. Canny DeWitt Clinton chose this since the excavation would not be difficult and by opening the land portage between the Mohawk River and Fish Creek he hoped to convince many of his opponents of the ultimate worth of the venture. Eight years later, the "Grand Canal" was open from Lake Erie to Albany. On October 20,1825, Governor Clinton passed through Utica by boat, just one short block from the Busy Corner. The canal was not just a simple matter of following the rivers, since natural waterways were considered undependable. A completely new "ditch" was dug. A hundred years later, when the canal had been moved to the river, and the river moved for the railroad, the old Erie was paved over to become Oriskany Boulevard. The canal served the fortunes of the area, and contributed much to the preeminence of New York State in economic affairs that persists to this day. Another canal, the Chenango, was dug to connect with the coalfields of Pennsylvania. This was finished in 1836, and a moderate amount of coal, and iron from the foundry at Franklin Springs near Clinton was carried. Within the city of Utica the route of this canal is followed by the North-South Arterial Highway.

Also, in 1825, the village welcomed General LaFayette on his triumphant tour of the country he had helped in its infancy. Homes were decorated in his honor, arches were raised, and a socially important ball was held. Since he entered the village from the west, the name of his route was changed from Rome Street to LaFayette Street. An early social arbiter, Blandina Dudley Miller (daughter of Rutger Bleecker Miller) recalls him as being "tall, distinguished, gentlemanly and handsome."

Still in 1825, the famous Calvinist exhorter Charles Grandison Finney began the Western Revivals here. For the first time, new techniques in revivals were used, such as having bands of converts as helpers, and praying for the "unsaved" by name. A sample of Calvinist preaching was recorded in nearby Newport:[4]

> "...You will go to hell and I am glad of it! I thank God he has made a hell for you! If you were to go to Heaven, you would only quarrel with the saints, and you are not fit to be on

> earth -- you ought to go to hell now! O you wretches, you serpents, you vipers! nothing is too bad for you to do; you would not hesitate to murder your fellow creatures and wash your hands in their heart's blood."

Reverend Finney's effect was felt throughout the county. His probable converts are reported as 500 in Utica, and 3000 throughout the county. Also it is reported that differences of opinion respecting the character of Mr.Finney and his influence marred the harmony of the congregation.

About the same time that Mr.Finney came here, also came an "eccentric Irishman", a convert from Methodism, the Rev. John S.Thompson. According to Brother Stacy:[5]

> "He was a man of keen satirical wit. He was speaking of the doctrines of Trinitarianism and endless misery and trying to make them look as ridiculous as language would admit of, and becoming passionately disturbed with the disgusting subject, he broke out in his true Irish brogue: 'Why, there's yer Great God, the Father, he is willin' the salvation of all men; and there's your great God, the Son, he is inthercedin', and there's yer Great God, the Holy Ghost, he is dhrawin' -- but that little black man down there outpulls them all!'."

It is not known how long the egotistical and unpopular Rev. Thompson stayed here; but he helped to organize the First Universalist Society in 1825. Forty two people, including five women, signed the charter (appendix) which provided that all members were entitled to vote at every meeting and all matters were to be determined by majority vote. The Society moved to continue the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism but to leave to every member the observance and manner of his participation. The early society met in the court house, but soon enemies, real or supposed, forced its removal and a meeting house was started within a few years.

The unpopularity of Universalism in the religious field did not keep the early members from public service. At least three of the charter members served the village as alderman; one of these, Ezra S.Barnum, was first elected in 1817 as constable, collector and coroner. At one time, Mr.Barnum could issue process, serve it, try the convict, hang him, hold inquest, and sell the convict's effects for taxes. Although Mr.Barnum was ignorant of the law when he took office, only two of his cases were ever appealed. After his multiple service in city office, he was appointed U.S.Marshal and Commissioner of Deeds.

Another prominent Universalist was Andrew S.Pond, who engaged in iron manufacture with Ephraim Hart and "gained a handsome property". In all of the financial records of the early church, Mr.Pond's contributions are the most generous.(appendix)

Our knowledge of this First Society is extensive for we have not only the complete church records, but many volumes of the Utica Magazine and Gospel Advocate, published here for fifteen years. At its beginning in 1829 the Magazine was distributed broadcast throughout the village by the editor, Dolphus Skinner, our second minister. This was in answer to a vigorous attack on Universalism by the Rev.Dirk C.Lansing of the Second Presbyterian Church. Brother Skinner was an adroit and worthy antagonist. Many of the early articles are concerned with minutiae -- the Scriptural passages were tortured and twisted to make suitable proof for Universalism. One of the early actions to be reported was the heresy trial of Mrs.Charlotte Pond (wife of Andrew) who was accused by the Congregational Calvinistic Church of Hanover.

With the court house being denied for services, the new Society bought a lot from Nicholas Devereux on the street bearing his name, in the uptown section of the village. Attendance at evening affairs was made easier by the village's installation of street lights on Genesee Street -- there were fifty-five between Bagg Square and Court Street. A brick building was started on the lot and the Rev.Dolphus Skinner delivered the sermon at the laying of the cornerstone, saying in part.[6]

> "...The fact is, truth is progressive; and in dissenting from the popular doctrines of the day and embracing further light on the subject of religion, we act on the first and fundamental principle of Protestantism: viz: that the Bible is one guide, and that every man has the right to examine it freely and independently for himself....and model his faith and form his practice agreeable to what he believes is taught therein.
>
> ...We have come to the full conviction that the popular doctrines of the day embrace but a part of the truth that God has revealed in his Gospel, and with that part, much error. We do not profess infallibility; but we profess and mean to practice honesty."

The early Universalists were seldom educated men, even by standards of those days, but they were thoughtful; their passion for their beliefs was deep and true. In many ways the Society flourished. The Universalist Female Charitable Society was formed to help with the housekeeping. Heat was supplied with wood stoves, and light by whale oil lamps. At celebrations held in the basement of the building, such as at Christmas, it was thought noteworthy that even though the admission was all of fifty cents, correct change was given at all times, and no lotteries were allowed. That these early members felt persecuted, however, is shown in a letter written many years later by Gratia Skinner (Mrs.Dolphus)[7]

> "I am reminded of the few that remain that can sympathize with the pioneers at a period when Universalism was considered next akin to crime. We were glad to receive as friends all who did not openly abuse us. Those who stood across the way and made faces we considered as harmless."

## CHAPTER III

Seemingly every way but financially, the Universalist Society flourished. The village of Utica as growing and the nation itself was undergoing profound changes in the years between 1825 and 1835. In a triumph of frontier democracy, Andrew Jackson had been elected to the presidency of the country. The first public railroad, the Baltimore and Ohio, had been started -- an event that spelled the eventual doom of Utica as a transportation center. The American Unitarian Association had been started in Boston, over the protest of older clergymen who feared that such an association would circumscribe individual liberty. William Lloyd Garrison started publishing the Liberator to mark the beginning of the abolitionist movement.

In New York State, the Legislature provided that no minister or priest could be forced to disclose any confession made to him in a professional character. The first Roman Catholic Church west of the Hudson had been built by Nicholas Devereux in Utica; the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was started with the baptizing of the first converts in Seneca Lake; these followers of the Book of Mormon soon moved westward to escape persecution from their neighbors. William Miller of Albany began preaching the second coming of Christ, scheduled for 1843; this caused a powerful fanatical awakening followed by profound apathy when the event did not occur. His followers recouped to found the Adventist church. These were minor sects, along with Universalism and Unitarianism in this area.

Education here had not been neglected. Utica Academy was founded in 1814; and a common school was established in 1817. Hamilton College at Clinton was started to educate white and Indian youths; in nearby Fairfield, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western district of New York became the second largest and one of the best equipped and run medical colleges in the whole country. The course consisted of twelve weeks of lectures and did not include seeing a single sick person! The Utica Lyceum of Natural Sciences was founded, indicating a genuine interest in the study of nature. Clinton was the home of many schools, including Clinton Liberal Institute (male and female divisions) for the training of young Universalists.

In 1832, Utica was incorporated as a city; the population had reached 8,323. Ninety-two mails a week came into the city by stage or post; forty-one scheduled packet boats left the city each week, and nine stagecoach lines ran in all directions. In the same year the dread Asiatic cholera was an unseen traveller along the Canal. Early in June, religious societies petitioned the city council to unite in observing a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer in consequence of the pestilence. This may have been touched off by the discovery of a body lying dead in Elizabeth Street; to prevent panic, the body was secretly interred at night. Prayers and fasting had no control over the disease and many people left the city -- thus spreading the malady over a wider area. Some insisted that it was not cholera; but finally hospitals were set up east of the city and also in the academy. Business was suspended, schools and churches closed, and hearses were often the only vehicles moving in the streets. By September there had been two hundred cases, of which sixty-five resulted in death. The same story could be told of any of the canal cities. With the

coming of frost, the disease stopped and normal activities gradually resumed. The Universalist paper published on a regular schedule however.

Three years later the first state convention of the anti-slavery movement convened at Utica in the Second Presbyterian Church on Bleecker Street. In opposition, a public meeting was held in the courtroom for "citizens of Utica opposed to the proceedings of the Abolitionists". The opposition was not so much for the abolitionist philosophy as for the wildness such a meeting generally provoked. This was no exception. At the courthouse, a committee was appointed to ask the convention to adjourn; adjourn it did only after much tumult within the church. Meanwhile, an immense crowd gathered in the streets around the building. Several "roughs" broke through with the ladder of one of the hook and ladder companies which they laid against the church. Finally, with the adjournment and the providential falling of heavy rain, a destructive riot did not follow. A cannon was brought out and fired several times as a gesture of triumph, and Gerrit Smith, well known Utican in the anti-salvery movement, invited the displaced abolitionists to meet at his home.

The Universalists were of course concerned with the slavery issue, and with other topics of the day. In the pages of the Magazine and Advocate are found discussions of prison reform, western emigration, education, outlawing of dueling, and promotion of temperance. A very active member in the temperance movement, the Washingtonians, was Abner Grosh, Universalist minister and editor of the paper. Believing that song improved any reform movement, he composed several of which this is a sample:

"Fill with water pure your glasses
Washingtonian lads and lasses
When the health and toast go round
Pure be all your worth and pleasure
As with water, Heaven's treasure
With which your glass be crowned;
Cheerful singing, lads and lasses
Voices ringing as your glasses
Let the temp'rate toast go round
Eyes all bright and cheeks all glowing
Health and peace to all bestowing
May pure water e'er abound."

Although education was available in the city, for those who preferred and could afford tuition up to $5. a quarter, a select school in the basement of the Universalist church was started. Subjects taught included reading, writing, orthography, grammar, geography, arithmetic, history, rhetoric, natural philosophy, chemistry, geometry, surveying, algebra, etc. Also, Latin if desired. One teacher was in charge!

Adult education was supplied in the Berean Institute which also met in the church basement. One of the charter members was Edwin H.Chapin, who became one of America's foremost preachers, at times rivalling Lyman Beecher in New York in the size of his congregation.

Also from the pages of the Magazine and Advocate [9]

> "...It appears very desirable that Universalist societies should more generally establish Sunday Schools and Bible classes....The advantages are many and great. The minds of the youth will be furnished with a knowledge of the Scriptures which will serve as a bulwark to protect them from enemies of truth and virtue. The knowledge they obtain will increase their reverence for the Deity, strengthen their resolution to do whatever is right and finally add happiness to their lives and comfort in their hour of death. And may not the old as well as the young be benefitted? How much better to employ their time in acquiring useful knowledge than to employ it as many do -- sleeping on the benches, roving in the fields or lounging about the tavern! "

The organizational meeting of the New York State Universalist Sunday School Society was held in Utica in 1842; at that time the Utica school consisted of one superintendent, seven female and five male teachers, seventy-three pupils and a library of two hundred volumes. The whole Utica group worked so hard for the convention that they were treated to an excursion on the new Chenango Canal -- the first recorded church school picnic.

Examination of the church records reveals a very murky financial record however. The First Society was reorgnized at least three times, because of entangled finances and overlooked laws. The founders put their trust in promises that were broken and patrons that went bankrupt. An unknown author left a long and involved account of the financial dealings which reads like a list of "How Not to Start a Church" (appendix). In a final burst of rhetoric, he closes the accounting:[10]

> "...Most of the members of our society able to pay anything, have already paid all, or nearly all that they can pay, and hence will pay no more, unless they are certain thereby of redeeming and completely paying for the house. The utmost extent of ability and strength of nerves possessed will have to be put forward to save the house. --If successful, it places our society on independent ground and in as prosperous condition as any society in the place; if unsuccessful, we loose all that we have done, nay, worse than loose it, are turned out of door in debt, and trampled underfoot by the cruel and unpitying spoiler, taunted and abused for our misfortunes and insulted in our calamities while the carr of spiritual tyranny and bigoted intolerance will be driven furiously over our necks, who have dared for a season to stem the torrent of the corruptions and abuses and the trumpet of endless damnation will be the requiem they will exultingly sound over our grave."

In spite of this impassioned plea, the building was sold in 1845 -- at the time when most other denominations had come to the point of recognizing Universalism's right to exist. The final dissolution came when the Rev. Skinner, who had ceased to be minister in 1832, presented a note for five years salary ($500.annually) and for the money he had advanced on the mortgage. Many people expressed their regret that the Universalists had lost their house and no one exulted -- at least publicly.

The city of Utica was having troubles at the same time. Its pre-eminent place as a transportation center had been lost, although there was still much canal activity. Community leaders felt that some united action was desperately needed to bring back prosperity. A committee of three, including that prominent Universalist Andrew S.Pond, was commissioned to investigate various possibilities. The three men returned enthusiastically proclaiming the advantages of textile mills powered with steam.

The following year, Utica Steam Woolen Mills was incorporated with Andrew S.Pond as president; among the directors were Dolphus Skinner and Nicholas Devereux. Other mills soon came into being; workers were drawn from the Irish whose immigration into this country was a result of the potato famine overseas. The Irish people were usually members of St.Patrick's parish in West Utica. Even more prominent in the city was the influx of German refugees. These people organized their own Lutheran and Moravian churches; they worked in the textile mills or in the meat packing industry. For the Roman Catholics among them, St.Joseph's Church was built across the street from St.Patrick's. It was many years before any services in these churches were conducted in English.

With the sale of the church building -- the First Universalist Society ceased to exist -- but Universalism flourished A "prominent and worthy brother" reported to the Evangelical Magazine that several discourses by Brother T.J.Sawyer were well received by large and attentive audiences. (Rev.Sawyer was of the theological department of Clinton Liberal Institute, the forerunner of St.Lawrence Theological School). The complainant carries on:[11]

> "...If many individuals who attended the Universalist meetings in Utica and who were looked upon as prominent members of the society, had done their duty and sustained their own ministers half as well by their purses and their attendance as they did Episcopal and other churches, the cause would never have been dropped in Utica...Had these individuals who knew their duty and did it not, performed well their part, we would not at this moment be houseless--our harps would not now be hanging on the willows. It is enough to make one's blood boil to think how the cause of Universalism was bled in Utica by the craven hearted lovers of popularity. If it was not for this accursed love of popularity, Universalism would long since have been triumphant in our city."

This unnamed gentleman saw his hopes materialize for a new society. The Rev.Eben Francis provided regular preaching in Mechanic's Hall; within three years of the failure of the First

Society, the Central Universalist Society was incorporated by "several male persons of full age". Members who signed the book included four men and fifteen women from the original society. A new building named "The Church of the Reconciliation" was completed in 1853, near the corner of Columbia and Seneca Streets; it cost $12,500. and seated 420 people. A portion of the church wall still stands and now separates the two sections of the present Marine Midland Bank. "Reconciliation" officially applied only to the church building until 1919 -- not to the society; however, the name was soon used for both. No explanation has been found for choosing this name, but according to statements made by many Universalists, it was meant to signify the final harmony of all souls with God, the reconciliation of religion and reason, or agreement, oneness, satisfaction, peace.

Mrs.Caroline Sawyer, wife of the Rev. T.J.Sawyer of Clinton and a moderately famous authoress in her own right, wrote a special hymn for the laying of the cornerstone of the new building which took place on July 15,1951. The hymn concluded:[12]

"Years still shall pass: Hoar age shall file
With noiseless tooth the massive stone
Till low shall lay this massive pile
In shapeless ruin o'erthrown:
While from a higher loftier dome
Our spirits o'er the wreck shall gaze
And in the soul's eternal home
Its being's Source forever praise!"

If nothing else, this shows the extent of the theological change in the past hundred years. The hymn was used again at the laying of the cornerstone of the present building in 1907.

From the founding of the Central Universalist Society, the task of a historian becomes much more difficult. The Evangelical Magazine had moved from Utica to New York City, so no local news was in its pages. Available records consist of minutes of trustee meetings, which are more noted for brevity than for clarity or interest, occasional letters, programs or newspaper clippings. Added to this, Universalism was no longer new and its advocates had ceased to feel zealous -- as many movements do when the second generation takes over. It was probably difficult to distinguish this church from other churches in the city in liturgy, hymnody and rituals, even though the thread of liberalism continued. In 1855, the Church of the Reconciliation was one of 133 New York State Universalist churches with 4570 members (the Unitarians had 16 churches and 1025 members).

Probably almost as soon as the church building was finished an unnoticed event occurred which was later to make the building famous throughout the nation -- a seed of a mountain ash tree lodged in a scant pocketful of dirt in the north tower and took hold. The tree eventually grew nearly full size, and was regarded as a choice landmark. Careful arrangements were made to transfer the tree to Forest Hill cemetery when the building was sold many years later. "The church with the tree in the tower" was much photographed.

The Central Universalist Society was a financial success from the start; pew rentals in the church were collected from 32 people. The whole church debt was paid off by 1866 (appendix); then more money was borrowed for the construction of a Sunday School wing. When the new addition was completed, fifty-one children were baptized. There are no records of baptisms for several years before this, so it probably represents an accumulation rather than a phenomenal birth rate.

## CHAPTER IV

Again, the church records do not reflect the excitement that must have prevailed in the city during the years before the War Between the States. Would that someone had seen fit to preserve a few sermons along with the stacks of receipts and minutes!

After Utica became a city, the Whigs and the Democrats controlled the elections usually; prominent citizens took less and less part in the official proceedings. As the election of 1860 approached one wonders how any work was done in the city. Tents for the new Republican party and for the Democrats were erected near Oneida Square; it was claimed that 10,000 people could be sheltered to hear campaign oratory. Uniformed marching clubs represented the parties -- the Wide Awakes for the Republicans and the Little Giants for the Democrats. In February, 1861, President-elect Lincoln passed through Utica on his way to the White House; standing on the rear platform of a train, he made a few remarks to the assembled crowd, and then was addressed by a local orator. The police department of twelve men and their chief are reported to have done an excellent job of controlling the crowd -- as well they might. They were paid $35. monthly for their services.

An unfinished letter found between the pages of an old book gives a glimpse of the excitement. This appears to have been written by the daughter of the Rev.T.D.Cook and evidently her younger brother had died shortly before. The letter is dated Feb.3,1861,and is in beautiful Spencerian script.[13]

"My dear Uncle Darwin

I write you this afternoon for a double purpose -- firstly to cheer you up a little and secondly to cheer myself; for you must know it is pleasant to write to one as intimate with Johnnie as you always were.

Your own health isn't very good is it? Well, I'm sorry for that, for I think some of going on to Washington (or some other place if that city is destroyed) as a Government Clerk; and perhaps my particular friend Horce Greeley, Esq. may find a berth for you in which case you'd have to fatten up a little for the labor is hard though the pay is good--I'm in hopes of getting a $500 place. Now what will you do to put the flessch onto your bones and the color in your cheeks. I'll tell you. Just save up money enough from those papers of tobacco that you throw away!--mark that!!--till you get a dollar--only ONE. Then take a yearly subscription to the "Water Cure Journal". Read it carefully, candidly, and honestly, and then practice its precepts. Give up chewing for one year, only one, --go to earning money and be what every inhabitant of this great country should be viz: an enterprising man!...You can scarecely imagine how lonely I am here. Up or abed, working, playing or study-

ing it is all the same-- continually thinking of the times that were--of pleasure enjoyed or of sorrows borne with one we shall never see on earth again.

A week ago Sunday--(it's Monday evening now) Father preached a most impresive discourse; from the text,--"We have John also for our minister" ...The last scenes in Johnnie's sickness were faithfully and beautifully depicted. Auntie I suppose has described to you, better than I can write, what occurred..."

In an era when diphtheria, tuberculosis and typhoid were unchecked, and antisepsis was unknown, the inevitability of death and the hope of immortality were in the forefront of consciousness.

After Fort Sumter was fired upon, recruiting in the city was active. The Utica Citizens' Corps, which had been organized in 1837, volunteered as a unit and was the first to report to active duty in Albany. The Corps furnished for the Union Army fifty-nine commissioned officers including six major generals and three brigadier generals. On its 50th anniversary, the Corps was received into the National Guard; it has had continuous existence for a century and a quarter.

There was tension in the nation, and also within the church, for the Rev. T.D.Cook was accused by industrialist Dolphus Skinner and others of "not acting like a Christian gentleman in his previous position" (His former pastorate was Providence,Rhode Island.) Majority and minority reports were filed, but just how our minister failed to measure up is never more fully explained.

Certainly the congregation must have been split over this matter; perhaps this accounts for the asperity of this note sent by the treasurer of the Society to the Moderator:14

" Dec.22,1863

E.S.Barnum,Esq.

The tax collector of the 3d Ward has called on me twice for the tax for sewer in Madison Lane. The Gas Company also called yesterday for pay for alcohol for the meter in the church. As the Trustees have paid no money into my hands for the purpose of meeting these expenses, and as I understand one of the Trustees has more confidence in his own integrity and ability than he does in the Treasurer's, I very respectfully suggest that you pay these bills and take receipts therefor.

Yours
D.P.White"

The note is hastily written in pencil and obviously was never intended to survive to the present day. Mr.Barnum,who had served the village of Utica in so many capacities, must have been a rather

old man at this time. D.P.White was probably a public spirited and popular printer who was active as a volunteer fireman, a Mason and Odd Fellow, and served for eighteen years as commissioner of the public schools. Finally, the differences between the two church factions were resolved with the calling of a new minister.

The General Convention of Universalists met in Concord, New Hampshire in 1864, and passed resolutions that probably reflected the majority sentiments of the Union:[15]

> Whereas: the fearful war with which our nation has been scourged for years still continues, and makes additional demands on our courage, energy, patience and faith, therefore
>
> Resolved: that we recognize in it punishment of our people for their persistent arrogance and oppression. We cannot therefore hope for the return of peace through efforts to rivet anew the chains of the bondsman, or to perpetuate the former glaring inconsistencies between our professions of love for liberty and the support of slavery.

In 1865 along with the rest of the North, Utica rejoiced in the final victory at Appomatox. On Friday evening, April 14, several citizens met in the Common Council rooms to arrange a victory celebration; a few hours later, the celebration was cancelled with receipt of the news of the tragedy at Ford's Theater in Washington. At 10 a.m. the next morning, the death of President Lincoln was announced. Before noon, houses and places of business were draped in black, and all the church bells tolled from noon until two. On April 26, the "long black train" with its hallowed burden passed through the city.

During the Reconstruction era, Utican Roscoe Conkling emerged as one of the most powerful men in the federal government and an undisputed leader in the Republican machine. He had been mayor of the city, district attorney for Oneida County, and elected to the House of Representatives before 1860. He was described as a handsome man of undeniable ability, an artist in the use of invective and a master of "spread-eagle" oratory; he depised reformers and was the greatest spoilsman of them all. He was a member of the Radical, anti-Johnson faction; General Grant gave him sole authority over distribution of federal patronage in New York State. Conkling and Blaine were nominated for the presidency in 1876, but eventually Hayes was the party's choice. Conkling became fatally ill after being caught in the famous blizzard of '88.

Another nationally prominent Utican was Horatio Seymour, once governor of the state and Democratic candidate for president in 1868. At the end of a long and useful life, Governor Seymour retired to his home in North Utica (near Horatio Street.)

With such prominent local contacts, it is not surprising that we can find no record of concern with the tariff, the spoils system, trust busting and other great issues of the day. All of American Protestantism, like politics, was orthodox and conservative. Many intellectual aspects were neglected, but the Central Universalist Society was true to the principles of its founders in at least one recorded instance.

When Robert Ingersoll, self-styled agnostic, wished to lecture here, the Universalists were the only organization to permit him the use of their building. Perhaps many of those who came to hear Mr.Ingersoll rode on the new horsecar trolley on Genesee Street. In 1875, Utica was the scene of many brilliant social events, when Generals Grant, Hooker and Sherman all visited here for the reunion of the Army of the Cumberland.

In 1881 the 50th anniversary of the Universalists in Utica was observed and was fully reported in the press. (It is unknown how these gentlemen added 50 to 1825!) By this time, Universalism had become eminently respectable. The breach in the congregation had healed enough so that the Rev.T.D.Cook was the main speaker; he recognized the inroads of Darwinism with the stout statement:[16]

> "Geology cannot take the place of the beatitudes; the telegraph, the rail-car and the newspaper do not make the love of Calvary less congenial to our thoughts."

Another speaker on this occasion stated "As Christians, we must be in sympathy with the social demands of our times"--thus doing a bit of forecasting.

The one time that the Board of Trustees acted on the advice given above is presented faithfully in the minutes and is self-explanatory:[17]

> "RESOLVED: That the Board of Trustees of the Church of the Reconciliation having heard with pleasure the resolution of the Board of Excise of the city of Utica to reduce the number of licenses; therefore resolved: That the trustees of said church do heartily approve the policy of reducing the number of licenses in the city of Utica and would respectfully ask that no license be granted to the saloon next to the said Church of the Reconciliation on Seneca St."

(How the Board of Excise replied is unknown; but we do know that first a tobacco shop, then a millinery shop later replaced the saloon.)

Throughout the state within a few years of the semi-centennial celebration, Calvinism began disintegrating, helped by the spread of evolutionary thinking and higher Bible criticism. Churches of other denominations soft pedaled parts of their liturgy and creed, or else re-interpreted these parts in a more liberal light. Universalist country churches began to suffer along with those of other denominations from depopulation.

In general, the minutes of the parish meetings are dull and very dry. However, in 1887, a lively series of meetings was recorded by some unknown but hard working clerk of the parish. At this time the church debt was $1500, but extensive repairs were required immediately. The north wall of the church had been damaged when a new building was excavated on that side (not the saloon); the city's commercial district had come up to the very doors of the church. The only greenery was the ivy on the walls

and the tree in the tower. At the first of these meetings, the proposition was made the building be demolished and a new block containing stores on the street level with church auditorium and Sunday School rooms on the second floor be erected. This suggestion brought forth lively discussion; it was opposed by Mr.Philo Curtis who stated that if the church could not live without going into a move of that kind, 'twas better that it should die. On the other hand, former minister Mr.Ballou predicted that if no new energy or activity were awakened in the Society, there would be no Universalists in Utica within twenty-five years. After further lively discussion, members of the parish gave approval for the change by a two to one ratio.

Someone must have done some proselytizing, for the opinion changed and at another meeting within a month, the vote was reversed and the trustees instructed to proceed with the repairs. Finally a motion to sell the church to pay the debts was made, seconded and carried by such a large majority that the clerk was forced to call the attention of the chair to the fact that more people voted than were members of the Society! The result of the whole series was that repairs were made, the chapel was redecorated, and the building was wired for electricity--three incandescent lights were used. Far from the Society's declining, a few years later the membership given was two hundred and the average attendance at Sunday School was a hundred and fifty.

By this time, many more immigrants had come into the area. The first Jewish synagogue, the House of Jacob, was organized in 1870; shortly after that, many Italian laborers who had worked on the West Shore Railroad settled in East Utica, beginning the nucleus of a large Italian section with many Roman Catholic churches with elaborate decorations. By 1890, the Polish community had also grown large enough to support their own church in West Utica.

A noble experiment was started in East Utica about the same time. The second Universalist church, The Church of Our Father, was organized in 1888 at a meeting in Mary Street School. Three years later a brick church was erected on Bleecker Street near Kossuth Avenue, the house and lot together costing $12,000. Children of the Church of the Reconciliation each donated enough money for a brick to help the building fund. The building seated 400 people. One history of Utica reported that the membership was about 80, and the Sunday School about 200. Rev.George A.Sahlin was probably the only Universalist minister to serve that church exclusively. This society did not prosper and the church building was later sold to the Baptists; it served the Negro community as St.Paul's Baptist Church, and later housed the congregation of the Assembly of God. It is now for sale.

At this time, Sunday School picnics were tremendous attractions -- possibly accounting for much of the church school registration. We have receipted bills for one Sunday School picnic held at Cazenovia Lake, with transportation provided by a special train on the New York Central Railroad. The Utica Citizens' Band and Orchestra was paid $12 for their services; and the same amount was expended for ten gallons of that delicious treat -- ice cream! The uptown section of Utica was graced with a monument to the soldiers of Utica who fell in the War of the Rebellion; this was unveiled in 1891. Funds for the monument were obtained through gifts and public entertainments managed largely by the ladies of Utica.

## CHAPTER V.

The turn of the century brought more changes. In 1899, crowds lined the sidewalks to see the first automobile go through Utica, travelling between New York and Cleveland. It was serviced by a mechanic who travelled ahead of the vehicle by train in order to be on hand for repairs in each city. The bicycle craze hit Utica -- mayors and judges pedalled to court, physicians made their rounds, and ministers called on the sick and dying -- all by bicycle. This and the automobile brought about the desire for better roads in the county--by 1912, there were over a hundred miles of first class macadam road in the county.

In the medical field, compulsory vaccination was introduced for all school children amid a storm of protests from the Christian Scientists; and medical officer Dr.William Clarke discovered that typhoid fever was being carried into the Eighth Ward by houseflies--the first time ever the common fly was recognized as a disease bearing mechanism.

To look back, this may seem like the Golden Age, but those who worked twelve hours daily in the mills or took piecework into their hovels would not agree. These were not represented in the congregations of the leading churches; for the typical Universalist church goer, it must have seemed that the battle for liberalism was won; the faith had become agreeable and pleasant. It must have been no hardship to go to service and hear that"always before man is a chance to develop and that always in man is the power to unfold. Progress onward and upward forever is the logical destiny of man". After all, everyone was right, and there was nothing much to fight about.

Women in New York State had voted legally twenty years before; our first woman trustee, Mrs.C.C.Green, was elected to fill a vacancy and then reelected in her own right. Miss Anga Perry also served as clerk at the same time.

There were of course, the omnipresent financial obligations; sometimes providence took care of those too. In 1903, fire destroyed a part of the church building, and with the insurance money, the trustees were able to pay the back salary of the minister, pay all the mortgage and loans, and repair the Sunday School wing. In addition, money was raised for a new organ; Andrew Carnegie sent a very generous contribution. However, days at the downtown location were numbered, and in 1906 the property was sold and the Comstock home at the corner of Genesee and Tracy Streets purchased. Since the old church was to be torn down, memorial windows and the large window with the figure of Christ holding the world were incorporated into the new building. The organ was moved, and some of the other church fittings. The home was remodelled for use as a parish house, and the cornerstone of the new adjoining church laid in 1907. The minister's salary was $1500. and 81 pledging units contributed $2600.

The minister's salary had not increased in 1913, but the church budget was estimated at $3600. There were nine trustees including two women, and these organizations: Ladies Aid, Mission Circle, Sunday School, Men's Club, and Young People's Christian Union. The annual Sunday School picnic was held at Hecla, easily reached by electric interurban trolley. Days of two or even three Sunday services were long since past; now the church even closed for most of the summer.

The whole church organization must have been very busy in the summer of 1913, when the local chapter of the Young People's Christian Union were hosts to the national convention. Conferees worked hard for three days, and then were able to see some of the countryside. An excursion to Trenton Falls was arranged on the New York Central. The old hotel was not open, but the porches and kitchen were commandeered for a banquet. Another special train was hired for the trip to Old Forge; the guests boarded a lake steamer for the trip to Fourth Lake. The whole outing, including meals, was $2. The next day arrangements were made for an excursion of 500 people to Cooperstown; this was $2.25. On the final day of the convention, the excursionists visited Oriskany Battlefield via electric trolley and then to Summit Park where there were pavillions, and outdoor theater, shooting galleries, a roller coaster, boats and canoes on the Oriskany Creek, dancing, and finally a ball game--New York Universalists against the nation! Prominent in the local organization were the Frear brothers, James and Robert, and also T.Harvey Ferris.

Shortly came the involvement in World War I, but the only mention is that a soldier about to go overseas received baptism. War enthusiasm was reflected in a World Drive for World Peace in 1919. The goal was $20,000; over $26,000 in cash and Liberty bonds was realized. After debts had been paid and a contribution to the national organization had been made, a trust fund was started with the remaining $18,000. Collection of the pledges was enlivened by correspondence in which the trustees are accused of hastening the departure of Dr.Nichols from this pastorate because he took part in a panel on which the radical International Workers of the World was also represented! The trustees denied the charge; other letters prove that the church tried to prevent his leaving.

In the years between the World Wars, church membership in the state increased at about the same rate as the population; however, the Universalists closed 23 of 68 churches and lost 1,000 members. Unitarians lost 4 churches of 25 and some 1300 members. The influence of organized religion declined drastically; many Protestants were no longer concerned with the strict observance of Sunday and agnosticism was common enough to go unnoticed. The trend was away from ritualistic observance to a ministry of human welfare. The battle between science and religion had been settled to the satisfaction of most people.

In this area, which had been a center for producing military supplies during World War I, the economy felt the inevitable hangover. In 1922, the knitting industry was hard hit by depression -- eighteen mills failed and the six that were left were running at a loss. Thousands of people were out of work. Recovery was slow. By 1928, Utica citizens again took action as the Chamber of Commerce organized a committee to seek more diversified industry for the Mohawk Valley. This was the beginning of the famous "loom to boom" effort that was to come to fruition twenty-five years later. However, during the Great Depression, survival was more important than growth. One quarter of Utica's families were on relief and the situation did not become completely corrected until the effect of Lend Lease and World War II buying was felt in 1940.

By this time, the denomination had become more and more like other Protestant churches. Applicants for membership signed a pledge which read in part:[18]

> "Because I wish to live a good and true life, and the Church of Christ calls me to the noblest living; because I wish to serve my fellow man to the best of my ability, and the Church spurs me onto the highest service, I desire to unite with the church.
>
> And because I find myself in substantial agreement with the teachings of the Universalist church, so far as I understand them, I desire to join that branch of the Church." (appendix)

For all of the period between the wars and continuing through World War II, church affairs were under the capable leadership of Ralph M.Jones, whose great grandfather, Aaron Grosh, was the third minister of the church, and whose children and grandchildren are now members. Mr.Jones was the president of Utica Knitting Mills and was an excellent administrator; he was also devoted to the welfare of the church, serving as moderator until his death in 1946. Mr.C.J.McKeown gave even longer service as clerk, where he served for thirty-three years. The Board of Trustees was increased to twelve persons and changed very little during this period -- trustees were renominated and reelected term after term.

Under the leadership of Mr.Jones and during the ministry of Rev. T.J.Saunders, several far reaching changes were made in the church. In January, 1926, at the annual parish meeting, the members voted to convey all real properties to the New York State Convention of Universalists, with the understanding that the Convention would immediately deed the property back to this parish for its use as long as a Universalist church should exist in Utica. This arrangement was a common one for churches in New York State.

At the same meeting, the parish went on record as favoring cooperation between the Universalists and Unitarians of this city. The Unitarians had never been organized as a church; however there had been a group in the 1880's led by Mr.E.P.Powell, author of several books dealing with such varied subjects as evolution and fruit culture. Mr.Powell had a large orchard near Clinton, where the small Unitarian group went for yearly outings. One of our present members, Mrs. DeLaughter, who was a little girl at the time, remembers him as being very tempermental; it is not known how long the group existed, but the attempt to have a church failed.

Even before this, the possibility of cooperation between the Universalists and the Unitarians had been discussed at length. As early as 1838, Stephen Smith wrote in the Gospel Advocate:[19]

> "...The discussion of this subject respecting the "worship of Christ" is a kind of an heirloom in the Universalist family. It was bequeathed to us some years since, when certain leading Unitarian clergymen took occasion to

assure the public that they were not Universalists. We then looked diligently, but looked in vain for the corresponding assertion that Universalists were not Unitarians; but it seems that the discovery has since been made -- and that, henceforth, there is to be precisely the same difference between a Universalist and a Unitarian, as between a Unitarian and a Universalist! Of the immense value of this discovery, those who live beyond the boundaries where the two denominations ever came or are likely to come in contact and collision with each other, will probably never entertain an adequate conception.

Unfortunately there seems to exist a kind of necessity for controversy among us. At least we are seldom without it, whether necessary or not. For no sooner has one crochet been disposed of then the harness and weapons are resumed for new conflicts -- and inasmuch as enemies cannot always be found -- why, we must, if possible carry on war with each other."

By 1926, there were several 'unchurched' Unitarians living in the city; on March 1, the Board of Trustees voted the following:[20]

"It was moved, seconded and carried that Mr.Saunders be given authority to receive into the church at Eastertime all Unitarians and others at his discretion."

At a special parish meeting eight days later, the by laws were revised and the name "The Church of the Reconciliation (Universalist-Unitarian) was adopted without dissent. The object was given in these phrases:

... "To advance the cause of Liberal Religion as expressed by the Universalist and Unitarian denominations".

On Easter Sunday, federation was accomplished by giving the right hand of fellowship to twenty Unitarians. This was a unique and possibly illegal way of accomplishing federation, since it was not the joining of two pre-existing churches, but time has sanctified the union. It has proven to be a happy and beneficial one for members of both denominations. However, it is not surprising to find, as late as 1944, the Board expressing the official view that the church was Universalist in orientation and outlook rather than bidenominational.

Another federation was accomplished a few years later -- between the Ladies Aid, the Enterprize Club, the Mission Circle which all combined to form the Women's Society. A social and money raising feature of these years was the annual Christmas bazaar. In 1929, the two day affair cleared $475.89; but the strenuous activity was discontinued in 1935, as profits became less.

Also during this ministry, the Board of Trustees, in response with the generally conservative outlook of the parish and the increasing tendencies toward cooperation within the Protestant sects, accepted an invitation to join the Council of Churches. Our right to belong to this organization was not questioned for many

years, but in 1968, the Council officially withdrew the membership. The basis for this action was that since we could not acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we did not meet the membership requirements satisfactorily. (Appendix)

During the depression years, survival was important. Because of the fortunate financial position of the church -- no debts and a trust fund -- and because of the presence of financial "angels" on the Board of Trustees, closing the doors never even became probable. Actually, problems created by the depression intensified the need for a church, and certainly many people received spiritual help in a quiet way.

## CHAPTER VI

Although both Universalists and Unitarians were known as liberal denominations, their liberality had been leached by creeping conservatism. In the mid-thirties, both began to awaken.

The Universalist Church of America, meeting in Washington, D.C., adopted a new avowal of faith:[21]

> "The Bond of Fellowship in the Universalist Church shall be a common purpose to do the will of God as Jesus revealed it and to cooperate in establishing the Kingdom for which he lived and died. To that end, we avow our faith in God as Eternal and All Conquering Love, in the spiritual leadership of Jesus, in the supreme worth of every human personality, in the authority of truth known or to be known, and in the power of men of good will and sacrificial spirit to overcome all evil and progressively establish the kingdom of God."

Thus, the Universalists put their faith not in doctrines and creeds, but in purposes and goals.

The Unitarians appointed a Committee on Appraisal which resulted in a complete overhauling of church organization; one of the most noticeable results was completely new church school materials, the Beacon Series. This soon turned into a joint venture with the Universalists and others.

Rev.Robert Killam began his ministry in this church in 1935; from here he has gone on to become one of the better known leaders of the liberal faith. The membership then was relatively small -- the church school had an enrollment of twenty-five children in five classes. The annual picnic was held at the summer home of Ralph Jones in Holland Patent, with transportation by family car. Other organizations included the Women's Society, the Young People's Society, which presented plays and minstrel shows, and an adult class; however, the shining example of a church group was the Men's Club of 87 members, many of whom worked under Mr.Jones at Utica Knitting Mills.

The need for a coordinating body other than the Board of Trustees was recognized with the formation of a Church Council, which was later called the Religious Education Committee. The original name was adopted in the bylaws of 1958.

A building drive was held in 1941; at this time the interior of the church was remodelled, with the removal of the brass railing in the chancel and the installation of a worship center. This year also, the new Beacon Series in Religious Education was used in the church school, under the leadership of Mercer Weiskotten, superintendent, and Mrs.Verna Carncross, director; Mrs. Carncross had been sent to a conference to learn more about this new idea, where the learner of any age is given the right to do his own thinking in matters of faith. Since that time, the Beacon Series has been used, under Mrs.Carncross's vigorous championship.

Dr.Lynn Booth was our minister during World War II; membership here was difficult to hold as in many churches. In 1943, there were less than forty members. Dr.Booth also preached at Washington Mills Congregational Church and the Madison Universalist Society. Church members put in long hours of volunteer work, especially at Rhodes Military Hospital on Burrstone Road.

With the end of the war and the return of many young people anxious to take advantage of the G.I. Bill, colleges blossomed to help those who wished to complete -- or start -- their education. Mohawk College shared the former Rhodes hospital with veterans' housing. An extension of Syracuse University, Utica College, found a home in the Oneida Square area in a garage, some houses, an abandoned school and several rented rooms. For one year, the Church of the Reconciliation rented the church basement and the first floor of the parish house for college classes -- an arrangement that required a good deal of forbearance on each side. Mohawk Valley Technical Institute, a two-year school, found a place in a former day school building and an abandoned knitting mill. Mohawk College was transposed by many steps and mergers into Harpur College at Binghamton; all three schools recently moved into beautiful new quarters.

Rev. John S.MacPhee began his ministry here in 1945 -- he especially believed in the value of public relations and community service. An air of change pervaded the church as well as the community -- many knitting mills moved south, and it was recognized that other industries would have to be attracted to the area. Once more, as it had a hundred years before, community effort succeeded; retrained textile workers were hired for newly attracted industries; the "loom to boom" program was nationally recognized as a fine example of a community helping itself.

In the church, the congregation stayed relatively steady in numbers, but began to experience a great turnover in members. In 1949 a new program of religious education was started; the children were given two hours of religious education and related activities on Sunday morning; for adults, Sunday forums, meeting after the service, had guest speakers from the colleges and the community. More people were reached with sermons broadcast over WRUN. Church activities were extended to sports -- softball and shuffleboard for the men, basketball for high schoolers.

The building was used to incubate many community groups. Here the Utica Chapter of the United World Federalists was organized; also here the Brotherhood Council and the Mohawk Valley Peace Council met. When members of the city Board of Education were to be elected by popular vote for the first time, the Church of the Reconciliation sponsored a public forum where candidates could express their views.

In 1947, Mrs.Caroline Cutter became the first woman member of the Board of Trustees since before World War I; soon began the practice of electing one woman to the Board each year; also the custom began that members of the Board would not serve more than one term of three years at any one time. For the first time, funds for leadership training were budgeted.

In 1951, moderator Spencer Prindle complimented the church members on their participation in the annual meeting, such healthy participation being relatively unknown before (but not since). In 1952, when Mr.MacPhee resigned, and with prospects for much slower community growth, the Church of the Reconciliation united with the Reformed Christian Church in Barneveld to secure the services of Rev. T.Conley Adams. The Adams family lived in the parsonage in Barneveld, and Mr.Adams preached in both churches Sunday mornings until his untimely death on Thanksgiving Day of 1956. The arrangement was continued during the ministry of Rev.Leon Simonetti, with the exception that the Utica church purchased a parsonage on Sunset Avenue while the Adams family continued to live in the parsonage in Barneveld. This arrangement proved difficult for the congregations as well as the ministers, and when Rev.Simonetti left, it was amicably dropped.

In March, 1960, Rev.Greta Worstell was called as this church's 32nd minister in 135 years. The Rev.Miss Worstell became the Rev.Mrs.Crosby before leaving in June,1961.

During the past ten years, the church school has grown to over a hundred students -- partly as a result of more families and partly as a result of bigger families. The influx of people, while not as phenomenal as in many liberal churches elsewhere, has resulted in the need for more rooms, more teachers, and more organization. As ever, the degree of interest and concern shown by members of the church attests to its strength and vitality.

This then is our heritage -- but it is not enough. We take pride in these traditions, remembering that beliefs and practices found most worthy and useful are the only ones that last long enough to become traditions.

Each human personality that grows and develops and helps others to grow and develop in a liberal church aids in making each organization unique. Through the years, this has been primarily an organization led by lay people. Only a few ministers stayed longer than five years, and none as long as ten. In contrast, some lay people held church offices for twenty and thirty years. What the records do not show is how many people worked to make their desires, prayers and dreams become reality within this circle of liberal fellowship.

The first members of the society signed their names to this statement:[22]

> "We believe in the one unchangeable, and infinitely wise, good and powerful Lord, who is sole Creator, Proprietor, and Governor of the universe, and impartial Benefactor of all mankind."

One decade's liberalism is another's orthodoxy, but the direct descendant of the powerful words of 1825 are these, adopted in the by-laws of 1958.[23]

> "This church shall be a fellowship of free minds, having for its object the study and practice of liberal religion, the development of the higher life of its members, and the building of a better community and world.

> The spirit of this church shall be truly liberal. Its pulpit shall be absolutely free and untrammeled. The people of this Church shall stand on a basis of equality, equally entitled to vote and hold office (subject to age limits prescribed by law) and shall have an equal right at all times to express their opinions, convictions and wishes; but no individual or group shall seek to rule over others in matters of belief or conduct."

As in the past, we must continue to develop personal and organizational philosophy in accordance with the principle stated by Dolphus Skinner so many years ago: "We do not claim to be infallible, but we do try to be honest in all things."

THE END

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4. The Utica Magazine; Dolphus Skinner, editor. 1827

5. Stacy, Nathaniel. op.cit. p.349

6. The Utica Evangelical Magazine; Dolphus Skinner,editor. June 25,1828

7. Letter, Gratia Skinner author, dated February 16,1881 Church records

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11. Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, 1846

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13. Unpublished, unsigned letter. Quoted in full

14. Unpublished note. Quoted in full.

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16. Newspaper clipping, undated, found in church records

17. Trustee minutes, 1887

18. Membership card, church records. Completed in Appendix

19. Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, 1839

20. Trustee minutes, 1926

21. Universalism, a Religion Appropriate for Man. Royal Cloyd editor. Council of Liberal Churches, 1959
Cummins, Robert; The Universalist Church of America Dept. publications. pp. 6-7

22. Avowal of Faith in constitution adopted Nov.21,1825.See appendix

23. By-laws of the Church of the Reconciliation (Universalist-Unitarian), Utica,New York adopted 1958; wording used in previous by-laws adopted 1919.

LIST OF MINISTERS

THE CHURCH OF THE RECONCILIATION, Utica, New York

| Name | Installation | Removal |
|---|---|---|
| 1. John S.Thompson | 1825 | 1826 |
| 2. Dolphus Skinner | 1827 | 1832 |
| 3. Aaron B.Grosch | 1832 | 1838 |
| 4. T.D.Cook | 1839 | 1842 |
| 5. H.B.Soule | 1843 | 1844 |
| (These men served the First Universalist Society, defunct 1845) | | |
| 6. Eben Francis | 1849 | 1853 |
| 7. Theophilus Fiske | 1853 | 1856 |
| 8. C.C.Gordon | 1856 | 1859 |
| 9. T.D.Cook | 1860 | 1864 |
| 10.D.Ballou | 1864 | 1869 |
| 11.A.J.Canfield | 1870 | 1873 |
| 12.C.F.Lee | 1875 | 1879 |
| 13.E.F.Foster | 1879 | 1879 |
| 14.M.Crosley | 1880 | 1882 |
| 15.O.A.Rounds | 1882 | 1887 |
| 16.Clarence E.Rice | 1887 | 1892 |
| 17.Caleb E.Fisher | 1893 | 1895 |
| 18.J.Frank Leland | 1896 | 1899 |
| 19.James D.Corby | 1899 | 1905 |
| 20.John Sayles | 1905 | 1907 |
| 21.George Cross Baner | 1907 | 1914 |
| 22.Willard C.Selleck | 1915 | 1919 |
| 23.Leslie C.Nichols | 1920 | 1925 |
| 24.Thomas J.Saunders | 1925 | 1929 |
| 25.Alfred S.Cole | 1929 | 1931 |
| 26.Standard Dow Butler | 1931 | 1935 |
| 27.Robert Killam | 1935 | 1941 |
| 28.Albert Lynn Booth | 1942 | 1944 |
| 29.John Stewart MacPhee | 1945 | 1952 |
| 30.T.Conley Adams | 1952 | 1956 |
| 31.Leon S.Simonetti | 1957 | 1959 |
| 32.Greta Marie Worstell(Crosby) | 1960 | 1961 |
| 33.Herbert E.Hudson,IV | 1961 | ---- |