

UNIVERSALIST CHURCHES

The Four Societies of That Denomination in New York
Reminiscences of Dr. Chapin's Old Church—A Universalist Preacher's Tilt with Dr. Talmage—
The Sawyer Memorial Church and the Third Universalist Society

The Church of the Divine Paternity, at Fifth avenue and Forty-fifth street, is the wealthiest Universalist Church in the city and one of the most famous in the country. It was known for many years simply as "Dr. Chapin's Church." Not only Universalists, but many others, especially young men, of all denominations, attended the services both in the present church building and in other places where the congregation previously worshipped. His [Chapin's] forcible delivery was studied by many actors and actresses who came to his church whenever they were in town. Edwin Forrest was a frequent attendant and so was Davenport; and Christine Nilsson once said to him, shortly before she left this country, "Doctor, I came to listen to you the first time I went to church here, and I've come to listen to you the last time I go to church here." Sunday after Sunday Horace Greeley was seen walking up the aisle on the right side to his pew; while the Carey sisters, James Cushing, Jr., Albert Havemeyer, Silas C. Herring, Frank Leslie and "Uncle Abner," as Abner Chichester is affectionately remembered, were also of the congregation.

The first service of this congregation was held on Sept. 2, 1833, by the Rev. William Whittaker, in the old Apollo Rooms, on Broadway. By the following eleventh of November the society was organized as the Fourth Universalist Society. The New Jerusalem Church, a small frame building on Pearl street, opposite City Hall place, was rented, and services were held there on Dec. 2. This church was back of the buildings fronting on the street, and was reached by an alleyway. It contained but fifty pews on the floor, and only a few in addition in a small gallery. Forty-three of these were rented for six months at a total of \$365. Among those who attended worship there, and are still attendants at the Church of the Divine Paternity, are James Giffin, Seymour J. Strong, Franklin Johnson, Samuel Weeks and E. B. Fellows.

Not long afterward, as the membership had increased, a larger church was leased in Duane street, near Chatham. Dr. Whittaker having changed his faith, the Rev. I. [Isaac] D. Williamson was called in November, 1840. Twice before that a young man, the Rev. E. H. Chapin of Richmond, Va., had occupied the pulpit, and was much admired by the congregation, one of whom spoke of him at the time as "a wonderful smart young man." In February, 1841, the congregation moved to the lecture room of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in Crosby street, where it remained until the May following, when a new church was opened in Elizabeth street, near Hester. In 1843 Mr. Williamson was succeeded by the Rev. Moses Ballou. His successor was the Rev. Thomas L. Harris. In May, 1847, the congregation left the Elizabeth street church and again worshipped in the Apollo Rooms until May, 1848, when it occupied the Murray street church. It was then that the pastorate of Dr. Chapin began. Owing to the up-town movement, it was decided in 1864 to build on the site now occupied by the church, which was dedicated on the first Sabbath in December, 1866. During the preceding two years worship had been held in Dr. Bellows' old church, between Prince and Spring streets, on Broadway, and at the Cooper Union. Dr. Bellows and Dr. Chapin, by the way, were staunch friends, and frequently one went to hear the other preach.

After Dr. Chapin's death the Rev. Charles H. Eaton was called from Palmer, Mass. He is only 26 years of age. Since his pastorate began there have been many additions to the congregation, which now numbers over four hundred. The Rev. Mr. Eaton's salary is \$6,000. There is a Sunday school connected with the church, and a mission which owns Brevoort Hall. Mr. D.D.T. Marshal, who joined in 1838, is Treasurer and Secretary. Among the other members

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are R. L. Strebeigh, C. [Collis] P. Huntington, G. [George] G. Lake, E. R. Holden, Benjamin F. Romaine, Abner Mellen, and Sinclair Tousey, who occupies the Greeley pew.\

A year ago the church, a brown-stone structure, was decorated inside at an expense of \$30,000. Back of the pulpit is a large picture of the Angel of Light in opalescent glass. Over the gallery hang velvets on which Scripture texts are embroidered until the organ loft is reached, where the hangings bear the score of Old Hundred. The ceiling twinkles with stars on a pink ground, and the windows are of burnt cathedral glass. To the left of the pulpit is St. Gauden's fine bronze relief of Dr. Chapin. The music has always been very fine, Miss Abbot and Miss Thursby being among those who have sung in the quartet. Mr. A. J. Holden is the organist, and Mr. Marshal has general supervision over musical matters. A feature of the service is the chanting of the Lord's Prayer after the first prayer offered.

The Church of Our Savior [Sixth Universalist Society] is on the north side of Fifty-seventh street, just west of Eighth avenue. It is built of brick, and its architecture was neglected in order to give it seating room and light. It is built on three city lots, and has capacity for seating 1,400 persons. Its cost was \$145,000. The congregation numbers 200 families. The society was organized on July 28, 1851. Services were first held in a hall at Eighth avenue and Twenty-fourth street. The first pastor was the Rev. Nelson Snell. He was succeeded by the Rev. Ahser Moore, and J. H. Shepard and Dr. E. G. Brooks were other pastors of the church. In 1860 the church was moved to Twentieth street, between Sixth and Seventh avenues, and again in 1866 to rooms at Broadway and Thirty-fourth street, and in the year following to the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Thirty-fifth street, near Sixth avenue, which was purchased for \$34,000. The corner stone of the present church was laid in 1872. The Rev. Dr. James M. Pullman, the present pastor, assumed charge in 1868. He is a native of Chautauqua County, and was born in 1836. He was educated at the divinity school of St. Lawrence University, from which he graduated in 1861. He preached for six years in the First Universalist Church of Troy before coming here. He is a brother of the Rev. R. [Royal] H. Pullman and of [George M. Pullman] the inventor of the Pullman sleeping car.

When Mr. Pullman was called to take charge of the Church of Our Savior his congregation consisted of forty-two families, and his salary was \$2,500. His salary is now \$5,000. Mr. Pullman was extensively reported at the time of the great controversy concerning the existence of hell, and his advocacy of the opening of museums and libraries on Sunday attracted attention. He once had an amusing tilt with Dr. Talmage in the religious papers. Dr. Talmage wrote: "Mr. Pullman, the Universalist minister, rivaling his brother of sleeping car celebrity, proposes to take us all to heaven sound asleep in a spiritual 'Pullman palace car.' We can take off our boots and hats, and lie down on our backs and wake up in glory. John Bunyan's pilgrim went tugging along on foot, and Paul had many an anxious day of hard walking, and all the old-time righteous felt themselves 'scarcely saved,' but (three cheers for the modern invention!) we can all now go in 'Pullman's spiritual sleeper, the Universalist ministers acting as brakemen and conductors." In reply Mr. Pullman wrote: "If Mr. Talmage would only adopt this idea in his earthly travels (that of making Jordan a hard road to travel) you would always know in what part of a railway train to find him. 'Is Talmage aboard?' you ask the conductor. 'Yes.' Where—in the Pullman car?' 'Oh, no.' 'In the baggage car?' 'No, ask the fireman.' The fireman pulls open the furnace door, and there—in the fire-box, it's brother Talmage, singed but serious, bound to get to his destination as 'scarcely' as possible and composing meanwhile an article for the *Christian at Work* against 'spiritual sleepers' and in favor of salvation by squirming."

Among the prominent members of the Church of Our Savior are C. H. Delamater, George A. Robinson, T. Fred. Thomas, Robert Gair, C. G. Lippincott, Monroe Crane, David A. Sherman, William A. Miles, and L. B. Wing.

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The Third Universalist Church, at 206 Bleecker street, is a plain, commodious brick building. The society dates back to about 1810, when it was formed largely from members of the old Orchard Street Universalist Church. The first place of meeting was in Sixth avenue, near Waverly place. In 1836 the present church building was dedicated. Father [Clement] Lefevre was the first pastor. The present pastor is the Rev. S. A. Gardner. Among the leading men of the church are Mr. James Slater, proprietor of the Berkeley House; Mr. John Biddle, Mr. Samuel G. Hull, and Mr. David D. Stagg. The church has a membership roll of about 600, but the uptown movement of population has somewhat affected the size of its congregations. The pastor receives a salary of \$2,500 per annum. The sermon yesterday morning was on the text "My Kingdom is Not of this World," John xviii, 36. Mr. Gardner spoke of the great material progress of the world as a thing apart from spiritual greatness. Mere increase of wealth and of population and the multiplying of the conveniences of life, he said, were not of themselves gains to the spiritual welfare of humanity. A spirit of Chrislike devotion to the people was needed to promote God's kingdom upon earth. Upon this spirit Church and Government must rest, or they will surely fall.

The Sawyer Memorial Church, in 127th street, near Lexington avenue [Harlem], is built of brick, with granite front, in the Gothic style. The doors are of natural wood. On either side and above are stained glass windows. The interior is tasteful. The walls are painted a light yellow, with slight ornamentation. The windows at the sides are of squares of blue and yellow glass. Across the ceiling stretch massive rafters of natural wood. The gallery at the rear, the pews, the pulpit, and the three armchairs behind it are of yellow pine. Over the pulpit, under a circular window of stained glass, is the inscription, "He is Risen." The choir and organ are in the gallery.

The church represents the Second Universalist Society of New York, which was organized in 1828. Their first place of worship was in Grand street. They next occupied a church in Orchard street, near Broome, for twenty-five years. This church was sold, and for five years meetings were held in the building of the Historical Society. Public worship was after this time discontinued, until six years ago, when the Society purchased an old wooden church on the site of the present one, afterward erecting the building now occupied, which was completed two years ago. The pastor is the Rev. D. M. Hodge. In his absence, yesterday morning, the Rev. C. [Cyrus] H. Fay spoke upon the sources of prejudice against the Universalists as a sect. Among the members are J. Y. Watkins, Jr., J. M. Sledman, A. A. Butler, Samuel Weekes, and O. L. Stickney, Jr. The pastor's salary is \$1,500.

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