

[Rochester, Monroe Co.]

DEDICATION OF THE REMODELED EDIFICE  
Universalists Held Interesting Services Last Night  
SOME FINE ADDRESSES

Principal Speaker Rev. James M. Pullman, D.D., of Lynn, Mass.—  
Remarks by Mayor Carnahan, Dr. C. A. Barbour and Bishop Atwood.

Last night was a happy occasion for the congregation and friends of the First Universalist Church, who assembled in that handsome, remodeled edifice at the exercises of rededication, at the completion of the work of six months, which has transformed the building to one of the most modern and convenient church edifices in the city. Handsome as the interior appeared at inspection, the full beauty, brightness and cheerfulness of the decoration, finishing and furnishing cannot be realized until one is present at a service, where every pew is filled to its capacity, as was the case last evening.

The natural attractiveness was enhanced by the addition of ferns, palms and blossoms tastefully arranged about the pulpit platform, and the old reading desk, soon to be replaced by a new one, was hidden under a great American flag. Clergy and the laity of the city assembled with the pastor and his people on the memorable occasion, to offer congratulations on the consummation of the hopes which they had cherished many years and which have been realized in such full measure.

The services were unusually impressive. They were preceded with an organ recital by John W. Force. The invocation was pronounced by the Rev. [Rabbi] Max Landsberg. The services were interspersed with many fine musical selections and anthems by the church choir, assisted by the De Robert orchestra, and a solo by Harry Thomas. The pastor, Rev. Isaac P. Coddington, conducted the services, and read the office of dedication. James Sargent made the delivery of the building for the building committee, and the response was made by H. G. Brooks, chairman of the board of trustees. Rev. W. G. Gannett, pastor of the Unitarian Church, read a passage from the Scriptures, and Rev. Dr. Asa Saxe, a former pastor, made the dedicatory prayer. A dedication hymn, written for the occasion by John M. Thayer, an old member of the church, was sung by the choir.

The address of the evening was delivered by Rev. Dr. John M. Pullman, of Lynn, Mass., a very forceful and interesting speaker. It follows in full:

"The great world problems fall into three classes: Problems of human destiny, human duties and human rights. All the host of social and economic problems that now confront us are but variations on these three great themes; and they are new only because they are deployed upon the wider field and under the new and unprecedented conditions of modern life.

"These problems are drawing heavily upon Universalism for their solution, the old and narrower interpretations of life having proved to be inadequate. Problems formerly treated as isolated and local have shown themselves under the increase of knowledge to be universal, and they inevitably look to a Universalism for their explanation. World-questions can only be answered by world truths, and world-difficulties can only be successfully met by a world-faith.

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"Universalism is the belief in a capable God who does not let His worlds run away with Him; an adequate God who is equal to the solution of His problem, and able to conduct His universe to the goal. He desires without the intervention of an eternal catastrophe. Universalism is the belief in man as capable, under God, of reaching the highest goal. He is the instrument through which God's purposes are wrought out on earth; he is God's executive agent and fellow-worker. He grows, he learns to subdue nature, he builds the home and the school, the factory and the temple; he organizes the commonwealth and tries to make it into a kingdom of God, full of justice and love, and beauty and glory.

Universalism is the belief in this world as God's workshop, where God and man work together for the production and embellishment of human character. And Universalism is the belief in other and higher worlds, where this great process of character-creation is carried on to completeness and the God of wisdom and love becomes all in all.

"Universalism as a religious faith is simply universalized Christianity—the central teachings of Jesus taken out from under incumbering and provincial accretions, and turned to a universal faith. For example, the universal love of God means that God as certainly loves His heathen children as He does His Christian children, and that He loves the Filipino and the Boer not less surely than He loves the American and the Briton, and that He as earnestly desires the salvation of the one as of the other. There is no possible solution of the great race problem, nor of the world problem of the treatment of the weaker by the stronger nations, except on this principle. The universal love of God is the only pure and unadulterated republicanism that ever was or can be.

"The advocates of that theory of human duty which places all responsibility on man, and none whatever on God, have been drawing heavily on the Universalist doctrine of the mutual responsibility of moral beings, whether they be gods or men. Just as surely as man is responsible to God, just so surely is God responsible to man. Between moral beings there can be no obligation on one side without obligation on the other. And the measure of that obligation is power. It is by this doctrine, and this only, that class-antagonisms can be reconciled, and the spirit of warfare between the workman and the employer be quenched. The stronger party has the larger responsibility and is under the higher obligation.

"All enlightened peoples are to-day busily employed in applying the Universalist doctrine that the function of punishment is remedial, to the treatment of their criminals and law-breakers. And there is no weak emotionalism in this. Precisely because punishment is remedial it must be adequate, certain and strict.

"But I will not stay longer in the region of theory. I will take the concrete case, and apply the principle and faith of Universalism to the burning world-problem of anarchy.

"It is a principle of Universalism that good is intrinsically stronger than evil and in the long run will surely prevail. Now the greatest good of associated human life, the fruitful mother of all other good, is good government; and the greatest evil is anarchy—heedlessness, no government. For many years the American people have been building up a social order founded on equality of opportunity for all. And because they know that human society can never at any time be anything but the

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product of human character and culture, they have kept education and religion at the heart of their plan. For years they have wrought diligently at this great structure at enormous cost of blood and treasure, taking out slavery and putting in freedom, substituting good for evil whenever and wherever possible, until the great republic, though by no means perfect, towers among the nations of the earth as the noblest and strongest social order yet achieved by man. Now, the ancient civilizations were destroyed by barbarians from without, but the modern civilizations are menaced by a mustering of barbarians from within; and so it happened on one recent dreadful day that the evil hand of anarchy struck what was meant to be a deadly blow at the very heart of our precious and costly social good. And for a few hours after the president of the United States was shot, it seemed to us in our bewilderment of grief and terror and rage, that evil was fatally stronger than good, and had triumphed.

"But was it so? No; our social structure, founded in essential righteousness, did not even stagger at that blow. It stood like a rock, not a stone of its foundations was displaced. Not for a day nor an hour were the necessary functions of our government interrupted. The whole nation trembled indeed, but it was with grief and indignation, not with weakness. That stroke of evil was a failure. The heart of the nation beat fuller and stronger after it than before it. If you shoot out the mainspring of a watch, that watch will stop, but the whole life of the American nation is not coiled in the brain of any one citizen, however eminent or beloved—it has seventy million separate lives. The assassination of the president showed, not the triumph, but the futility of evil.

"But, you say, evil killed the man, and therefore did have some triumph. I doubt the triumph. All men must die, and what is so universal, cannot, under God, be of itself an evil. Most men die ingloriously in their beds. But that shot gave William McKinley an opportunity to die nobly, and he so nobly took it that it has multiplied his life a million-fold here on the earth; and it translated him to the uplands of the universe, where he walks with Washington and Lincoln and Garfield and Harrison and the rest, and serves the interests of the universe in higher ways than the highest ways of earth.

"But still, you say, that evil shot triumphed in the sorrow which it wrought. I doubt that. Of all the influences that God brings to bear upon man in this life, none is more refining and ennobling than a noble sorrow. And in this case that common sorrow not only melted and fused the nation's soul compactly together, but it raised a great resolve against the evil thing itself. There is a distinct sense in which that shot was the suicide of anarchy. The scorpion's tail had stung its head! We shall be more vigilant in detecting the presence of anarchy, more sure that it is an evil, more persistent, honest and fair in our search for the causes of it, and therefore safer against it than we ever were before.

"We shall cure anarchism in the only way in which it can ever be cured. We shall not fight the battles of Cosmos with the weapons of chaos, nor tyrannize free speech under pretense of protecting liberty. But we shall strictly restrain those in whom anarchism has become a mental and moral disease, educate the ignorance in which that disease takes root, and reform the abuses that sow the seed. Education and religion are the only permanent cures for anarchism. No man, loyal to God and

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believing in His success, can ever be an anarchist. He will antagonize bad government with reason and not with the knife.

"But there is another vital aspect of the case. Universalism is belief in the conversion of bad beings into good beings. It discards the theory of endless punishments in favor of the doctrine of just punishments, which manifest the divine justice instead of an undivine vengeance. It is not punishment that we protest against, but against the endless duration of sin and misery. For the endless continuance of sin and misery means everlasting anarchy in God's moral universe.

"Now take the case of the assassins of Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley. How you abhor and loathe their crime, and how you hate and detest them! How willingly in the first spasms of your indignation, contempt and hatred you would have torn them in pieces, and how glad you are in your sober second thought that you did not! That you did not sink to their level, that even in your grief and rage you honored law and order, that you soberly tried, condemned and executed them, thus handing them over to the higher powers for a punishment commensurate with their crime, which you feel yourself wholly inadequate either to prescribe or inflict.

"Next week the assassin of William McKinley will die at the hands of the law. What, beyond this, ought to be his fate? What do the moral interests of the universe demand? That he be kept in everlasting worthlessness in chains and torments, an eternal blot! The evil that is in him made to live forever, or that he be awakened from his nightmare dream of anarchy, purged of his leprosy so as by fire, changed to cleanness and sanity, converted to order, trained to obedience and set to atone for the harm he has done?

Nay, men and brethren, let us take our shoes from off our feet, and realizing that we stand on holy ground, let us ask which outcome will best satisfy Abraham Lincoln and William Kennedy where they are? What fate do they desire for their murderers? For it seems to me that if our late beloved president deserves one-half the praises that have been lavished upon his high-mindedness and moral and Christian character, he could desire no greater boon in heaven, no diviner revenge than to have the demands of justice satisfied and his murderer restored to sanity and obedience. He who rendered up his life to anarchy can never desire that anarchy should remain a permanent part of God's universe.

"Universalism teaches that neither heaven nor hell, whatever the terms may be construed to mean, are final stages in the career of man. They are means to a greater end. What is a worthy consummation of God's great plan, of the vastness of which the toiling ages of humanity on this earth and the huge frame of the universe alike bear witness? Part of His creatures shut up in hell to thrill forever with useless pain, and part of them shut up in heaven to thrill forever with useless pleasure? Both alike worthless to the larger plans and unending energies of God. No: man is keyed to higher things than such pleasure and such pain—he is keyed to endless progress.

"The wages of sin is death; if the wages of virtue be dust, would she have the heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly? She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just, To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky; Give her the wages of going on, and not to die!"

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"Our planet has swept into a new atmosphere of thought on those high themes, and under this new wide sky the Universalist faith, old as the morning stars, has found a new development, and the Universalist Church has arisen among the churches of the earth. Goldwin Smith, distinguished social student and publicist, on his recent paper on the 'Progress of Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century,' says this: 'The only Protestant Church of much importance to which the New World has given birth is the Universalist.' If, in the view of a student only of the phenomena of his own age this can truthfully be said, with what wide significance must the rise of the Universalist church be invested, in the minds of the students of the moral and spiritual values of the ages, and the world!

"The destiny of humanity under God is final moral harmony with God. It sounds like an echo of the ancient prophecy: The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eye of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

A brief address of greeting was made by Mayor Carnahan, who referred to the occasion as inspiring not only for the members of the church, but for all who live in the city. As mayor of the city he expressed his pleasure at being present, and congratulated the church upon its prosperity.

Rev. Clarence A. Barbour, pastor of the Lake Avenue Baptist Church, brought the greeting from the churches of Rochester. After expressing his pleasure at being present, he said: "I'm not a Universalist, and probably never shall be. I believe in a man having convictions, and following them. Now, I'm something, and I want to be a good deal of that. But I want to tell you, good friends, that I believe in a good doctrine in which you have no monopoly. One is the fatherhood of God, and that He did send His Son to save the world. And you have no monopoly on the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. I believe in the brotherhood of man, and I believe that man is made in the image of God. So you can't form any trust in the fatherhood of God or the brotherhood of man."

He then spoke earnestly of the relation of the church to the community in which it is placed, and of the great work which it has to do.

Bishop I. M. Attwood, D. D., spoke briefly for the general convention.

This evening there will be a reception at 6 o'clock, followed by a banquet at 6:30 o'clock at the church with after-dinner addresses.

*Democrat and Chronicle*, Rochester NY, Fri. 25 Oct 1901

Transcribed on 16 Jan 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY