

Ann Arbor, Mich Parish History

INTRODUCTION

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The history of any parish can only be valuable as

it is typical of the religious movement of which it is a segment. As such a segment, its study offers opportunity for a cross section of the thought pattern of the nation.

Therefore, it is with the aim of gaining a truer perspective on the Unitarian movement that this history is attempted. Surely, the experiences of one parish should present a microscopic picture of the trials and accomplishments of liberal thought in America through Unitarianism.

By way of introduction, it might be well to set the stage for Unitarianism by a brief account of Ann Arbor and of liberal religion in Ann Arbor. The town itself was founded in 1825 on both banks of the Huron River. The site was a comfortable day's run from Detroit on the stage coach line to Chicago. For its first few years, the population was largely transient, ~~the~~ pioneers on their way to the unopened lands would stop for a time. The University of Michigan had been contemplated by a number of the officials of the treasury department of the United States who had set aside a portion of the public lands in each of the parts of the old Northwest Territory for University purposes. Michigan was not yet a state and its great resources had hardly been discovered.

1828 saw Andrew Jackson come to the presidency. He was the first son of the new west to achieve the office. He started his war on the National Bank and broke that institution in 1832. Three years later Michigan engaged in the bloodless "Toledo War". The bone of contention was a narrow strip of the Northwestern corner of Ohio including the present city of

Toledo. When Michigan was admitted to Statehood in 1837, the land was awarded to Ohio and the upper peninsula given to Michigan as compensation.

Liberal religion ^{here} started in '35. At that time a group of ~~liberal~~ minded people in Ann Arbor wrote to the Reverend Nathaniel Stacy, an itinerant preacher of the Universalist denomination, asking him to come to Ann Arbor, and stating that they felt they could support "sustained preaching". Mr. Stacy had spent most of his strenuous life as minister to the outlying settlements, first in central New York state and later in the middle west.

Rev. Stacy was past fifty but still bringing his word to the trackless country as vigorously as in his earliest youth. It was early in the spring of 1835 when he received, I quote his memoirs,

"An invitation to remove into that country, and take pastoral charge of the society in that place. (Ann Arbor) I had been then four years and a half itinerating this wild and trackless country; and although improvements in roads, as well as in agriculture, and everything else pertaining to civilization, were in progressing with as much rapidity as could be rationally expected, still it was almost impracticable to travel in carriages of any kind, and it was truly a severe task to perform my monthly labors. And considering my advanced years and increasing infirmities, I felt justified in changing my ~~position~~ position, so that I might enjoy, at least, a temporary release from the extreme fatigues I had so long endured."

job By the sturdy pioneer gods, here is a man! His notion of an easier ~~rest~~ is to found a new church in a backwoods town! He accepted provisionally, saying that he would come for four Sundays in July.

Taking a steamboat in Erie, Pennsylvania, he arrived in Detroit thirty six hours later. Then,

"Taking passage on the stage next morning, a ride of forty miles over very bad road, for at least half of the way, brought me a little before nightfall to the place of my destination."

He found that the only finished meeting house in the village was the property of his prospective parishioners, These were of respectable numbers and several of the members had known him in central New York.

Mr. Stacy's rest and relaxation for the infirmities of old age was to go after the other ministers of the town, tooth and nail, as soon as he and his family had settled. The question of Universal salvation, the moot point, he seized upon in the columns of the Weekly Argus and the State Journal, the two weeklies published in Ann Arbor. He challenged them to "Christian discussion" in his own church. This gauntlet was not picked up by his brothers of the cloth.

Promptly, he threw another at their feet. It was picked up reluctantly by the Episcopalean Minister, who wrote an article for the papers declining to commit theological suicide by debating on Rev. Stacy's own subject at his own church. He intimated further ~~and said~~ that his instruction in matters theological had been comprehensive but if Rev. Stacy was interested in learning the truth, he might come to him for it and it would be gladly given.

Stacy himself was a small man imbued with the fire of Peter the Hermit. He was inspired to force his religion on as many people as possible. He was a liberal evangelist. He sought controversy. He would talk furiously in defense of his convictions. He glorified in converting someone to his faith.

He tells of the conversion of Deacon Williams, a staunch Calvinist, in Ann Arbor. "Never," he says enthusiastically, "since the time of Saul of Tarsus has there been a more complete conversion."

This militant liberal, then, was the first proponent of liberal Christianity in Ann Arbor.

The Rev. Mr. Stacy stayed in Ann Arbor for five years, until 1840. On retiring, he secured the services of Dr. T.C. Adam, a retired physician, who had been educated in the University of Edinburgh. Unfortunately for the Universalists of Ann Arbor, Dr. Adam was so conscientious that, to quote Stacy, "His labors proved too severe for him.....He preached himself sick." A Dr. Smead took up the work and then a succession of ministers of whom we have no record. When the Rev. Mr. Stacy returned to Ann Arbor on a visit in 1847, he found Dr. S. Miles, again an unknown, in charge of the parish.

By 1847, much improvement had taken place in Michigan. Ann Arbor was served by a railroad. The capital had been moved from Detroit to Lansing.

It is largely speculation to try to picture the Ann Arbor of this period in regard to liberal religion. The only definite record we have is the Rev. Mr. Stacy's memoirs and scattering mention of the episode by Dr. J.T. Sunderland, the Unitarian minister, 1878-'98, and brief newspaper stories.

We can safely say that these people, carving a livelihood from a virgin country, were of simple philosophy and strong convictions. The very strength of their convictions was an added spur to the missionary zeal of all faiths. It must have been an achievement to win over one of these pioneers.

We are here at the dawn of liberal religion as we know it today. It evolved slowly. It assailed every weak point in traditional dogma, even though such opposition meant nearly complete ostracism. These early liberal ministers hammered upon the barriers of superstition and narrowness with unquenchable courage and compelling persistence.

The Rev. Mr. Stacy was such a man. His quick, fiery nature took the torch of liberal faith eagerly and the indomitable will of the man carried it through a life of seventy years.

It is unfortunate that after his departure, the Ann Arbor church did not succeed in securing other men of his caliber. Thus we find that after 1848 there is no record^a of Universalist Church in Ann Arbor.

This leaves us with a gap of nearly twenty years before the start of the Unitarian movement. From a national point of view, they were filled with the drama that led to the civil war and with the war itself. Years of bitter hatred and high tension. Years of struggle and suffering. This, briefly is the setting of Unitarianism in Ann Arbor.

CHAPTER ONE

THE START OF UNITARIANISM IN ANN ARBOR

In order to understand the first Unitarian ministry in Ann Arbor, it is necessary to know something of the Unitarianism of that day. The liberal teachings of Emerson and Channing had had their effect in lightening the dead weight of centuries of dogmatism and superstition among the more intelligent people but the great masses of the country had not yet been reached by the principle of reason in religion. The work of the Unitarian minister of that day was extremely difficult and even uncomfortable from a social viewpoint.

The Bible was more than a great book. It actually constituted the living thought of the time. It was the final authority, the fountain of all wisdom. It was so closely interwoven in the mental structure that the only possible way that large numbers of people could be reached was through it.

The first qualification of even a liberal minister, then, was a full and comprehensive knowledge of the Bible. If he could interpret it well enough to avoid ruffling the delicately balanced but deeply rooted prejudices, he had some chance of inoculating the people with his doctrines.

Then too, there must be a gift of oratory without which no minister in the middle of the last century could hope to hold any important pulpit.

In Ann Arbor, the problem was intensified by the presence of more than a thousand students at the great State University. These must be reached by a minister of extraordinary power and personal charm. A man must be found who would be admired by the students and at the same time carry the Uni-

tarian message to them.

To fill this important mission, the American Unitarian Association selected Charles Henry Brigham, then pastor of the First Congregational (Unitarian) Society in Taunton, Massachusetts. Vigorous and alert of mind and body, an exceptional and industrious student, a powerful, logical, and convincing minister, Mr. Brigham was ably fitted for the Ann Arbor Pastorate.

He was then in the very prime of his life, forty-five years old, stockily built. He had been in Taunton more than a score of years; infact it was ^{his} ~~the~~ first pulpit ~~he had received~~ after graduating from Harvard Divinity School.

He started his work in Ann Arbor on the first Sunday in September, 1865 at the Washtenaw County Court House where a small society of Unitarians were in the habit of meeting. In the Spring of 1866, the Methodist Church was available and was purchased for the use of the Ann Arbor Church. This building, at the corner of Fifth and Ann Streets, is still standing.

Mr. Brigham's first reports from his Ann Arbor Mission are in the files of the A.U.A. The reports for some of the months were published and give a good picture of the opportunities here. He said that there were not enough paying members of ^{the} a Unitarian church in Ann Arbor to make the church self supporting and that he doubted that there ever would be. The project has remained missionary to the present time.

Despite the handicap of poor quarters, Mr. Brigham had capacity (200) crowds for both his afternoon and evening services while still in the court house. It was very pleasing to him to find many professors and students among his audiences. Many of the Unitarian tracts were distributed and he even had enquiries

from two or three students about the Unitarian Ministry as a life work.

A Bible Class was started at the church building in the spring and the attendance was gratifying. An average attendance of from fifty to sixty over a period of years, with about three hundred different students reached every year, shows the extent of Mr. Brigham's work among ~~the college~~ students. The University of Michigan was very large in number of students attending. One authority said it had more students than any other University in the world. More than two-thirds of the eleven hundred students were studying law or medicine. This important nucleus of the professional group in the middle west was being reached each week by Mr. Brigham in increasingly large numbers.

It is interesting for us today to look back on the type of Unitarianism that Mr. Brigham preached. It was very conservative; even for that time. But there is more than just moral and spiritual teaching. The Reverend S.A. Eliot, in a biography, says that Brigham had one of the finest memories he had ever seen and that his wide reading and conscientious study enabled him to speak with authority on almost any subject. He had traveled most places in Europe and in Egypt and the Holy Land. Also, he had traveled so intellegently that he was able to use the material gathered in this journey of less than a year in sermons for many years.

Rev. Eliot says further that Mr. Brigham was so accomplished a conversationalist that his conversation became almost a monologue, so eager were his hearers not to miss anything. ~~With this background, we~~

With this background it is not hard to understand that the Unitarianism of Mr. Brigham was honored in Ann Arbor. Several of the University professors said that Mr. Brigham was able to talk to them on their own lines as an equal.

Mr. Brigham was here until the late summer of 1877, twelve years, at which time he suffered a breakdown and went to the home of his sister in Brooklyn, N.Y. He died two years later and an obituary notice in the Christian Register of Mar. 1, 1879 characterized him as follows:

"He gave solid dignity and respect to his work, and through it to a good cause, by the amplitude of his learning and the mass of his mental industry. The opportunity of Unitarianism in the west, as a movement of religious thought, must be quite a different thing from the fact of those twelve years labor. Once for all, any possibility of stigma of narrowness, conceit, shallow radicalism, was forbidden to rest on the name he represented. A scholar of the widest range of reading, a man of the world, familiar with art and foreign travel, a sober and somewhat conservative thinker, a man of letters, of untiring industry, a writer and speaker of more than average eloquence and force, - these qualities were recognized and applauded in every form in which the recognition and applause of man has its value.

.....Most significant of the tasks he did was the instructing , , , , of young men who have made his name, word and work familiar in every part of the Mississippi valley....."

For a year, from early fall, 1877, until fall, 1878, the pulpit was filled by the Reverend Joseph Henry Allen. Mr Allen seems to have been primarily interested in History, religious and general.

From all that can be learned, Mr. Allen ~~xxxxx~~ was not as fine a scholar as Mr. Brigham nor was his reading and study as broad. His work in Ann Arbor, while adequate, lacked the creative brilliance of Mr. Brigham or the constructive and sustaining fire of his successor, Dr. Sunderland.

It is hardly fair to him to judge him on the basis of the others mentioned because his term here was only a year in contrast to the twelve years of Mr. Brigham and the twenty years of Dr. Sunderland.

Two ?
Chapter Three
THE MIDDLE PERIOD

Just as Mr. Brigham was the pioneer, coming into the hard, new country and hewing a place, so Dr. Sunderland was the settler, industrious, quiet, who built the new empire of thought. The American Unitarian Association sent Mr. Brigham as a missionary and he followed his calling with the zeal and force that must characterize the successful missionary, spreading his gospel and planting his idea. Such a man must be first. After him must come one who will patiently till the fertile soil and harvest the crop. He, too, must build - build the storehouse of the new freedom - the home for the new ideals.

Such a man was Dr. Jabez T. Sunderland. The Unitarian Church in Ann Arbor stands as a tribute to his genius. His industry was as great as Mr. Brigham's and his eloquence, more human, and nearer to the hearts of his people, was as moving. While Mr. Brigham stimulated the minds of the small university town, Dr. Sunderland won their hearts with his beautifully written and delivered sermons.

A man of wider interests probably never occupied the pulpit in Ann Arbor. Dr. Sunderland was an understanding and tolerant crusader for social, economic, and religious reform. The great variety of subjects on which he wrote authoritatively in the twenty volumes he published is a tribute to his scholarship. The complete and active organization of his church is a tribute to his ability as a leader and an executive.

No story of Dr. Sunderland's work can be complete without mention of his wife. A brilliant student in her own right, she was able to take much of Dr. Sunderland's burden

onto her own shoulders. Her charm and ability made her a vital force in her husband's church. Perhaps her greatest work was the conducting of the Bible class. This organization, meeting every Sunday at noon after the regular church service, was the most attractive part of the church program as it reached a larger number of students than any other.

The organization of the Bible class was this: a topic was chosen for a given year and some phase of it was discussed each Sunday that the students were in town. There was a wide range of topics: Biblical History and Criticism, Comparative Religion, Religious Philosophy, Religious Biography, History of Christianity, Growth and Principles of the Various Sects, Ethics, Charities and Philanthropies, to name a few.

Dr. Sunderland continued the Bible class of Mr. Brigham and Mr. Allen himself but at the end of two years he turned the work over to Mrs. Sunderland. She had great success in drawing the students to the class, the average attendance being over a hundred students and sometimes reaching a hundred and fifty. This was the largest attendance of any Bible class in town and the largest to assemble in the Unitarian Church in Ann Arbor at any time.

It is difficult to over-estimate the value of this one phase of the Sunderlands' work here. The great number of university students who were in this manner brought in close touch with the doctrines of Unitarianism at this formative period of their lives - the number who must have seen the clarity and beauty of religious freedom thru this class - is one of the most cheering aspects of Unitarianism in this town. Too great tribute can not be paid Mrs. Sunderland for her share in disseminating Unitarianism through the middle

west.

It might be well at this point to mention the other activities of the Church. The Sunday morning service was primarily designed to reach the townspeople and faculty. It was well attended. In the evening, Dr. Sunderland held another service which was intended to bring his message to the students. Of course there was no sharp line and many students came to the morning service as well and quite a number were in the habit of coming in the morning and staying for the Bible Class at noon.

The evening services, aiming at education as well as moral and spiritual guidance, fell very naturally under large subject headings which frequently covered a whole year's work. Many things were discussed here. Biography, Philosophy and other subjects were sub-divided so that each Sunday a different phase was elucidated.

Dr. Sunderland said in a sermon, "Religion is larger than Sunday, however well that priceless day may be spent." He proved this by the extent of his church activities during the week. The Ladies' Union carried on a variety of studies for the twenty years Dr. Sunderland was here. The King's Daughters was an organization of young women which reached quite a number both townswomen and University students. The Young Men's Guild was organized "To draw all the young men within our reach into acquaintance and comradeship, and to carry on various lines of practical religious work."

The Unity Club, organized in the first month of Dr. Sunderland's ministry, aimed to draw together the students in social, literary, and intellectual union. It helped to soften

the lines of religious prejudice between denominations.

A very important part of Dr. Sunderland's work in Ann Arbor was the distribution of tracts. This work was carried out with great vigor and an almost unbelievable number of tracts ^{was} ~~were~~ distributed. In ~~the~~ Appendix will be found a detailed list of the literature distribution during the twenty years of Dr. Sunderland's service in Ann Arbor. #

This vigorous and capable ministry had a great effect on the establishment of Unitarianism in Ann Arbor and it is largely through the efforts of Dr. Sunderland that the church gained a foothold here.

In the second part of this chapter the building of the church by Dr. Sunderland in 1882 and the parish house a year later will be described.

This appendix will be found in the files of the Ann Arbor church. It was not thought that it would be sufficiently pertinent to warrant attaching it to a short history such as this

CHAPTER THREE

THE BUILDING.

Two years after he came to Ann Arbor, Dr. Sunderland started agitation for a new church building. The old church secured by Dr. Brigham from the Methodists was proving unsatisfactory. It had been built before University days, was inconveniently located, heated poorly in the winter, and was poorly ventilated in the summer.

Through the years this old building had steadily deteriorated until the Unitarians in Ann Arbor could offer only the most meagre accommodations to the student population who were sought after so eagerly by all denominations. The building was quite ^{a distance} ~~a way~~ from the university campus and it is a tribute to Dr. Brigham that he was able to work so well with the students.

In August of the year 1880, Dr. Sunderland published two letters in the Christian Register advocating the new building in Ann Arbor. This was the first public notice of his plans. Nearly a half year before he had taken the matter to some of the leading parishioners and had not been very enthusiastically received. Toward the end of ^{that} ~~the~~ meeting when the pastor's dream was receding further into the distance, Mrs. ~~Prof.~~ J.W. Langley spoke and said that if the men of the church were not interested, she would go to the women and see if something could not be done. The women of the church allied themselves in backing Mrs. Langley and in a year they had raised \$250. toward the new building.

The letters in the Christian Register were followed by several personal letters to ministers and men influential in the church. The trustees pledged the congregation pledged the congregation for \$3,000 in the event that \$10,000 could be raised in

other parts of the country. Dr. Sunderland took this promise to the national conference at Saratoga. It was well received and the decision was reached that the National conference ~~would~~ aid the Ann Arbor parish.

After diligent work, the money was raised and ground was broken in September 1881. The foundation was completed before the cold weather set in. Abundant rains somewhat delayed the work in 1882, but in the fall of that year the church was ^{finished} ~~completed~~. It follows closely the Norman style of architecture and the Ann Arbor Register of Sept. 13, 1882 says,

"The structure is thoroughly churchly in look, picturesque in outling, and certain to be one of the most admired, architecturally, of our public buildings."

The church was dedicated on November 21, 1882. It is interesting to recall that it was dedicated free of debt. It was completely fitted, many of the furnishings being paid for in memory of Dr. Brigham by his friends in the East.

Some of the interesting sidelights of the new building might be mentioned. The first contribution to the building fund was from the Rev. ^{Mr} J.H. Allen, who sent twenty dollars. The first Ann Arbor [^] contribution came from Mrs. Rhoda Fuller, whom Dr. Sunderland mentions affectionately as "Grandmother" Fuller, aged ninety two, who sent twenty five dollars to the pastor. The original lot, on which the church was to have been built, was sold and another lot bought, this time at the corner of State and Huron Streets. Gov. Bagley, deceased before the church was completed, gave the largest single gift, \$500. The over-all cost of the building was about \$19,000 W.S. George, editor of the Lansing Republican promised \$100. On his death, his wife redeemed the promise.

Some key to the type of Unitarianism ~~is~~ preached ~~in~~ in Ann Arbor in those days is found in the creed painted on the new

walls:

In the vestibule, the words of Dr. Wm. E. Channing:

"To free inquiry and the love of truth do we dedicate these walls.
Let Heaven's unobstructed light shine here."

In the library and reading room, from Charles H. Brigham,
"Unitarians hold their doctrine not as a finality or perpetually
binding creed but as ready always to revise and improve it as the
spirit of God shall give them more light and knowledge."

In the main auditorium, from Lowell, "They must upward still
and onward who would keep abreast of truth."

Also in the main auditorium over three arches, "All men brothers."
"All truth sacred." "All duty divine."

Over the pulpit are the words, "Oh, worship the Lord."

On a tablet at the rear of the pulpit, from the Bible, "To us
there is one God, the Father." "By this shall all men know that ye
are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "Not everyone that
saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven But
he that doeth the will of my Father ^{who} ~~that~~ is in Heaven."

At the right of the pulpit, a passage from scripture, "In every
nation they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him."
Then, under this, a Hymn by Samuel Longfellow, number 452 in the
Hymnal, the first, third, and fourth verses.

These inscriptions give us a key to the Unitarianism of Dr.
Sunderland. Foremost, there is a very real reverence for a definite
and intelligent God; a living God, everpresent, close at hand, and
understandable. In conjunction, there is a fine appreciation of the
social and spiritual responsibility of man. Here is the essence of
real Unitarianism. Not simply blind trust in an omnipresent but
vague supernatural being, but a true appreciation of the fineness
and fitness of man. This religion works both ways. Man, too, as a

creature of divine origin, must prove himself worthy of his heritage.

From Dr. Sunderland's sermons we get a complete picture of the man. There was no movement for social betterment of which he was not a staunch advocate. Temperance, higher education, social reform, clean politics, public improvements - all found in him a strong supporter.

Dr. Sunderland's place in his profession deserves some mention here. That he was internationally known is a compliment to his ability. That, as a present Hindoo student of the University put it, "Next to Ghandi, he is loved as no other man in India today," is an even greater tribute. Dr. Sunderland made two visits to the orient, One in 1894-5 as missionary of the British Unitarian association, and in 1914-15 as Billings Lecturer. To quote a late address of Dr. Sunderland before the Liberal Students Union, "Any success I may have had in preaching to the people of India I attribute to my attitude of feeling that it was my duty to understand India and its people rather than to bring them some foreign doctrine."

This wide and kind understanding of Dr. Sunderland's made him the great preacher he undoubtedly was. It was not so much his wide education that made people of all races listen to him with respect, but the fact that here was a man whose heart was open to their problems, a man to whom the much abused golden rule was a straight-forward pattern of life.

In concluding this chapter, it is fitting that the parish house of the Ann Arbor church be mentioned. Dr Sunderland secured the funds for this structure and completed it in 1882. Thus the church buildings of today are largely from the genius of this one great man.

THE NEW CENTURY

The next man to occupy the Ann Arbor pulpit was Dr. Joseph Henry Crooker. Dr. Crooker, altho born in the state of Maine, in the year 1850, spent fourteen very important years in the new west. (1850-1864) In the virgin forests of Minnesota he spent his life as a boy. Indian massaces were still to be dreaded ~~here~~, and Dr. Crooker tells graphically of the great Sioux massacre which occured while he was still living there.

With this natural background and the strength of character it undoubtedly gave him, it is unfortunate that at the time of his adolescence, his family moved back to Maine. Used as he was to coping with the wildness of Minnesota, the boy was horribly missfitted in his new environment. This accentuated a natural shyness which he was forced to fight all during his life. His schoolmates, his teachers, the townspeople all misunderstood the big boy from the frontier. They were tempted to look on him as an ignoramus - an uncouth and awkward "greenie".

This shyness was exceedingly painful to the boy and to the man he later became. Old parishioners in Ann Arbor say that he never overcame it, even in middle life. But it was not the only marked character attribute. At an early age, an instinctive taste for finer things in literature became evident in the boy. He read widely and intellegently, retaining and digesting each book or article.

This, then was the type of man who came to Ann Arbor early in the autumn of ~~1882~~ 1898. Widely known as a writer and speaker before that date, he added to his fame while here by writing on behalf of several causes. His articles against im-

perialism, at the time when America seemed to be getting the colonial fever, were sound political science and good horse sense.

Altho his shyness was a problem to him, those of the Ann Arbor parish who remember him and his work say that Dr. Crooker was considered the most powerful orator in the city at the time of his ministry here. In fact, his popularity among his parishioners and the university students was largely due to his eloquence. His ministry at Madison, Wisconsin had prepared him well for his work here. In both of these university towns was he successful.

The Rev. Mr. Crooker wrote well. His "Back to Jesus" was circulated widely. Many of his sermons were printed by the A. U. A.

Religion to Dr. Crooker was an intensely personal thing and he made it so to his parishioners. He seemed to talk to them individually from his pulpit. His God was a personal reality and every hearer felt intensely the force of his convictions.

Dr. Crooker was not so interested in the church as a social institution as he was in the church as an instrument for the propagation of finer moral values. He had a large following among the students and his lectures were always well attended.

Records of the parish organizations during his tenure are scanty but from the recollection of members of the present church we learn that this organization was adequate and that Mr. Crooker had many close friends among his flock and that his own personal magnetism gave a strong impetus to the Ann Arbor body.

There is a period of a little more than a year, between June, 1905, and September, 1906, when the pulpit was unoccupied by an official minister.

However, on Sunday, September 30th, 1906, The Rev. Henry Wilder Foote preached his first sermon in the church. Here was a different kind of man from Mr. Crooker. In the pulpit, Mr. Foote was much quieter. He depended on the simple earnestness of his message rather than any force of oratory.

Mr. Foote was one more in the series of finely educated men who had held the Ann Arbor pulpit in the forty ^{since} years it had been established. He was widely read and his knowledge of the bible and biblical history was extensive.

Mr. Foote met people well and it is not surprising that the church prospered during his stay. His evening lectures were well attended.

It might be well to review the church organization at this time. The Ladies' Union was a thriving ~~ex~~ body of a hundred and twelve members. It met on Wednesdays from October to May and made many contributions to the well-being of the church, financial and otherwise.

A Student's Bible class met at noon Sundays and was well attended. Bible literature in the light of modern scholarship and other worth while subjects were discussed.

There was a Young Peoples's Religious Union meeting at 6:30 Sundays before the evening services. There was a King's Daughters chapter and a Fortnightly Club. This club was the working organization of the ladies, the Union being interdenominational and a discussion group. On Dec. 25th, 1910, Mr. Foote left the Ann Arbor Church.

CHAPTER FIVE SOCIALISM IN THE CHURCH

The man who occupied the pulpit after Mr. Foote provided one of the most interesting interludes in the history of the Ann Arbor Church. He was Dr. P.M. Dawson and a more unusual minister would be hard to find in the annals. In the first place he was not trained as a minister. At the time when the idea came to him to be one, he was a professor of physiology at Johns Hopkins University. He attended a seminary for a year and then was sent, experimentally as minister to the Ann Arbor body.

Mr. Dawson was interested in the sociological rather than the theological side of religion. This was quite a revolutionary change, as the Ann Arbor Church had for years championed the conservative side of issues at the Western Conference. Starting with Dr. Sunderland's vigorous defense of Theism before the Conference and his success in having it retained as an article of faith, thru the ministries of Mr. Crooker and Mr. Foote, both theists, and advocates of a strong personal emphasis on religious matters, the church here had fallen into ~~align~~ alignment on the conservative side of all denominational questions. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that there is a great deal of truth in the statement of Dr. Dawson to the press, "The First Unitarian Church of Ann Arbor has for twenty years been recognized as conservative among the churches of the Western Conference."

Dr. Dawson was called to the pastorate here in December, 1910. Undoubtedly a cultured man, he was fitted from an intellectual and social standpoint to fill the pulpit here admirably. It is unfortunate that his first pulpit should have been here, as he resigned from the Unitarian Ministry after his failure. I say

unfortunate in the full meaning of the word, for he ^{is} ~~was~~ the type of man much sought after by the congregations of larger cities today.

The movement that started the schism of the Ann Arbor Church was the allowing of the Socialist Club of the University to use the church for their meetings. Sensing that here they had found a religious body that was sympathetic to them, the socialists became interested in the church and many of them joined. In fact they joined in such large numbers that they were able to control the vote in a church meeting and succeeded in placing two men on the board of trustees. That they could have placed their men in full force on the board is probable, but they returned five of the former members. One of the two was Professor Karl E. Guthe and the other was Mr. George Bishop, the candidate of the Liberal Student's Union.

The Liberal Student's Union considered themselves justified in their move because several years before ^{they} ~~this body~~ had been impelled to leave the church because of restrictions put on the church property by the board.

This victory, of course, aroused much resentment on the part of the old members. An intensive campaign resulted, both factions inducing as many members as possible to join their ranks. The socialist "wing" recruited from the student body and the "old line" members went into the delinquent ^{rolls} ~~members~~ and those who had lost interest in the church.

The meeting of May 6, 1912, was a tumultous one. About seventy conservatives were in attendance and fifty-five socialists. With their numerical superiority, the conservatives were victors in this odd struggle, intolerant as it was, in a supposed liberal

church. The Minister, Dr. Percy M. Dawson, was asked to resign. The socialists, disgruntled, left the church. Thus ended the stormiest episode in the local church history.

Dr. Dawson returned to his teaching after the incident. It is hard to get an accurate picture of the man from the people who were here at the time because most of them either liked or disliked him for his attitude on this one point so intensely that any opinions they formed have no place in a history of this kind. That he was a strong personality there is no doubt. That his stay here had any lasting results is not certain.

CHAPTER SIX THE PERIOD OF THE WAR

In postulating general rules for the study of their complex subject, historians seem agreed that events many times seem to produce men capable of coping with them. This is true of all history, be it of the world or of a parish.

After Dr. Dawson left the Ann Arbor church, there was great disorganization, almost chaos. There was a sharp cleavage in the membership and warring factions threatened to extinguish this church.

Mr. Loring was the man of the hour. He arrived at a hard time and his genius for organization almost immediately starting reknitting the Ann Arbor body. He mixed well with the parishioners, preached sermons that bridged the gap between the unreconciled groups and speedily produced an ordered body with a unified spirit.

Robert S. Loring ~~was~~ is the type of man who is very popular with congregations today. Business-like, but cultured, a good preacher and an intelligent one, it is small wonder that he has risen so far in his profession.

He was dealing with a changing church in a rapidly moving epoch. Attendance was falling off. The "old time religion" no longer carried its all powerful appeal to the new type of man that the many inventions brought forth. This was not only true in the older churches. The "religious depression" had struck at Unitarianism also. To be liberal was not enough. One must have a constructive and understanding liberalism that was right up to the minute. Religion, to exist, must become an active force in the community. People were not going to church simply out of habit. And they were beginning

to evaluate carefully before making subscriptions to any institution. Briefly, religion of all kinds must prove its worth or perish.

This was also the period of the world war. Internal and external pressure on religion was terrific. It is fortunate for the Ann Arbor body that a man of Mr. Loring's calibre was in charge here.

Mr. Loring's method of preaching was keen and direct. Humanism and its doctrine of self reliance was a product of the twentieth century that he incorporated into his sermons. His addresses were more on religion and its place in the world today and amid the problems of today than on moral behavior and spiritual well being.

The^e_^ addition to the church of a social hall was made during his stay. The memorial stained glass window was moved to the other side of the auditorium where it was more immediately visible upon entering.

However, these architectural changes were not so important as the change in outlook that came with him. As the first humanist to occupy the pulpit, it is natural to expect him to show the way to a revitalized and socially valuable religion. This was his contribution to Ann Arbor and it is for this that the parish here remembers him. He left the parish stronger and better organized than he found it. He made friends who today remember him well.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE POST WAR PERIOD

The great war with its great shift in human and moral values had a profound affect on religion of every sort. Unitarianism was no exception. Philosophies were torn down or left badly shaken by the gigantic catyclasm which clutched at the throat of civilization.

At its close there arose a devil-may-care type of thinking, a here-today, gone-tomorrow plan of life that threatened to wipe out existing moral codes. It became the problem of every church to make a drastic and difficult readjustment to the new conditions.

Ann Arbor, as one of the centers of education and constructive thinking was a focal point of the attack. Here were the present and future intellectual leaders of the nation. The American Unitarian Association sent Sidney S. Robbins here early in 1919. He came here with a reputation as a philosopher. He was faced with many discouragements during his nine years here. In the first place, attendance ^{at} church on Sunday morning grew out of the habit class and into the class of a chore ~~that~~ ^{to which} any excuse for not going became honorable and "the thing to do".

Church attendance in the Ann Arbor church dropped. But it is only fair to place the blame on the extraordinary conditions rather than the man. Dr. Robbins was much loved by his parishioners and of all the old parishioners who have been interviewed, there was not one who did not express his appreciation of the privilege of knowing the man. It is unfortunate that he could not have come at a more oportune time.

Mr. Robbins left the church in the summer of 1928. There was no minister until the spring of 1929 when Harold P. Marley came.

Mr. Marley was faced with a more difficult problem than his predecessor. The church was badly disorganized. They seemed to have lost their impetus to go on. There was talk of disbanding. The reaction had set in after the war and its consequent era of ~~stagnant~~ loose ^{thinking} living. The whole of western civilization was drifting, neither caring nor knowing whither. Economically, the people of this nation and others were mad with a lust for easy money. Spiritually they seemed to have forgotten everything else.

To return to the problem here, Mr. Marley had a nucleus of faithful friends of the church to work with but little else. He says that he realized that the time had come for religion, especially Unitarian religion, to prove itself. It must have something definite to offer or succumb. It must conquer this situation or admit its inadequacy.

Being a humanist himself, Mr. Marley felt that the only solution was to ~~xx~~ establish a new kind of church in this community, a church that would be something more than a meeting place for Sunday mornings. The church must become a living, working force ~~in the community~~. Mr. Marley set out to make it after this plan.

Before he came to Ann Arbor, he had had wide experience in social betterment organizations. It is not an exaggeration to say that since he came here, there has not been an improvement suggested in the community or an unfortunate group which has not found in him a friend and able advocate.

Starting with a service of rededication on Tuesday, November 26, 1929, at which the church and its new minister pledged themselves to renewed effort, Mr. Marley pushed forward with his program. The American Unitarian Association gave enough money to renovate the church and parsonage. This put the church on its feet as a physically perfect building.

Mr. Marley threw open the church doors to worthy organizations. Business girls met there. Labor groups came. The Jews of Ann Arbor used the auditorium for ~~these~~ ceremonies on their holy days.

The church declared definitely for humanism when Curtis Reese of Chicago was invited here as the speaker during religious emphasis week. Mr. Marley was made chairman of the committee for social reformation at the Ann Arbor Ministerial Association.

A marriage institute was planned for the fall of 1930 and four speeches were given. This was open to the public. Mayor Murphy of Detroit, now Governor General of the Phillipines, was the speaker at an unemployment mass meeting in Hill Auditorium. Mr. Marley is chairman of the civil liberties committee here. This organization held a mass meeting to protest the shooting of Ford Workers.

Mr. Marley has been active in the Socialist party both in Ann Arbor and in the State of Michigan. No socialism has entered his sermons but he has been a candidate on the Socialist ticket for Congressman and for Alderman.

The Board of Trustees of the Ann Arbor Church have given Mr. Marley full backing and are as interested as he is in community problems. The services in the church are humanistic and there is a humanistic marriage ceremony written by

Mr. Marley.

Twenty five new members were taken in during the last year and the church, while not large, is a living force in the community. No other church in this city and few in the nation can boast of as large a proportion of its citizens engaged in socially important work.

As this church was established for the purpose of bringing Unitarianism to the University students, it might be fitting to close this history with a brief report of the activities of the church in that line. The Liberal Student's Union reaches several hundred students each year. There is an average attendance of about twenty five at the present time. The open house which the church holds every Friday night during the school year is well attended by both students and faculty. These gatherings are informal.

This closes this history. The church is sixty eight years old. The date today is April 27th, in the year 1933.

AN APOLOGY

The author has an apology to make. It is to the men who served as ministers of the First Unitarian Church of Ann Arbor. It is a humble apology to them for this little history.

Truly, history is a barren thing. He came on such-and-such a date he did so-and-so, he left. The historian begs mercy on the grounds of lack of space. In his relentless search for fact, he must obliterate any emotion or prejudice. As soon as history becomes human, it ceases to be accurate.

This would not be fair to the nine men who have given of their lives to this church. They were more than mere names to the men and women who heard them and were inspired and comforted by them.

Therefore, reverently, I bow my head to them. Their service is not something to be recorded and analysed. It can not be. If I have seemed to slight the human side of their ministries, I can only say I am sorry. Memory does not slight that service. The fellowship they have built is a living, glowing tribute.

Each parish call, each word spoken from heart to heart over a dear one departed, each marriage partnership consummated, each word spoken to troubled men and women in the quiet of the study - these are the true memorial of the nine men who have served here.

It is fitting that a word of gratitude be expressed to the men who have filled the pulpit from time to time, professors, ministers, laymen. They, too, have contributed.

And to the countless loving services that any church calls forth; are any words of mine adequate?