

[Rochester, Monroe Co. NY]

## THE HOUSE IS DIVIDED...

[several excerpts]

The gathering in Rochester, the biennial session of the General Assembly of the Universalist Church of America, October, 1949, was disheartening and disrupting. It was not colorless. Oh no—the color was red! RED with a big deficit for the past two years—red with the anticipation of another big deficit for the two ensuing years—red with chagrin... Such a situation is tragic while orthodoxy is roaring its reactionary teaching...

The Occasional Sermon at Rochester was preached by the Rev. Bernard F. Gibbons of Wausau, Wisc... The speaker had every right to speak for himself but unfortunately newspapers everywhere publicized the sermon as proclaiming our break with Christianity... Mr. Gibbons spoke for a small group of ministers, who still wear the Christian clergyman's collar and a Christian cross, even if it is off center. This is inconsistent. This group was articulate in Rochester.

Mr. Gibbons said: "The Christian interpretation of unity means the conversion of everyone to Christianity and smacks of Soviet Russia's ambition to communize the world."—where has Mr. Gibbons seen Christians using Soviet methods? Where?...

True, the Unified Appeal will suffer until this matter is cleared up. As one minister expresses it, "If our official position is to renounce Christianity, then we must be prepared for an exodus of members and churches[,] for our people in a referendum would never repudiate the universal religion of Christianity. It may mean that we shall have to consider withdrawing some of our state conventions [governing bodies] from the national body until we know whether we are within or without the tradition which we have loved and served. Something of a declaration along this line is in order now!"

...The bottom of the [fiscal] barrel has been reached and this non-Christian Universalism is disrupting. The situation is serious and it is not something to be ignored...

Monday's newspapers in Rochester on October 24, carried extracts from the sermon delivered by Dr. Donald B. F. Hoyt, pastor of the Universalist Church, in which he sought to clarify statements issuing from the newspaper report of parts of the Occasional Sermon. The congregation was assured that Universalist leaders are not urging a break with Christianity nor have they any thought of departing from the religion of Jesus...

Back in the nineteen twenties, we had a Christ Crusade in our churches and it brought all of us nearer to His way, truth and life. Jesus in his Christianity did more than was required of Him, going the second mile. Our observation of those who claim that they have outgrown Christianity is that they are still at the One-Mile Mark.

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