Abel C. Thomas, *A Century of Universalism in Philadelphia and New-York, Sketches of Its History in Reading [PA], Hightstown [NJ] Brooklyn and Elsewhere* (Philadelphia: 1872) [abridged]

[p. vii] After all the endeavors of one hundred years, we are numerically, in the sense of organization, a small people. We are surrounded by sects differing in name but holding substantially the same anti-Universalist creed; and there is sometimes the dismay and questioning of the young man. Whoso shall have his eyes opened, will understand the assurance of the prophet.

I do not claim that all the beneficent changes of a century are attributable to Universalism. I grate-[p. viii] fully acknowledge the benign influence of science, philosophy, literature, the arts, civilization in general—also the power of good men everywhere, building wiser and better than they knew: yet I do hold that Universalism has been the inspiration of all these instrumentalities. Universalists have not always been in the fore-front of reforms, but Universalism has. The creed has always been in advance of the men, whereas in all other cases the men have been in advance of the creed. And it is because the principles of Universalism have been absorbed by outside progress, that Universalism as an organization is so restricted this day. Times have changed, and men have changed: Universalism remains, as it has always been, a divine prophecy.

The final reconciliation of all souls is the dis-[p. ix] tinctive thought in our profession of faith, and we cannot cancel or suspend that, for the accommodation of any unbeliever.

I purpose simply to set forth the rise and visible progress of Universalism as a doctrine and an organization, within certain limits.

Universalism is indeed both the Heart and the Head of Christianity. Alike its supplications and its thanksgivings, neither transcending the other, are for all sorts and conditions of men.

We are not blind to the activities of sin, the stir and craft of multitudes who lie in wait to deceive, and who practically reject every negative in the [p. x] decalogue. And we look with lamentation upon the grossness of the masses who seem to have no aspiration higher than the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh, and are not moved into decency of demeanor by even the pride of life. We are not blind to the crimson and the scarlet of man's selfishness and sinfulness; nor are we afflicted, as charged by some, with morbid sentimentalism...

We can trace abounding sin and condemnation to the postulate of the serpent in the garden—namely, that there is escape from the consequences and penalties of transgression.

How shall we escape? is the question outside of Universalism: How shall we escape? classes us with myriads who failed in the experiment, Heb. ii. 2, 3. And we hold that the certainty of a merciful punishment is of vastly greater solemnity and restraint, than is the terror of a merciless but uncertain judgment. The foundation of the Lord standeth sure.

[p. 261] In 1787 a work was published in New York, entitled "The Universalist," 300 pages i2mo., written by William Pitt Smith, M. D. His professional talents, his literary acquirements, his character for integrity, were so extensively known and acknowledged, as to gain for him a wide political influence, especially as he used his talent and opportunity in the furtherance of all philanthropic plans. In the N. Y. Legislature of 1796 he was a strenuous advocate for the abolition of slavery. Exposure to inclement weather super-induced disease, and he died in the early part of that year, aged thirty-six. The book referred to is a clear and forcible argument for Universalism.

In 1793 another work, also in behalf of Universalism, was published in New York, written by Joseph Young, M.D., the tutor and patron of Dr. Smith. It was entitled, "Calvinism and Universalism Contrasted." Dr. Young fairly [p. 262] earned an exalted reputation for benevolence of spirit, urbanity of manner, and skill in his profession. In the closing years of his life he practised without any charge, and was particularly devoted to the necessities of the poor.

In 1804, Dr. Young published another work, of the like tenor as the preceding. It was entitled "The Restoration of All Men, proved by Scripture, Reason and Common Sense." What this volume lacked in logical arrangement was more than compensated by the soundness of the principles enunciated and the genial spirit of its pages. The author died April 18, 18 14, aged eighty-two.

Abel C. Thomas, *A Century of Universalism in Philadelphia and New-York, Sketches of Its History in Reading [PA], Hightstown [NJ] Brooklyn and Elsewhere* (Philadelphia: 1872) [abridged]

REV. ABEL SARJENT.

In 1793 the first and second numbers of a remarkable quarterly were issued in New York. The work was entitled, "The Free Universal Magazine, being in part a display of the Mind of Jesus, as manifested to his Servants, the Members of the New and Free Church." Each number consisted of from 42 to 60 pages, close l2mo.—the third and fourth numbers being printed in Baltimore. Closed March, 1794.

Of this publication Rev. Abel Sarjent was editor, and if he never did anything else in furthering the cause he loved, he deserves to have his memory gratefully refreshed in our midst on the score of this record of the olden time.

[p. 263] Besides many religious essays of permanent value, there is statistical information as to churches and ministers in that day. There is evidence, too, incidentally introduced, that while the churches met in the Philadelphia Convention, being a junction of the Murray and Winchester branches, had agreed to disagree in details, and were at peace, there was sharp, disastrous controversy elsewhere, on the old questions of necessity and free-will, the extremes of an endless hell of misery, or no hell at all in a future state," &c.

[p. 265]

REV. EDWARD MITCHELL.

In the spring of 1796, one of the class-leaders in the John Street Methodist Society in New York, who had for some time held the sentiment of Universalism, relinquished his class-paper to the Presiding Elder; and it was thought that this official was bent on the excommunication of the Universalist. The latter being joined by two brethren in the faith, waited on the Elder, and said in substance, [p. 266] "On the subject of religion we three are of the same mind, and what you intend to do with one, we suppose you will do with all. As we are men in business, our characters are dear to us, and we request that you will be so good as to give us a certificate, stating that it was not for any immorality of conduct, but for a difference of opinion that we are excluded."

The Elder replied that he would not act hastily—meaning, it was thought, that he suspected or knew of other sympathizers with Universalism in the Methodist Church, and that he feared fulfilment of the adage, "the more haste the less speed." But the answer to the reasonable application of these three members being unreasonably delayed, they forwarded the following note:

"Sir:—As you cannot, or will not, do us the justice to which we are entitled, we do not choose any longer to continue in this condition. Therefore, from the date hereof, we shall no longer consider ourselves as members of the Methodist Society, nor subject to its precarious discipline.

Abraham E. Brouwer
Robert Snow
Edward Mitchell
"New York, April 28, 1796."

"Thus situated," says Mr. Mitchell, "belonging to no church, we seriously considered what was our duty, as professors of religion, on the subject of worship. We knew that we could read the Scriptures together, pray to God for each other, sing the praise of God our Saviour, and be helpers to each other in one common faith. We therefore determined to worship together, hoping for the enjoyment of the promise of Christ, that where two [p. 267] or three are gathered in his name, he would be with them."

The conduct of the Methodist authorities produced considerable agitation, and several persons who had formerly belonged to that society, and who "hoped for the happiness of all men," withdrew and united with the band of believers. Among these, mention is made of Barnet Mooney, "a highly esteemed friend, whose sound sense was of great value in the formation of the Constitution." These, to the number of fourteen, were leagued as the "Society of United Christian Friends."

A room in a private dwelling did not long accommodate the increasing group of worshippers, and a meeting-house was erected in Vandewater Street. In Nov., 1800, the Society resolved to become an

incorporated body—a movement which caused so great offence to Mr. Brouwer and Mr. Snow, who had both officiated as Elders, that they withdrew shortly after.

Class-meetings and Feasts of Charity were relinquished in 1807—thus striking out several of the elements of the Methodist Church which had been at first retained and adopted.

In the autumn of 1798, Mr. Murray visited and preached in New York, but not in the meeting-house of the "United Christian Friends," for what reason does not appear.

[On] Jan. 19, 1801, being straitened for room, the Society purchased from the Lutherans a church [p. 268] in what is now known as Pearl Street—a property which in 1818 passed into possession of the Swedenborgians.

Rev. John Foster came to New York in 1803. His friends, it seems, asked permission, in his behalf, for occupancy of the church in Pearl Street, presumably not so as to interfere with Mr. Mitchell's regular services. The trustees refused the request, for what reasons we know not. Some of the members were so displeased with this refusal, that they opened a place of meeting in Rose Street, and afterwards in Broadway near Pearl. Here Mr. Foster continued to preach for about two years, and from that date all trace of him is lost.

Until 1803 there was no stated preacher in the organization of "Christian Friends," exclusively devoted to the ministerial office, but Elders served in that capacity, there being at one time as many as five, among whom Mr. William Palmer was prominent. But in July of that year Mr. Mitchell was specially appointed and set apart as the pastor—a position which he occupied without interruption until the summer of 1810. He was then settled as colleague of Mr. Murray in Boston for about fifteen months, Mr. Palmer meanwhile officiating in his stead in New York.

He was a brother of Rev. Dan Foster, who in that year issued a critical review of Rev. Nathan Strong's advocacy of endless misery, Walpole, N. H.

[p. 269] Being recalled from his New England labors, in the latter part of Oct., 1811, the Society of United Christian Friends commenced a new career of prosperity. So crowded were the meetings for several years, that a new and more spacious church was demanded, and one was promptly erected in Duane Street, corner of what is now City Hall Place. It was dedicated in Dec, 1818.

Thurlow Weed, in reminiscences of his early life in New York, being then in an humble sphere, related that he first attended upon the ministry of the renowned orthodox divines of that day, but "settled down (1815) under the droppings of Rev. Edward Mitchell, a truly eloquent and exemplary Universalist, who instructed and elevated a united and happy congregation in a small church situated in Magazine (now Pearl) Street."

In "Old New York, or Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years," by John W. Francis, M.D., enlarged and revised edition of 1858, I find the following:

"The Universalists, with Edward Mitchell and William Palmer, though circumscribed in fiscal means, nevertheless drew together a most respectable body of believers to their house of worship in Magazine Street, now Pearl. They were both men of eloquence and good pleaders in behalf of their tenets, and had large auditories. Occasionally they were sustained in the work of their conviction by the preaching of John Murray, whose casual absence from his people in [p. 270] Massachusetts, enabled him to gratify the disciples of their creed in New York. Murray had a rival of a like name to his own, of the Calvinistic faith, a man of sound erudition and rhetorical powers, and in contradistinction they were designated by the sobriquets of Salvation and Damnation Murray. These men moved together so harmoniously that they often alternately occupied the same pulpit on the same day in New England. The Universalist, little John Murray, had much of the primitive about him. His rich humility, his grave accent, and his commentaries on the divine love, won him distinction from every discourse. None could withhold a kindly approbation. He seemed to me always charged with tracts on benevolence, and engaged in distributing a periodical called The Berean, or Scripture Searcher. He called himself a Berean.

"The doctrine of the Universalists had been entertained and promulgated in New York and elsewhere among Americans long prior to the time of the public discourses of Mitchell and Palmer."

....

"Seed therefore had been sown broadcast ere Edward Mitchell had mounted the pulpit. Nevertheless Universalists may well look back with equal emotions of gratitude at the labors of Mitchell and Palmer for a series of years, begun fifty years ago, while their Society was in its infancy, as at the present day they hail their accomplished orator, Dr. Chapin, as their ecclesiastical leader."

Mr. Mitchell was a Calvinistic Universalist, standing distinctly on the Rellyan basis. He never was in formal fellowship with the Universalist denomination, and never fully sympathized with any of its plans or members. He was [p. 271] nevertheless a pronounced believer in the final restitution, and heartily employed the energies of his vigorous mind and the charm of his eloquent voice in its proclamation and defence.

He was, however, impatient of contradiction, and when his popularity waned by reason of increasing infirmity, he became increasingly hostile to every form of profession not in harmony with his own. But nearly all these were the characteristics of another, and I am persuaded that we should either say more about Edward Mitchell or less about John Murray.

Mr. Mitchell was undoubtedly a highly useful man in his generation, and there are few, of any order, who excel what he was in the day of his power. Though not perhaps blameless, he walked firmly in the statutes of the Lord, and left behind him the memory of the just. He died of apoplexy at the house of a friend in North Salem, N. Y., August 8, 1834.

HENRY FITZ.

Henry Fitz, born in Newburyport, Mass., in 1785, removed to Albany in 1817—thence to New York city in 1819—and commenced the publication of the Gospel Herald in the spring of 1820. He was educated in the Calvinistic faith:... The first Universalist preacher he ever heard was John Murray. And it is not wonderful that on his arrival in New [p. 272] York he should seek Mr. Mitchell's church,—nor is it wonderful that his paper should be commenced on the anti-unitarian theory. The first volume was in quarto, four pages weekly.

At the commencement of the second volume, there was a change in both the form of the paper and the platform of principles, there being still a devout recognition of the final reconciliation of all souls. It was now issued in royal octavo, eight pages double columns, and so continued until the end in April, 1827.

Mr. Fitz, though he never claimed to be a clergyman and never aspired to the consideration of the ministerial office, for several years preached whenever and wherever there was an opportunity. He was a clear thinker, a forcible speaker, and a terrible battle-axe when arrayed against the falsehoods and shams of the world—and withal a man of a good spirit. Best of all, he was an upright man in his life, holding the truth in righteousness.

In 1840 he removed to Baltimore, where he died of consumption, July 10, 1848... The Gospel Herald was strongly controversial, as indeed a Universalist paper needed to be in that day. Mostly through this influence, in 1822 a Society for the "Investigation and Establishment of Gospel Truth" was instituted. For [p. 273] a long time its sessions were held in a school-room in Christie Street, and in different parts of the city. More frequently than any other questions, the relative merits of Universalism and Partialism were freely discussed, Mr. Fitz being prominently one of the disputants.

Chiefly, I judge, by the energy of Henry Fitz, a building once occupied by the members of St. Luke's Church, corner of Hudson and Christopher Streets, in "the village" (Greenwich district being then a village,) was opened for public worship on Tuesday evening, July 6, 1822. Less than six months afterward, it was opened for religious worship on Sunday afternoon also, Mr. Mitchell officiating usually; and in the close of February there was announcement that the Second Society of United Christian Friends had been organized.

A lot was immediately obtained at the corner of Prince Street and Orange—the corner-stone of a spacious church was laid, July 10, 1823—and the house was informally dedicated on the fourth Sunday in July, 1824. The session room had previously been dedicated and occupied by worshippers.

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Dating early in July, 1824, and ending with July, 1825, Rev. Nehemiah Dodge was for one year the stated minister of the Prince St. Church. Under what sort of covenant I know not, but he went to Philadelphia, Aug. 3, 1825, where he officiated for about three months, Mr. Kneeland [p. 274] being meanwhile in Prince Street. The latter was invited to the pastorate and commenced his permanent services, Oct. 4, 1825.

This connection continued until the spring of 1827. It would be useless now, as it certainly was irritating then, to consider the question of ejectment or withdrawal, or the antecedent or accompanying controversy, and therefore I will say, only, that the connection was dissolved—certainly not with impeachment of Mr. Kneeland's denominational standing.

What preachers immediately followed him as supplies does not appear, but he was succeeded by Rev. Adin Ballou, as pastor, on the third Sunday in Sept., 1827, which relation continued about nine months, ending with the close of June, 1828. Then followed abortive efforts to secure the services of Rev. Hosea Ballou—after which the house was closed, unless for an occasional service, until the spring of 1829, when Rev. John F. Myers, then late of Boston, was elected pastor. The engagement closed with August. [p. 275] Often have I pondered the question, What would have been the history of Universalism in New York to this date, if a man of devout stability had been pastor of the Prince St. Church from the beginning? There was a powerful organization of believers, needing no profane hand to steady the ark of the Lord. Only this was required in tabernacle or in temple: See that the manna be neither spoiled nor wasted, nor the blossoms blasted of the budding rod.

REV. ABNER KNEELAND.

In leaving the Prince St. Church, Mr. Kneeland was accompanied by a strong minority, if not indeed by a majority. They were sound men, mostly, and believed there was soundness in him. At first they occupied the New Jerusalem Chapel in Pearl Street, May 27, 1827—in June, organized the Second Universalist Society (the Society remaining in Prince Street being now known as the First)—in July, engaged Tammany Hall for three months, and were established in Masonic Hall, Broadway, Nov. 11, 1827.

Then, and for months afterward, some of the most distinguished clergymen in our ranks held Mr. Kneeland in fellowship, though deploring his denials and his doubts. Expostulation [p. 276] was vain. Constitutionally a sceptic, and exulting in novel criticisms, he constantly evoked questionings which he could not answer. Seeking celebrity, he gained notoriety, seeming not to perceive the distinction of difference, and ere-long concerning faith made shipwreck, whatever became of a good conscience.

He had been editor of the Olive Branch, since the close of May, 1827. This paper superseded or succeeded the Gospel Herald, and at the close of volume first absorbed The Christian Inquirer, which had lived and died in the care of Rev. B. Bates. No longer upheld by a publishing association, Mr. Kneeland took proprietary as well as editorial control in May, 1828. The whole establishment passed into ownership of Rev. T.[Theophilus] Fiske in the close of that year, and in the first week of the new year, 1829, appeared the first number of the Gospel Herald, new series, Rev. Abel C. Thomas being nominally the publisher.

About the middle of January, Mr. Kneeland invited Miss Frances Wright to lecture in his pulpit in Masonic Hall. She was a woman of rare talent, without doubt; and I see no reason to doubt that she sincerely believed the "Institution of Nashoba," a sort of prophetic Fourier Association of which she was the founder, would greatly promote human welfare; but in her "Explanatory Notes respecting its nature and objects," published in the New Harmony Gazette, she advocated highly offensive principles and details [p. 277] respecting the marriage law and the domestic relations, and at the same time was understood to discard every formula of religious faith. Add to this that she had organized certain beneficent plans in behalf of emancipated slaves at Memphis, Tenn., and the cup of popular indignation overflowed.

So far as social reform was concerned, Mr. Kneeland sympathized with her and with Robert Owen, and had something or much to do with the Franklin Community established at Haverstraw, N. Y. Whatever may have been the outline or filling up of its government, more than one Universalist minister of that day commended it as a philanthropic measure, and it is possible that exclusion of sectarism [sectarianism] was construed into rejection of the religious element.

At the time of Miss Wright's first visit to New York, Mr. Kneeland had for several years been slowly but surely drifting away from anchorage ground in the New Testament. A man of unquestioned reputation as to Christian faith, with little hazard if not with impunity might have invited her or Mr. Owen into his pulpit to lecture on social reform: Mr. Kneeland did it at his peril, and at the peril of his cause. It is not probable that his invitation had anything to do with sceptical or speculative opinions. He was deeply interested in plans for furthering human welfare, socially; but the public sentiment, while condemning her, held him respon [p. 278] sible for the alleged grossness and infidelity of the scheme.

He was a pure man in his life, but not strong enough in the repute of faith to stand up under the burden. He had lost ground among his denominational friends. The Second Universalist Society, of which he was pastor, annulled its connection with him, and his sympathizers hired a Hall in Pearl Street near Broadway, where he walked out into the utter-dark sea of doubt, with the apology to his protesting personal friends, "I have left stepping-stones behind me; —I do not urge the precision of a day, but am I wrong in considering this the gloomiest era of our annals in New York? Mr. Fiske must needs, at times, be in Philadelphia with his parish: Mr. Bates, whose adherents were very [?] at most, never came near us; Mr. Mitchell had no regard for our denominational misfortune; Prince St. Church was closed; Masonic Hall was closed. Homeless and hopeless, the Universalists were scattered. And often, when spending my evenings alone, in our cumbered, dingy printing-office, 6 Centre Street, I appropriated an ancient record: He came thither unto a cave .... and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him, What doest thou here, Abel ? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left.

[p. 279] Yet Mr. Kneeland (March 2, 1829) still claimed to be a Christian Minister, a claim which he asserted as late as May 20, by attending the session of the Southern Association in Hartford and presenting a request to be admitted as a member of the Council. This was refused, and he was suspended from the fellowship of the order.

It certainly must be classed among the curiosities of the human mind, that the extremes of credulity and incredulity should meet in the same individual. Professing no faith in the prophets of the olden time, he sincerely believed in the ability of two little girls, modern seers, to describe the locality of buried treasures by looking into a glass of water with pebbles at the bottom, and on equally good (or the same) authority invested all he had, and much of what several of his friends had, in digging in Dunderberg mountain for Kidd's money, and ransacking Hurl Gate for a sunken ship laden with gold!

—After a few years of varied experience in New York, Mr. Kneeland removed to Boston, where he lectured to a loose-organization of followers. Some narrow-minded zealots, taking advantage of an old Puritan law, pushed him into court, and into prison, too—on a charge of blasphemy, I believe. There was more infidelity in the creed and in the deed of those zealots, than in any crowd of people who say in [p. 280] their heart what he had uttered with his lips or by his pen. Surely the imprisonment of an old white-haired man, for a few fanatical-sceptical words, was one of the most barbarian as well as impolitic expedients of the nineteenth century.

How long subsequently, I do not remember, but Mr. Kneeland migrated to the Des Moines River region of Iowa, where he cultivated a few acres. I have no memorandum of the date of his death.

GRAND STREET CHURCH

Running parallel with Mr. Kneeland's increasing sympathy with the plans of Miss Frances Wright, there were efforts in New York to redeem Zion. In the close of Jan. and in Feb., 1829, Mr. Fiske and

others preached in Prince St. Church and in Masonic Hall; but dawn came in the word that a recently-vacated Episcopal Chapel, near the junction of Grand Street and Division, on leased ground, was for sale on easy terms. By the urgent counsel of Mr. Fiske it was bought—dedicated as the Third Universalist Church, March 8,—and there, April 5, 1829, commenced my stated ministry.

[p. 282]Was it because the well-to-do classes resided at inconvenient distances, or were so utterly discouraged as to have lost even sympathy, or because the new movement was in a lowly edifice? Certainly there was no help from the wealthy fragments of preceding organizations, and contract-payments for our meeting-house, partly met by current income, and of expenses which could not be postponed, incidentally pressed hard upon the preacher in charge.

A detailed statement of the causes and reasons of my removal to Philadelphia in the autumn of that year, would lead me through a story of sickness, poverty and embarrassment, the memory of which I have no desire to perpetuate.—

Mr. Fiske succeeded me in Grand St. Church, though it would seem he was neither pastor nor permanent supply. He was certainly elsewhere frequently.

[p. 283] the Gospel Herald of June 19, 1830, announced that " Rev. T. J. Sawyer has accepted a call to settle over the Third Universalist Society in Grand Street." There can be no doubt that Universalism in New York touched bottom in Jan. or Feb., 1829, and confessedly it was very low one year later. The chief things which prevented utter overthrow were these: The possession of a meeting-house, and the coming of Mr. Sawyer in the spring of 1830. He had the help and en-[p. 284] couragement of good men, yet often was constrained to exclaim, Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord! Mr. Sawyer was admirably fitted for the three-fold position which he now occupied, preacher, pastor and editor. Learning, fidelity, industry; with courtesy in speech and dignity in manner, qualified him for his responsible trusts, and the denomination has never been stingy in the acknowledgment of his merit and value.

In Jan., 1832, Shaler J. Hillyer, whom the Lord had prepared for the work, entered the ministry with high encomium of worthiness; and the world was informed, "with feelings of no ordinary pleasure," that Rev. Wm. Whittaker, whom the Episcopalians had prepared for the pulpit, had become a convert to Universalism. Of the latter we shall hear in time enough. The former was truly a devout, humble, genial, self-sacrificing man, counting not even his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy. In one year of missionary service, there being no railroads, he travelled 4622 miles, [p. 285] preached in 81 different places,—meeting-houses, town-houses, school-houses, public-houses, dwelling-houses, Lord's-houses, (meaning the open air)—174 times in all—a stinted, meagre livelihood being all his worldly compensation. It was inward necessity which carried him through; and when, in May, 1834, he settled in North Salem, he began a pastorate of more than thirty-one years—ending only with being exalted to a crown and throne, Sept. 26, 1865.

In the spring of 1832 Mr. Sawyer leased a church in Orchard Street for a term of two years, at the annual rent of $1050, four members of his congregation becoming his security as to prompt payment. He in turn pledged to them, as security, the whole income of the church.

The house had been erected four or five years previously for the use of a Society of the Dutch Reformed Church, and had fallen into the hands of the builders because of failure in the receipt of the contract-price. The Grand St. Society took possession on the third Sunday in April, 1832.

It was a hazardous undertaking for Mr. Sawyer. Besides a brave soul and a strong hand, all he had in the world was a young wife and a two years' lease of a Dutch Reformed Church. Both these proved good investments.

[p. 286] The Society gradually increased. Old friends whom circumstances had alienated or caused to stand aloof, returned, and forgot their former difficulties and estrangements. Though the Dutch Reformed Church [p. 287] would not save their meeting-house in Orchard Street, no sooner had it passed into possession of the Universalists, than the members of that communion began to express a most lively concern for the interests of religion. The Christian Intelligencer, their organ, soon began to pay some attention to Universalism; and in the autumn, Rev. W. C. Brownlee, D.D., one of their boldest if

not their ablest men, commenced a course of lectures against the doctrine. These lectures were repeated in all their churches in the city. They were also briefly reported and published in the Intelligencer. An attempt was made, but failed, to induce their delivery in the Orchard St. Church. A review of these lectures, by Mr. Sawyer in his pulpit, was condensed in a series of twenty-two Letters to Dr. Brownlee, and published in the Messenger beginning Feb. 16, 1833.

Among the many sterling men attracted to the Orchard St. Church were Cornelius Harsen and Henry H. Brown. Being neighbors and enjoying each other's confidence, walking to and from the house of God in company, and doubtless conferring by the way, they resolved to embark in the enterprise, not then considered promising, of organizing a Society to be in a manner associated with the Orchard St. Society, though on the other side of the town.

In the spring of 1833 a meeting-house recently vacated by the Presbyterians, in Sixth Avenue at the foot of Amity Street, was obtained by these two brethren, before even their friends were well aware that such a measure was [p. 288] in contemplation. The movement met Mr. Sawyer's hearty concurrence; and here public worship was inaugurated April 21.

The church organized in Greenwich Village and known as the Third Universalist, was without a pastor (though the pulpit was regularly supplied, longest and latest by Rev. Henry Roberts) until March 22, 1834, at which time Rev. C.[Clement] F. Le Fevre took charge.

So earnest and efficient were the moved and moving spirits of this enterprise, that the cornerstone of a new church was laid, Nov 5, 1835, at the junction of Bleecker Street and Downing. [p. 290] On the first of Sept., 1835, the building being in progress, Mr. Le Fevre sailed for England, purposing a continental tour. He returned in May, 1836, his pulpit having meanwhile been supplied by different preachers,—mostly by Rev. B.[Benjamin] B. Hallock.—The new church was dedicated June 19, 1836. Mr. Le Fevre preached in the morning, Rev. T. J. Sawyer in the afternoon, and Rev. A. C. Thomas in the evening.

No man was happier on that occasion than Cornelius Harsen. He had for many years been a Universalist of the enthusiastic order; but after the Kneeland disasters he held aloof until the opening of the Orchard St. Church. He was one of the fathers and among the pillars of the Third Society, beginning in Sixth Avenue in 1833—and now he enjoyed the blessedness of those who both work and wait for the consolations of Israel.—He departed this life, Oct. 27, 1838, aged fifty-five, leaving the testimony of a religious life, including the record of an open hand.

—In the spring of 1840 Mr. Le Fevre resigned his position as pastor, and from that [p. 291] date onward for two and a half years the pulpit was supplied by Rev. Menzies Rayner. He was a convert from the Episcopal Church in Connecticut in 1827. There was honorable openness between him and the Bishop, and he left that communion without fear and without reproach, ever afterward holding the more sure word of prophecy.

During Mr. Rayner's ministry in the Third Society, above-noted, namely, April 11, 1841, Henry H. Brown departed this life, aged forty-eight. His church-companion, Cornelius Harsen, was highly vivacious in temperament. Mr. Brown, on the contrary, was cheerfully sedate, with a mild, glowing steadiness in his eyes and in every line of his countenance. The former was of Dutch Reformed lineage. The latter was a convert from doubts generated by the monstrous theology of the churches. These two men, so different and yet so touched by the same divine spirit, walked harmoniously in the paths of this world, into the closer unity of the world to come.

— Rev. William S. Balch took pastoral charge of the Third Universalist Society, Nov. 20, 1842—a relation which continued, for the most part prosperously, for seventeen years. Dating in 1837, the Third Society had been in serious financial difficulty, with its accompaniments. The lowest ebb was in 1840, and hence the engagement of a temporary supply [p. 292] instead of a permanent pastor. When the tide turned, they did well to put Mr. Balch into that local ministry. He was a practical man, a financier, whose energy did much to revive the zeal of the Society. Even his several terms of absence in Europe were overruled for a wholesome end, forasmuch as they enabled him to freshen his discourses by observations in the old world, and by the way.

He was little indebted to books, and made little pretension to learning, in the popular sense of the term, but his perceptive faculties made all things tributary to his purpose. He wrote much for the press, but I do not find that he was engaged in direct controversy on the question of Universalism. His forte was, I judge, in biographical sketches and in sketches of travel. He was for a few years one of the editors of the Ambassador, but mostly his long term of service found employment in the duties of his parish.

Seventeen years of pastoral life and of per[p. 293] sonal change: can we wonder that he longed for the mountain-springs of Vermont, as David longed for the waters of the well in Bethlehem? He resigned and retired in April, 1858—and was succeeded by Rev. M. Ballou, May, 1859... Mr. Ballou resigned September 1, 1864, and was succeeded by Rev. D. K. [Day Kellogg] Lee, May 1, 1865. The modesty of his countenance and the urbanity of his address gave small indication of the range of his mental resources. He was a man of literary taste, not inclined to dogmatic theology nor to textual commentary, but delighting in the developments and morals of science, especially of astronomy. He was an impressive, instructive, but not exciting preacher, and has never been excelled in the sweet graces of social life. He drew nigher to "the music of the spheres," June 2, 1869, in the fifty-third year of his age; and Rev. E. C. Sweetzer entered upon the duties of this pastorate, about the middle of September.

[p. 300] The announcement of Mr. Whittaker's conversion to Universalism in July, 1832, was made "with no ordinary feelings of pleasure," because he came to us with a clear, manly record. We could not use the same language in the announcement of his renunciation of Universalism in 1840; yet while we lamented that he had done himself a gross wrong, there was room for congratulation that the facts made him of indifferent value to his sympathizers. After a few months of turbulence in the religious elements, he went to his own place, and the Universalists thanked the Lord for the patience and perseverance of the saints.

FOURTH SOCIETY

[P. 301] On the first Sunday in Sept., 1838, with concurrence of Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Le Fevre, meetings for public worship were held in Apollo Saloon, 410 Broadway; and in that Saloon, a week later, the Fourth Universalist Society was organized, with Rev. William Whittaker as pastor. There was room, it was thought, for another Universalist Society in New York. Mr. Whittaker had been in the ministry six years, and was of fair repute: besides which, he assured the friends that he could labor one year without compensation. [On] Dec. 9, 1838, the Society removed to the New Jerusalem Chapel, 486 Pearl Street, the meeting-house in which Mr. Mitchell officiated previously to occupancy of the church in Duane Street. [On] April 28, 1839, the Society took possession by treaty of the church in Duane Street,...and the occasion was celebrated in three sermons by Rev. Hosea Ballou.—In that church, for about fifteen months, Mr. Whittaker proclaimed Universalism with all the energy at his command; and by letter, dated July 22, 1840, he informed the Trustees of the Society that he had renounced Universalism, and piously entreated them to Go and do likewise, immediately! This event and its connections awakened and intensified vigorous controversy in pulpit and in pew, in print and by speech, for several months; and even now, after the lapse of a third of a century, I peruse the articles from the pen of Mr. Sawyer in admiration of his dignified indignation. Starting with a collation of cardinal facts, he demonstrated the hypocrisy of the new candidate for holy orders, and utterly demolished the barricades erected by collateral issues. This, in few words, is the history of the conversion:

[On] Sunday, July 12, Mr. Whittaker preached in Stamford, Conn., and was earnest and impressive in the delivery of a sermon he had frequently delivered elsewhere, embodying his reasons for rejecting the doctrine of endless misery.

At noon, on Thursday, July 16, he met the chairman of his Board of Trustees, and had a long conversation with him relating to their Society affairs, and in the afternoon he visited another Trustee on the same business. He was told, what indeed he already knew, that there existed much dissatisfaction with him in the Society; that owing to the course he had pursued, the Trustees had lost confidence in

him as a pastor; that the Society could not prosper under his labors, and indeed was declining; that he could not remain much longer there; and finally he was advised to embrace the first opportunity for changing his position. He exhibited displeasure, said he did not like to be driven away, and would stay till next spring.

[P 303] On Friday, July 17, he had an interview with Mr. Crowell, a very zealous member of Mr. Hatfield's church, and there, so far as could be learned, he first expressed his doubts of the truth of Universalism, and on Saturday, July 18, fully renounced his faith in the presence of the same individual.

On Sunday, July 19, he preached in two of the Universalist churches in New York, and was in his own pulpit in the evening. On Monday morning he received his weekly stipend, as usual. On Tuesday, July 21, he was visited by Mr. Hatfield, and toward evening his letter of renunciation, dated 22d, was dispatched to the Trustees of the Fourth Universalist Society...

[P. 304] [On] Nov. 1, 1840, Rev. I. D. [Isaac D.] Williamson took charge of the Society, which largely prospered under his administration. They continued to occupy the Duane St. Church until late in the winter of the year following, when the owners of the property, it seems, were required to close up their affairs by a sale of the premises, and the Fourth Society removed to the lecture-room of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Crosby Street, between Broome and Spring Street.

Here they continued until the first of May, 1841, at which time they took possession of what was known as the Bowery Church, which they had purchased. The entrance had been from the Bowery, but the piece of ground used as a passage way, being of large value for business purposes, had been sold, after which the entrance was in Elizabeth Street.

In April, 1842, Mr. Williamson sailed for England, for health's sake—also as a delegate and representative of the Odd Fellows—and returned to his charge in the close of July, his parish having meanwhile been acceptably served by Rev. Wm. S. Ballou.

In the latter part of 1843, Mr. Williamson, [P. 305] having been greatly troubled by a bronchial affection, resigned and removed to the South; and early in May, 1844, was succeeded in the pastorate by Rev. Moses Ballou—who resigned in the autumn of 1845, and returned to Portsmouth.

Rev. Thomas L. Harris was ordained as pastor March 12, 1846, and resigned in the summer of 1847. The Society sold its meeting-house in Elizabeth Street in May, 1847, and occupied Apollo Saloon, by many supplies, until the spring of 1848, and then took possession of a church it had purchased, corner of Murray and Church Streets—Rev. E. H. Chapin being the pastor.

This property, proving to be " too far down town" for worship, whatever it may have been for business, was sold in October, 1852, for an advance of nearly [$130,000?]; and shortly afterward, for three times that advance, the Society bought the edifice known as the Church of the Divine Unity, in Broadway above Spring Street. There was a liberal entrance to a very spacious audience-chamber in the rear, the building extending to Crosby Street. There was accommodation, it was thought, for sixteen hundred people or more,—and seldom was there a vacant seat.

This edifice, also, being " too far down town," or " not far enough up town," was sold, and [on] Oct. 11, 1865 the corner-stone of a modern church [P. 306] was laid, on Broadway and Forty-Fifth Street,—the congregation worshipping in the large Hall of the Cooper Union until the dedication of the Church of Divine Paternity, Dec. 3, 1866. Rev. E. H. Chapin, D. D., pastor. — This congregation, having its beginnings in a lowly estate and making progress in many complications of difficulty, has risen into a condition of enviable distinction. Many men of wealth, and otherwise influential, are connected with it, and the hand of liberality is ever open. The early promise of the renowned preacher has been more than fulfilled. His strong elucidations of divine principles always marked him as a distinctive Universalist, not of the dogmatic order but of the spiritual; but I am persuaded that he latterly pushes farther than ever into sublime results.

[p. 311] I intend no disparagement in any direction, [p. 312] nor can I forbear to add, that early membership in all the Universalist Societies in New York and parts adjacent, was largely the overflow or overgrowth of the mother-church in Orchard Street.

—Late in the summer of 1845, Mr. Sawyer resigned his position in New York, and took charge of the Clinton Institute, as Principal—also of a Theological School established on his own responsibility.

[On] April 12, 1846, Rev. Otis A. Skinner assumed pastoral charge of the Second Society. He was a preacher of more than ordinary attraction—celebrated as a pastor—and of such happily-blended geniality and dignity, that his praise was on every lip. Diversified pulpit-service, pastoral duty in all its departments, amenity in social life—all these were vital under his administration, but he felt a continual yearning for return to his home in New England, and relinquished his relations in New York in the early spring of 1849.

[p. 313] Rev. Cyrus H. Fay succeeded Mr. Skinner as pastor of the Second Society, May 1, 1849. Qualities eminently fitting him for the position could not overcome the weakening of local ties; and removals to other churches directly, and to other neighborhoods with the like result, determined him to relinquish the charge, Nov. 1, 1853, after a pastorate of four years and a half.

FIFTH SOCIETY

The slow and not-sure operations of the Missionary Society established a Station in Manhattan Hall, Jan. 31, 1841—and thence sprung the organization known as the Fifth Universalist Society, Rev. B. B. Hallock, pastor for eighteen months. He resigned Oct. 29, 1842, and was succeeded by Rev. L. B. Mason for six or eight months—then Rev. S. H. Lloyd for a few months. Then Rev. J. N. Parker was settled, May 12, 1844. A meeting-house on Fourth Street, between Avenues A and B, was erected in the summer of 1845, and dedicated Sept. 10.

Mr. Parker resigned April 1, 1846, and was succeeded by Rev. Z. Baker, Oct. 11, 1846, who continued until the spring of 1848. [P. 315] Rev. I. D. Williamson became pastor of the Fifth Society, May 1, 1849, and resigned on the first of September, of his own free-will, and not of necessity, (though some would say, of necessity and also of choice.) Rev. H. R. Nye took charge about the first of July, 1850 — the pulpit, during these long pastoral vacancies, having been supplied by different (and by few indifferent) preachers. Mr. Nye relinquished his position, May 1, 1851. The meeting-house, in a degenerating locality, was sold in August, the people having determined to go "further up town." There was a reservation of right to occupy the premises a portion of every Sunday, until the congregation should be suited elsewhere; and Mr. Nye for several months supplied on Sunday afternoons. In Dec, 185 1, Rev. Hosea Ballou was in New York, and preached fourteen sermons in all, mostly in the lately-sold Chapel; and in Feb., 1852, the Society leased the Lecture Hall of the Medical College in Fourteenth Street. There was no pastor yet, in July of that year, but there was stated worship. Rev. J. [John] H. Campbell was there in September.

[On] Dec. 5, Mr. Sawyer (after seven years of service in Clinton,) made a temporary arrangement [P. 316] as pastor of the Fifth Society in New York, and in April, 1853, extended it for a year longer. [On] May 1, the Society removed to Dodsworth Hall on Broadway, and pastor and people made vigorous exertions to buy or build a desirable church up-town, — all which ended in disappointment. Before half his term had expired, Mr. Sawyer was unanimously invited to his old home in Orchard Street—made vacant by the resignation of Mr. Fay.

This seemed to seal the fate of the Fifth Society. Its membership, mostly, was merged in other organizations — and its history is at an end, with this explanation: A gathering of children and their friends, inspired, I learn, by the presence and energy of Dr. Needham, for a time assumed the name of a relinquished Sunday School, and occupied Oriental Hall. It was thence removed to Plympton Buildings in Ninth Street, and is now established in Chickering Hall, 11 East Fourteenth Street, under the title of the Fifth Universalist Society. Divine service is held every Sunday morning and afternoon, in the leadership of Rev. Charles F. Lee, whose pastorate dates July, 1870.

Without sitting in judgment upon the many changes in the pastoral relation recorded in this history, we surely may hope for the coming of the day when every clergyman will have life-long dwelling among his own people.

Abel C. Thomas, *A Century of Universalism in Philadelphia and New-York, Sketches of Its History in Reading [PA], Hightstown [NJ] Brooklyn and Elsewhere* (Philadelphia: 1872) [abridged]

[P. 317] SIXTH SOCIETY

For many years past the religious world in New York has been "moving up town." Whether there has been an upward movement, religiously, might be a question, with the usual two sides. Business has been crowding into down-town quarters, hemmed in by families of lowly means; and people, increased in substance, enlarging also their style of living, have for years been pressing into the brown-stone sections of the city. of of
of the city. And whithersoever the wealthier families went, went also the places of amusement, the great hotels and the churches.

Universalists, so far as they had means, have been in the same up-town current. A few of them, faithful, resolute souls, mostly from the Bleecker St. Church, [Third Universalist] in July, 1851, leased a Hall at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 25th St.—had regular afternoon worship on Sundays, led by the settled pastors — and organized the Sixth
Universalist Society and Sunday School, in October of that year, Rev. N. [Nelson] Snell was invited to the pastorate in May, 1852. A small, neat church on 24th Street, between Avenues 8 and 9, purchased in October, was refitted and occupied in Jan., 1853. Mr. Snell resigned May 1, 1854, and Rev. Asher Moore was engaged, as supply until autumn and as pastor from Oct. 1. At the expiration of three years of pastoral service, he re- [P.318] signed, and after a vacancy of eleven months was succeeded by Rev. J. H. Shepard — during whose administration the 24th St. Church was sold, and a church in 20th Street was purchased May 1, 1859. A few months later, Mr. Shepard made way for Rev. E. G. Brooks, who continued for eight years.

The duration of the term was highly creditable in these days of change, but the Society seems to have sojourned in the land of promise,
have sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles. The cry was for up-town, and the late purchase was retrograde—a step afterward amended. The church in 20th Street was sold March, 1866. For nearly a year the Society worshipped in Everett Hall, and then took possession of a new purchase in 35th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, known as the Church of our Saviour.

For this Society there now seemed good hope through grace of permanency in location, but very soon there was removal in the pulpit end
soon there was removal in the pulpit end of the sanctuary. Dr. Brooks resigned in Oct., 1867, to become General Secretary of the General Convention, and Rev. James M. Pullman took pastoral charge of the Society on the third Sunday in March, 1868, [P. 319] having resigned his position as pastor of the Fifth Society. Rev. T. J. Sawyer assumed the charge of his ancient parish in Orchard Street, in the close of Nov., 1853.

There need be no wonderment that Mr. Fay was weary of his position before he had completed his engagement. Orchard Street was decidedly on the down-town grade. The neighborhood had become undesirable for a well-to- do residence, and many influential families had removed. Garbage carts in front of the church
were more useful on week-days than ornamental on Sundays. It was nevertheless hoped, without detracting from the talent, worthiness or [P. 320] fidelity of any one, that a revival of the old times would follow a revival of old memories.

The winter of 1853-54 was a season of most effectual labor among the Universalists of New York. Special lectures were delivered by all the pastors, and large congregations attested a wide and deep interest in the cause of Universalism.

...

[p. 322] In the summer of 1858, renewed efforts were made by the Second Society and its pastor, to go higher up in locality as well as to go up higher in a devout experience. Whatever was the result in the latter respect, there was renewed failure in the former. Religion had become a Sunday luxury as well as

a daily necessity, and the price of lots and of brown stone had advanced beyond the means of people reared, or rather remaining, in Orchard Street.

[On] Nov. 20, 1859, there were commemorative and farewell services in the old hive, which thenceforward was to be abandoned; and on the Sunday following the congregation took possession of the Hall of the Historical Library, Second Avenue, corner of 11th Street.

...

[p 323] In April, 1861, Dr. Sawyer resigned and removed from New York to his farm in Clinton; and about the same time Dr. Williamson resigned and removed from Philadelphia to his farm on the Ohio...

[p. 324] Mr. Sawyer was succeeded in the pastoral office by Rev. G. T. Flanders, Sept. 1, 1861. There was both large attendance and an earnest hearing under the vital force of the new pastor—to which was added the co-operation of Mr. Sawyer, who, after a brief experience as a farmer, took editorial charge of the *Ambassador* Jan. 1, 1863. In the early part of that year there was a series of stirring lectures on Christian Universalism, by Ballou, Blanchard, Peters, Fletcher, Brooks, Ellis, Flanders, Sawyer, —verily a strong company, — and there was urgent talk of "a new church up-town." It appeared, too, that for five years the net fund from the sale of Orchard St. Church had supplied deficiencies in the financial account, and it was plain that this could not last always. Better stop with a liberal sum in hand, waiting for the break of day, than to exhaust the fund at night-fall, and collapse in dreams.

The resignation of Mr. Flanders dated in the close of July, 1864, and Rev. G. L. Demarest took pastoral charge of the Society May 1, 1865, and continued to the end, a term of two [p. 325] years. Most manfully did he contend with the adversities of the position. Born and reared in the Second Society, and cherishing as cordial a love for his early religious home as ever did a graduate for his alma mater, he strove to revive the good church-mother. He was joined by faithful sons and daughters of the same stock; and the Sunday School, (with the pastor's proverbial talent and tact,) conference meetings, lectures, and all other wholesome influences, were never better tested than in this endeavor.

Why was it not successful? The answer reaches into the changed and changing condition of the great city. The families who came from Orchard Street to the new location, resided, generally, at an inconvenient distance—a difficulty endurable only for a time,—and new families, though crowding the Hall under the stimulus of a new thought, could not be attracted into permanent union unless by a new church. We may lament the fact, but we must accept the world on its own terms, if at all.

There was lamentation, but no remedy in present probabilities…

[p. 326] MISSION-SCHOOL-CHURCH.

In 1859 a Mission Sunday School was organized in a Hall on Third Avenue near 61st Street, and meetings for worship were held there on Sunday afternoons, the city pastors officiating with their accustomed willingness and energy. Overgrowing straitened accommodations, there have been several changes of location, until now it is established in Brevoort Hall, 155 East 54th Street, in charge of Dr. Needham and associates, after thirteen years of diligence and fidelity. Here, until lately. Rev. Charles Fluhrer preached once every Sunday; and when no professional preacher can be obtained, the service is conducted by Dr. Needham.

HARLEM UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY.

Beginning in the close of July, 1866, there was a stir in Harlem, which resulted in the organization of a Universalist Society. A great door and effectual was opened, but there were many adversaries,—some of them in the household, I believe. Recollection of embarrassments is scarcely desirable, but I have pleasure in mentioning that meetings for social worship, [p. 327] first instituted in Washington Hall, and thence
removed to National Hall, are well attended, with increase in knowledge and grace.

In Nov., 1869, the Missionary Society engaged the services of Rev. Charles Fluhrer, with a request that he would make Harlem a central point of his ministry. He is now the pastor.

CHURCHES IN BROOKLYN.

In Jan. and Feb., 1830, Mr. Fiske preached several Sundays in Brooklyn, with small prospect of permanency. Two years later, the experiment was repeated by Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Hillyer, finding place in a School House in Concord Street. On Feb. 27, 1832, there was at least the hopefulness of trial, for a Universalist Society was formed, William Burbank, Secretary. This truly excellent brother, steadfast in the beginnings patient in the waiting, workful in the progress, exultant in the triumph of our religious organization in Brooklyn, perished in the close of 1846, in the great "Atlantic Disaster" on Long Island Sound.

Meetings were continued, occasionally, in that School House and in the Hall of Apprentices' Library in Cranberry street, until Feb., 1833. Brooklyn was then a small village, Universalists were few in number and sympathizers still less—for which reasons the enterprise was relinquished, in obedience to the command, Stand still, and see the salvation of God.

The believers stood still until the spring of [p. 328] 1842. There was then a movement, for the First and Second Unitarian Societies had united, and they leased the meeting-house of the First to the Universalists. It was in Adams street east of Pearl, neat, convenient, with sufficient accommodations for 250 or 300 worshippers—and there was an organ in the premises.

[On] Sunday, April 3, 1842, it was opened by the lessees, the New York clergymen officiating. The pulpit was afterward supplied by different ministers until the coming of Rev. Abel C. Thomas in August.—About the middle of Nov., 1842, a site for a meeting-house was obtained at the corner of Fulton Street and Pineapple. Ground was broken early in December: the edifice was dedicated June 22, 1843: a Sunday School was organized Oct. 22.

In the autumn of 1844 Mr. Thomas removed to Cincinnati, and Rev. Thomas B. Thayer, leaving Lowell, followed him as far as Brooklyn in the spring of 1845, Rev. F. F. Thayer having been his herald for several months. Nor was he inclined to leave this desirable home, although the meeting-house was utterly destroyed by fire in Sept., 1848. On the contrary, he officiated in the Lyceum Hall until the Society had erected an attractive meeting-house at the corner of Munroe Place and Clarke Street—which was dedicated July 2, 1850. The former structure was known as the "Brooklyn Tabernacle:" the latter was the Church of the Restoration.

[p. 329] Mr. Thayer resigned May 1, 1851, and assumed his old position in Lowell, leaving this stipulation: "I will return at the end of a year, if the Brooklyn Society be not meanwhile united in another pastor." Pending the result, the Rev. H. R. Nye officiated. At the end of half the term, it was clear that there was unity in *him* —Mr. Thayer was released from his engagement by his own request—and the question was settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

Mr. Nye resigned the pastorate, Jan. 1, 1857, and in February was succeeded by Rev. Henry Blanchard, with the condition that he was to be merely the preacher until September, and afterward the pastor.

At the end of the first year of this pastoral administration, a number of the members, chiefly attached to the Sunday School, established a branch organization at 274 Cumberland Street. The room secured for the purpose was dedicated on Sunday, Sept. 5, 1858, by Mr. Blanchard and Joshua P. Powers, Superintendent — with prophecy that this gathering was the nucleus of another Society.

Sunday evening services soon followed, by the Brooklyn pastor and the pastors in New York.—Shortly there were appointments for otherwise—disengaged clergymen. [On] Oct. 27, 1860. Rev. N. M. Gaylord became the settled pastor of an organized Society,—all this being the result of two years of fidelity.

[p. 330] Mr. Gaylord resigned in June, 1861, and Rev. Charles Cravens succeeded him in August. Rev. L. J. Fletcher followed, during whose administration the corner-stone of a meeting-house was laid

(October 4, 1863) in Green Avenue, and the building, promptly erected, was dedicated as the Church of the Redeemer.— [On] May 1, 1865, Mr. Fletcher resigned, and Rev. J. G. Bartholomew became the pastor, Feb. 1, 1866.

I care not to inquire the reasons or the cause, but a year developed the fact that the two churches and their pastors were not increasing in the graces of co-operation. Besides this, the church in Munroe place felt "the up-town" influence, and prudent men advised a centralization in the church in Green Avenue. A treaty was negotiated accordingly. There was no denial or doubt of the character or ability of either of the pastors, but the two congregations could unite in neither. Mr. Blanchard resigned in July, 1868, and Mr. Bartholomew in November — in which latter month the church in Munroe Place was sold, and there was union in the church on Green Avenue, under the ministry of Rev. E. C. Bolles.

Meanwhile a new Chapel was being erected on Clermont Avenue. The Green Avenue Church was sold for immediate delivery—the congregation for a season worshipped in Adelphi Academy—and occupied the new structure, June 19, 1870. Thus the Church of the [p. 331] Restoration and the Church of the Redeemer were merged in the Church of Our Father.—Mr. Bolles resigned June 11, 1871, and Rev. H. R. Nye was elected to the pastorate, Jan. 1, 1872.

Thirty years ago the population of Brooklyn proper was little more than forty thousand, and the modern policy of letting Universalism alone had not been developed. Rev. Dr. Cox sent many a crowded sympathetic audience to The Tabernacle, by revilings which no man of reputation would dare to utter in this year of grace. The changed condition of the religious world marks the growth of Universalism in this city of churches. Who are the popular clergymen, and what is the purport of their preaching? In the ratio that our principles have been absorbed, the growth of our organization has been retarded. It is not yet clear to either preachers or people, that Universalism is true, but it is clear in the pulpits of the most influential churches, that the mystical, merciless creeds of an age ago, are parts of a discarded mythology.

Williamsburg.

From March until Nov., 1833, strong efforts were made by Rev. S. [Shaler] J. Hillyer to establish stated meetings for worship in the village of Williamsburg — but without success.

In 1845 there had manifestly been a large increase of population, partly the overgrowth of [p. 332] New York, including some Universalist families who sought a less crowded place of residence; and these soon awakened the hope of social religious privileges. They hired an inconvenient out-of-the-way building known as "The Tabernacle," which was the best they could procure, and for about three months they had the presence of different ministering brethren, mostly those residing in New York. They then engaged the services of Rev. Henry Lyon, as pastor, Aug. 10, 1845.

As he was on the Lord's side, the Lord was on his side; and so it came about that a Society was organized. In due time, a beautiful meeting-house, erected on the corner of Fourth and South Third Street, was dedicated March 15, 1848—the sermon being, very appropriately, by the pastor—and within a month a Sunday School was established by the nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers of the Church.

Mr. Lyon having resigned as pastor, to engage in missionary work, Rev. Day K. Lee was elected pastor, and took charge on the first Sunday in Dec, 1849. After five years of service he resigned, and was followed by Rev. W. W. King, who in turn resigned, and was succeeded by Rev. B. Peters, March 2, 1856. His closing service was in the close of Jan., 1864, and in the beginning of Jan., 1865, Rev. A. J. Canfield took pastoral charge. His withdrawal, in Aug., 1870, left a vacancy, which was supplied on the first of [p. 333] July, 1871, by Rev. Almon Gunnison, who is at present the pastor.

Green Point.

By the energy and the agents of the N. Y. Missionary Society, meetings for public worship were established in Green Point, and a Society was organized in Jan., 1857. Financial condition did not at first

justify the engagement of a pastor, but occasional supplies and the generous offices of the settled ministers in New York and vicinity, especially Rev. B. Peters, so vitalized the believers that they erected a neat place of worship, which was dedicated Sept. 14, 1862.

Rev. Frank Maguire was first settled as pastor Feb., 1863. Rev. E. Fitzgerald succeeded him April, 1865. Rev. J. H. Shepard followed Dec. 1, 1866—succeeded by Rev. S. S. Hibberd March 1, 1868. Rev. Charles F. Lee is pastor at this date, 1872.

CENTENARY SCHOOL.

In the latter part of 1869, a few believers, chiefly from the church in Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, were moved to hire a very humble room at 581 De Kalb Avenue, and commence a Sunday School. Increasing prosperity emboldened them to purchase a lot on Nostrand Avenue near De Kalb, and erect a house of the Lord for the Lord's children. With fifteen teachers, one hundred and fifty pupils, and forty [p. 334] families, there is certainly the beginning of a noble ending. Until March 1, 1872, there was public worship every Sunday afternoon, conducted mostly by the settled pastors of the neighborhood; and then came Rev. Almon Gage on a brief engagement, statedly. Surely this may be considered a prophecy of another Universalist Society in Brooklyn.

SKETCHES AND MEMORANDA.
[abridged]

In the progress of this narrative, I have incidentally touched the garments of several departed Universalists. I here add several of the ministry, now deceased, who either began pulpit-life or were once pastors in New York or Brooklyn — also a few of the laity, by reason of peculiar marks — to freshen the memory of them in this land of forgetfulness.

[p. 335] Philo Price came from Norwalk, Conn., to New York, full of the courage and zeal of hope, and commenced the publication of the Christian Messenger in Oct., 1831. For nearly sixteen years of many experiences, he was in control of the establishment as publisher and one of the editors—industrious, courteous, and hopeful. He was a good though somewhat diffuse writer, with whom Universalism was all-in-all. He was a man of admirable qualities in mind and life, and all who knew him well, do sincere homage and honor to his memory. He died in Williamsburg, June 17, 1868, aged threescore and ten.

James Hall was one of the early disciples of Edward Mitchell, but became connected with the Prince St. Church. After the failure of that organi-[p. 336] zation he stood aloof until the Orchard St. Church was secured. He gave one thousand dollars—a large sum in that day—toward the purchase of that property. Toward the close of his life, he resided for some time in Williamsburg, and thence removed to Elizabeth, N. J., where he died, December 20, 1867, in the ninetieth year of his age. He was a truly religious man, anchored within the vail.

William B. Marsh, born in Exeter, N. H., had his convictions of Universalism confirmed, when quite a lad, by the ministry of Rev. Thomas F. King in Portsmouth. He came to New York as a journeyman printer, and he and Horace Greeley were for some time compositors in the same office, and were hearty friends. His talent as a journalist put him in charge of the *Brooklyn Eagle* as editor in 1841, and there he continued to the end. He was an exception to the rule (if it be a rule) that party-political interests interfere with higher and nobler associations. With him home came first, and then the Church. Around these were the groups of friendship and love—and beyond, all that pertains to business. I do believe he was one of the pure in heart. He departed this life February 26, 1846, in the thirty-third year of his age.

Carlos D. Stuart, born in Berlin, Vermont, July 28, 1820, died in Huntingdon, L. I., Jan. 22, 1862, in the forty-third year of his age. Though not rising into distinction and applause, he was a poet of more than ordinary merit, and of fine literary taste generally. He was also a journalist of repute, being for

several years an associate editor of the *N. Y. Sun*. Not, however, on this account do I record [p. 337] his name in these pages, nor simply as a genial brother in the gospel, but as one whose talents were openly consecrated to the cause of Universalism. He was of us in the sentiment, and with us in personal presence and influence—an encomium not deserved by many public men who have had the blessing of its baptism. His pure life illustrated his faith, and his death was a seal of its power.

Rev. Henry Lyon departed this life in Williamsburg, Sept. 1 6, 1866, of consumption, in the fifty-third year of his age. For a few years of his life he was known among us as a pastor, but mostly he was engaged as a missionary in New York and the region round about—also as agent of the *Ambassador*, succeeding Mr. B. B. Hallock in that responsible office in 1852. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," appeared to be his practical motto. Illness, having death as its prophetic end, did not disturb his equanimity, and he passed serenely and hopefully into the light that shineth behind light.

Rev. B. [Benjamin] B. Hallock perished in the terrible Mast Hope disaster on the Erie Rail Road, July 14, 1869. Beginning as Principal of a Select School, he passed into the pulpit of Evangelism, and always adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. He was for a brief space one of the proprietors of the *Ambassador*, and afterward the agent of the establishment until 1852, but for many years he devoted his life to the ministry, as missionary or as pastor. Unpretending in his demeanor, he largely ministered to the joy and comfort of many souls by his clear thought and happy utterance.

[p. 338] Rev. Carl Schaum, for some time resident in East New York, was pastor of a German congregation. His record in the neighboring Universalist ministry was that of an humble, sincere brother of more than ordinary education, whose talent was consecrated to religious uses. Finding himself too far advanced in life to meet the buffetings of the many, and seeing little hope of an increase of the few, he exchanged his property for a quiet homestead in Kingston, N.J., where he died, August 1, 1871—at about threescore.

The Second Universalist Society continues its organization. There is an annual meeting for the [p. 339] election of trustees and the care -taking of an invested fund, now amounting to about thirteen thousand dollars. There is also a quarterly meeting for reunion in worship. The prophecy of a new church will some day be fulfilled.

Two Illuminated Windows of much artistic merit, and therefore of much pecuniary value, were in the pulpit end of the old Orchard St. Church. They were presented many years ago by Barzillai Ransom. He was then a member of the Society, but afterward removed to Brooklyn, where he was one of the standards of Zion until his death—a devout Christian and a most courteous and liberal gentleman.—In the sale of the Orchard Street property those windows were reserved. They are now among the adornments of the church in Stamford Conn., presented by the Second Society in New York.

The Harsen Ministerial Relief Fund, controlled by the N. Y. State Convention, was founded by Cornelius Harsen, who died in 1838. His bequest of six thousand dollars has grown into goodly proportions by the thoughtfulness of others. His son, Dr. Jacob Harsen, who died on the last day of 1862, aged fifty-four, bequeathed ten thousand dollars. Margaret Ritter Halstead and Rev. Dolphus Skinner, each one thousand. John Blyer, three thousand. Jeremiah Richardson and a friend, contributed five hundred each. Others have given or contributed as large or larger sums in proportion to their means, the aggregate being now (1872) about thirty-two thousand. To this must be added Friend Burt's legacy of three thousand dollars, payable in the close of 1873. By gift of Mr. Dockstradter, a farm [p. 340] of one hundred acres will revert to the fund on the decease of certain persons named in the deed. I find also a memorandum of July, 1865, that Sarah A. Sturtevant had made a reversionary bequest of twenty-five hundred dollars.

Transcribed on 29 Jul 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY