Phillip Hewett has been minister of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver since 1956. Born in England, he holds degrees from Oxford, Harvard, and Starr King School for the Ministry. Dr Hewett's previous books include *The Uncarven Image*, a collection of mediations and *On Being a Unitarian*, the third printing of which was issued by the Canadian Unitarian Council in 1977.

Unitarians in Canada describes the evolution during more than a century and a half of a radical religious movement. Though always small in numbers, it has inspired many people who have exerted a powerful influence in Canadian life, and has consistently promoted the growth of tolerant and inclusive attitudes.

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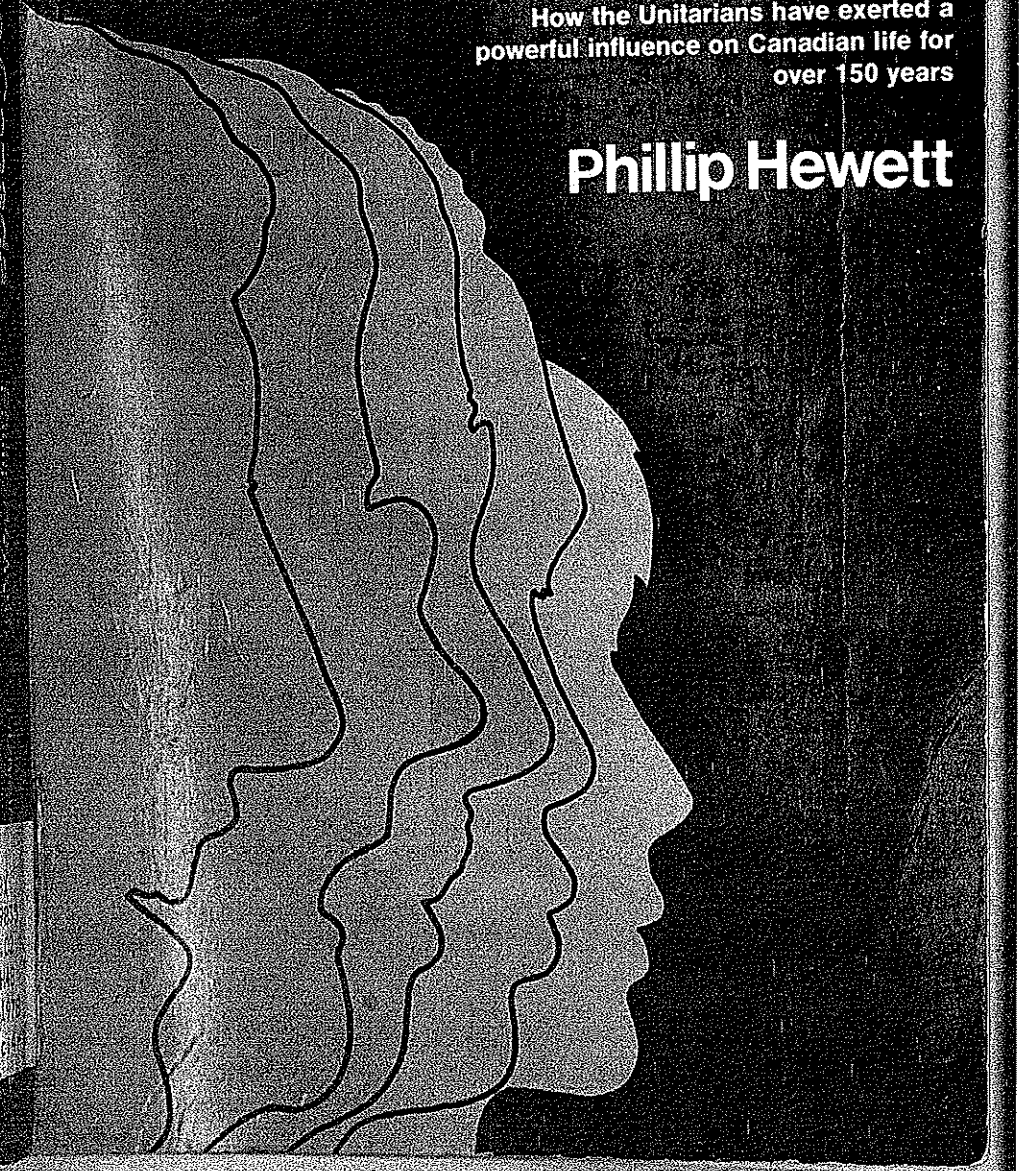
How the Unitarians have exerted a powerful influence on Canadian life for over 150 years

Phillip Hewett



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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Abbreviations

AUA	American Unitarian Association
BFUA	British and Foreign Unitarian Association
CCUU & KRL	Canadian Conference of Universalists, Unitarians and Kindred Religious Liberals
CUA	Canadian Unitarian Association
CUC	Canadian Unitarian Council
GA	(British) General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
IARF	International Association for Religious Freedom
UUA	Unitarian Universalist Association
USC	Unitarian Service Committee

Introduction

It might appear at a casual glance that Unitarianism would be a form of religion with a peculiar appeal to Canadians. *Canada: Unity in Diversity* was the title of a recent book[1]—precisely the phrase long used by Unitarians to describe their distinctive approach to religion. The image of the mosaic, which has been used for half a century and more to represent Canadian society, expresses better than any other the kind of religious fellowship Unitarians seek. Again, as William Kilbourn puts it, 'Canadians have been accustomed to define themselves by saying what they are not.'[2] So too have Unitarians. Attempts to define an identity in more positive terms have in both cases often raised explosive difficulties and disagreements.

The story of Canada's development over the years gives grounds for surprise that the country is not much larger than it actually is, alternating with surprise that it still exists at all. The same could be said of Unitarian history. Within both contexts appears the phenomenon of the revolving door. A great many people come in from the outside but they don't all stay. Those who do stay are torn between the desire to keep what they brought with them and the desire to shake themselves entirely free of it.

Despite these superficial similarities, Unitarianism has never been the religion of more than a tiny segment of the Canadian people. The most recent census recorded no more than 21 000 in the whole country. Yet this small minority has had an influence upon the national life out of all proportion to its numerical strength. More of its members have held leading positions in all walks of life than is commonly recognized.

At least two reasons for this lack of recognition can be identified. It has been noted in England that the biographers of well-known persons sometimes went to great lengths to avoid mentioning their subjects' Unitarian affiliation, as though this were some kind of reprehensible secret. 'To write the life of a man who had been a Unitarian minister and founded the Scottish Unitarian Association without mentioning

the word Unitarian would appear to be a rather difficult task, but even this feat was accomplished when Mrs Lewes wrote the life of her grandfather, Dr Southwood Smith.'[3] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that something of the same sort has happened in Canada when, for instance, H. J. Morgan's *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (1898) lists G. W. Stephens and Dr Clarence Church, both lifelong Unitarians, as Anglicans.

In the second place, those not familiar with some of the semantic tangles of religious history can easily be led astray. Thus, it has been alleged in a number of Canadian references, most recently in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, that William Hincks was a Presbyterian minister who became a Unitarian, the implication being that this was a clear break with an earlier Calvinism. In fact, Hincks became a Unitarian only in the sense in which a person growing up in a Unitarian family becomes a Unitarian. By the time of his birth all the English Presbyterians and a considerable number of the Irish Presbyterians were in fact Unitarians, though a good many of them in England and all of them in Ireland held on to their inherited Presbyterian name.[4]

The story of the Unitarian movement in Canada has never before been told except in the most fragmentary way. As in many similar situations, the absence of a written history has resulted in a luxuriant growth of legendry, much of it fanciful. It may be too much to hope that no such legendry has found its way into these pages, though an attempt has been made to go back to original sources wherever possible.

This study was commissioned by the CUC in 1970, with the financial assistance of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto Foundation. Many persons and organizations have contributed to its making. The Unitarian Church of Vancouver provided me with a three-months' sabbatical which was devoted to research supported by a grant from the Canada Council. Some local congregations produced outlines of their own history or referred me to earlier writings along the same lines. I am particularly grateful to those who assisted me directly in the work of research: Trevor Watkins in England; Glenn Turner in Massachusetts; Mary Lu MacDonald in Montreal; Christine Johnston, Avis McCurdy, Nancy Knight, and Eugen Fandrich in Toronto; and Richard Morton in Edmonton. I am indebted to the librarians of Manchester College, Oxford, Dr Williams's Library in London, the

Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago and the Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley; and in particular for their valuable assistance and advice to Carl Seaburg and George Spencer of the UUA, Alan Seaburg of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, and Hugh Taylor, formerly of the Public Archives of Canada.

Professor Russell Miller of Tufts University and Dr George E. Carter of the Institute for Minority Studies at the University of Wisconsin referred me to a wealth of material on Universalism, which was amplified by the studies already made by Louise Foulds of Olinda. Arnold Westwood gave me access to his father's unpublished autobiography. Philip M. Petursson and Emil Gudmundson reviewed the sections on the Icelandic contribution and offered useful criticism and advice. I have enjoyed a number of stimulating discussions with Edgar Andrew Collard, whose forthcoming history of the Church of the Messiah in Montreal will no doubt supplement this narrative in many ways. To Professor Ian MacPherson of the University of Victoria I am particularly grateful for reading the entire manuscript and offering a number of helpful suggestions.

The laborious work of preparing the typescript was ably and cheerfully handled by Greta Stewart and Ethel Greer; likewise the publishing arrangements by Joan Harris. Jack Wallace gave valuable assistance in laying out the illustrations. My grateful acknowledgment to the many helpers named above and unnamed must be supplemented by appreciation to those who have assisted by their forbearance during the months in which I have been preoccupied with this work, foremost among them my wife, Margaret, and my children, Peter and Daphne. Many aspects of this enterprise have been truly co-operative, but for any blunders in fact or presentation I must retain sole responsibility.

Phillip Hewett
Vancouver, February 1978.

1

Why Unitarian?

'The dedication of the first avowedly Unitarian church in British America almost requires of us that we explain and justify ourselves in such a step. When there are so many other houses of public worship in which the members of this society might have found opportunities of religious service, . . . why have they thought it necessary to erect a sanctuary bearing the distinctive name of Unitarian?'[1]

The date was May 11, 1845. The spring sunshine brightened the crowded building as Ezra Stiles Gannett spoke at the dedication of the Montreal Unitarians' first church. For an hour and a half he responded to his own question, outlining the distinguishing characteristics of Unitarianism as he saw them. It was an assignment for which he was well suited, as successor to William Ellery Channing in the most prominent Unitarian pulpit in the United States, as past secretary and future president of the American Unitarian Association, as a lucid and forthright spokesman for the religion he represented.

The task of explaining and justifying themselves is one that Unitarians in each generation have found it necessary to tackle. As Gannett pointed out, many options already exist within the spectrum of organized religion. Unless Unitarians have something quite distinctively different to offer, the whole process of setting up yet another religious organization may seem like an exercise in futility.

Most Unitarians have little doubt that they do have something distinctively different to offer. They often, however, find it surprisingly difficult to say precisely what it is. Sometimes they have succumbed to

the ever-lurking temptation that leads holders of a minority point of view to explain it in terms laid down by the majority. What this has produced in practice is a catalogue of rejections or reinterpretations of traditional beliefs, giving Unitarianism an essentially negative appearance. 'A Unitarian', Somerset Maugham once wrote, 'very earnestly disbelieves what everyone else believes.'[2] On closer inspection, 'what everyone else believes' turns out to be the general consensus among professed Christians. It is true that many doctrines regarded as essential by most Christians are not accepted by Unitarians, but no movement based solely upon negations could have survived so doggedly, often in face of considerable social and even political pressures.

The real reason why it is so difficult to define Unitarianism in a few words is that its distinguishing characteristics are not to be found in the realm of beliefs and doctrines at all. These are only the symptoms of something that lies far deeper. Unitarianism represents a wholly different approach to the question of authority in religion, by which an individual's beliefs and lifestyle are to be justified. Within traditional Christianity this authority is found in the Bible, or in the Church, or in the recorded sayings of the founding fathers. Unitarians find it in the reason and conscience of the individual. The Reformation principle of the right of private judgment in matters of religion is thus pressed to its ultimate limit, and this is far more significant than any differences that may exist on specific points of belief and practice. 'Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind', wrote Emerson, himself at one time a Unitarian minister.[3]

Such a demand for personal integrity carries with it far-reaching consequences. The person who takes it seriously will not accept religion at second hand. It has to be forged anew in the fires of one's own thought and experience. Help from others in this formidable undertaking may be gladly accepted, but one reserves the final responsibility to oneself. Given the variety of human thought and experiences, it is not to be expected that a complete consensus will emerge among those committing themselves to such an enterprise. 'Unity in diversity' has therefore become a key phrase expressing one aspect of Unitarianism. The unity is to be found in the process; the diversity in the product.

The attractiveness of such a form of religion for some people is quite obvious. Almost equally obvious are the problems it raises. The person who makes a responsible attempt to put Unitarianism into practice has to live within the continuing tension between conflicting

forces that are by no means easy to reconcile. In many ways these tensions are the same as those experienced in the political arena by people attempting responsibly to make democracy work. In fact, Unitarianism has been called the expression of the democractic spirit in religion.

One such tension is the perennial one between *individuality* and *community*. During the past four centuries – the period of time, not coincidentally, during which Unitarianism has existed as an organized movement – the claims of individuality have been pressed in the Western world to an extent unprecedented in human history. Arising, like Unitarianism, out of the Italian Renaissance, these claims were expressed outstandingly for the English-speaking world in the philosophy of John Locke. As one of the bridges between Continental and English Unitarianism, Locke holds an important place in the history of the movement, and exercised a profound influence upon Unitarian thinking for the next couple of centuries. For him, the individual was of paramount importance, the claims of society secondary and derivative. His followers pushed this point of view even further. A concern for individuality became the cult of individualism, which destroyed the supportive ties of human community, and the consequences of this have become more and more apparent as time has gone by. The final outcome of leaning too exclusively in the direction of individualism is the deep sense of alienation expressed by many sensitive persons in recent times.

Unitarians have certainly contributed to this lopsided emphasis. Perceptive spokesmen within the movement have repeatedly pointed out the difficulty of building an effective community life on the basis of a radical respect for individuality. As early as the sixteenth century, Unitarians attempted to establish a close co-operative community on the Hutterite model, but it failed because it could not be reconciled with the demands of individuality.[4] The same experience has been frequently repeated in less dramatic ways ever since, and has made the organizing of strong Unitarian congregations a peculiarly difficult undertaking. In Canada this problem has been, if anything, more acute than in most other places. It can be resolved only where full recognition is given to the values expressed both in individuality and in community. This is something which is notoriously easier to do in theory than in practice.

The same considerations apply with regard to the closely related

tension between *freedom* and *order*. Without an effective recognition of the claims of each, freedom degenerates into irresponsible licence and order into authoritarianism. The danger for Unitarians lies exclusively in the first of these two directions. Neither in the past nor in the present has there been any likelihood of their endorsing authoritarianism in church or state. None the less, at the opposite end of the scale, the freedom of the individual is equally endangered where there is no social order capable of maintaining it.

One unhealthy reaction to this particular tension which can only too easily be documented from Unitarian history is a resistance in the name of freedom to any form of organization, no matter how democratic. At the very time when the need for help to the fledgling movement in Canada was greatest, there was so much opposition to giving effective support to the only organizations which could have marshalled the necessary resources that the opportunity was missed. Again and again this has happened: in the name of freedom there has been opposition to the very organizations that could have safeguarded freedom.

A third tension under which Unitarians have to live is that between *tolerance* on the one hand and *conviction* on the other. Tolerance, like freedom and individuality, has been one of the traditional Unitarian virtues. However, tolerance comes most easily when nothing really matters, when a person has no vital and compelling beliefs about anything. Where there are strong and definite beliefs, it becomes notoriously more difficult to tolerate opposing beliefs, particularly in religion. On the whole, Unitarians have handled this particular tension rather more successfully than they have handled the preceding two. There have, however, been occasions when a misunderstanding of the requirements of tolerance has been allowed to undermine the search for truth to which Unitarians avowedly commit themselves. Such a search requires rigorous thinking, and an unwillingness to dignify unreasoned prejudices with the same degree of respect as is given to beliefs arising out of a long wrestling with evidence.

Intolerance has not been unknown in Unitarian history, though it appears less frequently than in that of most other religious bodies. A genuine tolerance arises out of the recognition that however firmly held one's present convictions may be, it is always possible that they could be mistaken. Such a consciousness is strengthened by the open-

ness to change which is part of the psychology of the person who takes Unitarianism seriously. The comparison has been drawn between the religious convictions of a Unitarian and the working hypotheses of a scientist. In each case, the person concerned may be prepared to stake the work of a lifetime upon the validity of what is believed. None the less, the possibility that these beliefs may eventually have to be modified or abandoned in the light of advancing knowledge and understanding is always acknowledged. The application of this temper and spirit within Unitarianism was described by a historian of the earlier part of this century as 'open-minded certainty'.[5] It lives creatively within the tension between tolerance and conviction.

A fourth type of tension experienced by Unitarians is that between *rationalism* and *romanticism*. 'Reason' has always been one of the key words within Unitarianism, but it has not always been used with precisely the same meaning. In its broadest sense it has meant the harmonious activity of all aspects of the human psyche, bringing the contributions of thought, sensation, feeling, intuition and imagination together into a meaningful unity. But there have been times when it has been used in a much narrower sense, notably in the eighteenth-century Age of Reason, which had a profound influence upon the evolution of the Unitarian movement. The foremost Unitarian of that period was Joseph Priestley, philosopher, theologian, politician and sicentist, and under his leadership English Unitarians adopted a highly rationalistic form of religion. For him the essentials of religion lay in intellectual assent to a system of ideas, and in a way of life that was the logical expression in practice of those ideas. A caricature which appeared in a Montreal newspaper in 1833 came uncomfortably close to the mark when it depicted Unitarians as saying: 'We are the sons of reason – we will admit of nothing but what we receive at the hands of scientific demonstration.'[6]

Such an attitude drove poets like Coleridge out of the Unitarian movement. But within the movement itself it produced in due course a reaction toward the opposing pole of romanticism. Rationalism laid its emphasis upon the intellect, and upon social action as a political process. Romanticism laid its emphasis upon the feelings, and upon social action as interpersonal encounter. The romantics were for intuition and spontaneity, for acting in harmony with what they felt to be their essential nature, whereas the rationalists emphasized education

and training. With the rise of romanticism, the pre-eminence formerly given to theological debate gave place to expressions of mystical experience, ritual and liturgy.

More than the other dualities, this one has tended to move in cycles, each side dominant in its turn. Once again, an adequate approach to religion demands both, as comprehended in the historic Unitarian appeal to reason. As Erich Fromm has put it: 'Reason flows from the blending of rational thought and feeling. If the two functions are torn apart, thinking deteriorates into schizoid intellectual activity, and feeling deteriorates into neurotic life-damaging passions.'[7]

A furious controversy erupted among Unitarians on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1830s. It arose from a polarity which had until that time been largely unrecognized, but has been very obvious ever since. On the one side were ranged those who drew their religious inspiration chiefly from the *past*; on the other, those who looked instead to the *future*, or at least to the present. The former position was well expressed in the title of a sermon which ran through many printings: 'Christianity as Christ preached it'. The basic idea was that Unitarianism represented a return to the original pure teachings of Jesus, as contrasted with the ecclesiastical creeds and dogmas stigmatized by Joseph Priestley as 'corruptions of Christianity'. Unitarians of this school made heavy use of the Bible. They contributed substantially to the critical study of Biblical texts, which became an increasingly important preoccupation for scholars from the eighteenth century onward.

Those Unitarians who took the opposing point of view saw themselves as participants in the advances made by the progressive movement some of them called 'The Vanguard of the Age'. The foundations of their religion were laid in immediate first-hand experience and in the new discoveries of the sciences, with which they maintained an ongoing dialogue. They accused those who looked back across the centuries for their religious inspiration of worshipping the dead hand of the past. The latter retaliated by accusing them of falling for each new fad or panacea that appeared over the horizon.

Once again, each end of the spectrum has had its contribution to make. Unitarianism has always had one foot planted in the past while it moves the other forward into the future. Revolutionary change, whether in religion or in politics, never makes quite as complete a break with the past as its more enthusiastic supporters propose. Unitarianism emerged and developed within a Christian matrix. It was a product, certainly, of the liberating spirit of the Renaissance. Most of the earliest Unitarians were Italians. But none of them doubted for a moment that they were Christians. Indeed, they saw themselves as performing a valuable service to Christianity by purging it of all the extraneous and corrupting influences which had crept into it over the course of the centuries. They were dismayed and hurt when Catholics and Protestants alike took a very different view of the matter, denouncing them as heretics, infidels and atheists, and persecuting them furiously whenever the opportunity arose.

The arguments on this subject have changed very little with the passage of the centuries. They were stated quite succinctly in a *Letter to Unitarians* by an Anglican clergyman in 1836: 'I know you in general consider it hard and unkind that we do not recognize you as fellow Christians. A few dispassionate remarks upon this. To recognize you as Christians would be to recognize Unitarianism (so called) as including the essentials of Christianity – the very point in issue between us. You are aware that we differ in essentials. According to your opinion, the essentials of Christianity are comprised in a very few particulars, which you consider us to hold in common with yourselves: you can therefore, consistently with your principles, give us the title of Christians. According to our opinion, the essentials of Christianity include certain particulars which you avowedly reject, and therefore consistently with our principles, we cannot give you the title of Christians. Would you have us renounce, without conviction, the whole question in dispute? Would you have us hypocritically meet you as our fellow-believers, while you disavow doctrines conscientiously deemed by us the very life and soul of our religion?. . . . I trust that when you calmly reflect on all this, it will commend itself to your better judgments and you will cease to impute to us uncharitable motives for refusing you a name which we cannot yield you without yielding up our principles, or our consistency.'[8]

The same argument was echoed a few years later by a minister of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Montreal: 'A whole religion is in debate between us. If their religion be Christianity, ours is not.'[9] And even at that period there were a few Unitarians prepared to accept the validity of the argument. 'Can there be more potent or undeniable truth', wrote one of them in 1837, 'than that if our opponents are in creed Christians, we are not? It were gross mockery in them to salute

us with the appellation.'[10] But only within the last century has a substantial and increasing proportion of Unitarians come to accept this, and at the present time there are still considerable numbers of Unitarians anxious to be regarded as Christians.

What are the alleged 'essentials of Christianity' that Unitarians have rejected? In general, they are the doctrines which, taken together, comprise the traditional Christian scheme of human salvation: the fall of man, original sin, the Deity of Christ and his death on the cross as a vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind, the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Well before the close of the sixteenth century, the more advanced thinkers among the Unitarians had come to think of Jesus as a human teacher and prophet, a person possessed of unparalleled wisdom and insight, divinely commissioned with supernatural powers, but not a God to be worshipped. Accordingly, they also rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, which had originally been worked out by the speculative theologians of the early Church to explain how Jesus Christ, a human being, could also be God. It was this latter rejection that caused them to be called Unitarians, originally a name with a strictly theological significance, but later broadened to its more modern meaning. Jabez T. Sunderland, whose ministry at Toronto in the opening years of the present century was perhaps the most spectacularly successful ever recorded by a Unitarian in Canada, wrote in a pamphlet reprinted many times on both sides of the Atlantic: 'Unitarianism to be true to its great name must be the religion of the Eternal Unities. It cannot be less. What are the unities of religion? They are those elements, actual or potential, which all religions have in common.... The religion which we are invited to, nay, pledged to, by our very name as Unitarians... is the highest, the broadest and the deepest of possible religions, that is to say, is nothing less than the one ultimate, uniting, and eternal religion of man.'[11]

Even in the earliest period something of this idea was in the minds of the pioneers who rejected the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. They saw in it a quite unnecessary stumbling block in the way of building understanding, goodwill, and co-operation between the various religions of the world. In the more limited awareness of those times, this meant Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; they hoped that by purifying Christianity of the illogical and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity, they might remove an obstacle to understanding and perhaps even bring unity between the monotheistic religions of the world. They

were idealistically and outrageously in advance of their [illegible] conversations both with Jews and with Muslims with thi[illegible]

These early Unitarians saw themselves as pure mo[illegible] long time, the terms 'unitarian' and 'monotheist' were [illegible] synonymous, and in fact the former term was frequently applied to Muslims. The sentiments expressed in the eighteenth-century Methodist hymn by Charles Wesley, 'The Unitarian fiend expel, And chase his doctrine back to Hell,' are generally considered to have been directed against Muslims rather than to the people who called themselves Unitarian Christians, though they may well have been intended for both. One of the earliest critics of Unitarianism in Canada took some pains to remind his readers of the early and cordial dialogues into which Unitarians had entered with Muslims.[12]

During the first half of the nineteenth century, many Unitarians still tended to see all Christians who were monotheistic rather than trinitarians as colleagues in a common cause. The way in which this affected relationships with the 'Christian Connection' will be examined later. Today the last vestiges of this attitude have disappeared. No one has ever argued that because Jehovah's Witnesses or Christadelphians reject the doctrine of the Trinity they are to be considered as fellow Unitarians. There is substantial truth in the oft-repeated claim that many people are 'Unitarians without knowing it', but such persons are to be identified by their basic attitudes rather than by the specifics of their theology.

If Unitarians gradually freed themselves from involvement in endless arguments over the Deity of Christ and the Trinity, it took them longer to cease campaigning to be regarded by 'the orthodox' as fellow Christians – or even, a little more arrogantly, as more Christian than the Christians. At times this struggle has seemed reminiscent of the battles fought by the pretender to a throne. His claims could have been legitimized had history followed another course. There comes a point, however, when the cause has to be recognized as a lost one, and energies are better transferred to some other field of activity. The word Christian has irrevocably become the property of a type of religion far removed from that of most Unitarians. To abandon the names 'Unitarian Christian' or 'Christian Unitarian', which were almost universally used within the movement in the nineteenth century, is not a denial of the importance of the contribution to one's religion that may be found in the teachings of Jesus. It is simply an

acceptance of the fact that there are more important things to be concerned with than terminology, particularly terminology that is gratuitously upsetting to other people.

Ever since its inception, the Unitarian movement has been modified by influences from outside the Christian tradition, and those influences have multiplied in number during the past century and a half. The process is a familiar one in religious history; it can be seen in the evolution of Christianity itself. The earliest Christians were all Jews. Christianity began as a Jewish sect, and in its formative period there was a lively debate as to whether or not one had to be a Jew in order to be a Christian. Over the course of time, the effects of Greek thought and of other influences at work in the Mediterranean world of the day, together with the efforts of those who wanted to assert their complete independence of the Jewish tradition, made Christianity into a separate religion in its own right. None the less, it still retains many marks of its Jewish ancestry. A similar evolution has taken place within Unitarianism in recent times, so that today it extends an equal welcome to people from all religious traditions or from none.

Among the major influences affecting this evolution none has been of greater importance than the ongoing dialogue with the sciences. Sir Isaac Newton is by most criteria to be reckoned as a Unitarian, and eighteenth-century Unitarianism in England was built upon Newton's cosmology combined with Locke's psychology. Its most outstanding leader was Joseph Priestley, who made a significant contribution both to scientific and to religious advancement. General acceptance among Unitarians of new theories about the universe and human nature moved them progressively further from the traditional Christian point of view.

One other major dialogue that has become increasingly significant in recent years extends the earlier Unitarian discussions with Jews and Muslims to bring in the religions of the Orient. The growth in Western awareness of those religions during the past century has been assisted by Unitarians such as Jabez T. Sunderland, J. Estlin Carpenter and Sir Edwin Arnold (author of *The Song Celestial* and *The Light of Asia*). It has also had a profound effect upon the outlook of Unitarians, particularly during the past quarter of a century.

These and other influences, combined with the inner dynamics of its own evolution, have produced the Unitarian movement of the modern period. It has taken institutional form in a number of widely scattered

places, from all of which have come contributions to the form it was eventually to take in Canada.

The earliest Unitarian communities were in Poland and Transylvania, to which comparatively remote parts of Europe the sixteenth-century heretics fled to escape ferocious persecutions farther west. There they established colleges and printing presses, and developed not only a radical theology but also a great many innovative social and political ideas. The gathering forces of the opposition succeeded in isolating the Transylvanian movement, though it survived. The Polish movement was completely crushed, but not before it had become a permanent influence in European religious thinking. Socinianism (as this early form of Unitarianism was generally called, after its chief spokesman Faustus Socinus) was the most notorious heresy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the libraries of progressive thinkers such as Locke and Newton contained many of the books written by the Unitarians of Poland.

In England there were short-lived Unitarian fellowships in the seventeenth century, but the continuing movement came into being by a slow process of evolution within the existing Presbyterian congregations. Many of these entered the eighteenth century as Calvinistic and ended it as Unitarian, yet without any sudden break at any point in the process. The members of these congregations were often people of education, wealth, and influence, contributing to the rise of modern industrialism and supporting the causes of social and political reform. A smaller group, the General Baptists, drew chiefly from the less educated classes but followed a similar course of evolution. Their Unitarianism, however, tended to be militantly propagandist, rather than quietly tolerant like that of many of the Presbyterians. A third and still smaller group, led by Theophilus Lindsey, came directly out of the Church of England. All these varied components found some kind of common focus in the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (BFUA) after 1825. In no sense a denominational hierarchy, the BFUA was a voluntary organization designed to promote the Unitarian cause by such means as assisting weak congregations, supporting itinerant preachers who were gathering new congregations, publishing literature, and defending the civil rights of Unitarians.

By a remarkable coincidence, the American Unitarian Association (AUA) was organized on precisely the same day as the BFUA: May 26, 1825. It was an even more loosely organized body than the British

one, and was the outcome of a similar process that had been taking place within the long-established parishes of New England. There the liberalizing trend had begun later than in England and had not proceeded to as radical a stage. It had, however, been accompanied by considerably more rancor within the congregations, many of which had eventually split amid mutual recriminations between 'orthodox' and 'liberals'. These latter did not regard themselves as Unitarians until the name was thrust upon them by a hostile writer in 1815, precipitating a period of confusion and uncertainty to be ended only when four years later their leading spokesman, William Ellery Channing, nailed the colors to the mast in his famous Baltimore sermon on *Unitarian Christianity*.

One further movement remains to be mentioned because of its direct influence in Canada – that of Ireland. There had been liberal trends within the Irish Presbyterian congregations ever since the first half of the eighteenth century, and the distinction was recognized between those who adopted this 'new light' approach and those who supported the 'old light' of strict Calvinism. The two positions continued to co-exist without too much disharmony until the 1820s, when the course of events in New England was repeated in Ireland. An orthodox protagonist, Henry Cooke, came forward with a demand that the 'new light' must be suppressed: 'We must put down Arianism, or Arianism will put us down.' For the next few years Cooke waged a vigorous battle with Henry Montgomery, leader of the 'new light' party, but in the end was successful in forcing an acrimonious separation, in 1829. Thenceforward the name Unitarian, which had hitherto been somewhat loosely used, was accepted by the new movement, though its official title was the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster. 'The privilege of free and fearless inquiry is the groundwork of the church we are now preparing to build; and *Prove all things* will be the motto inscribed on its front in characters of gold', declared William Porter in his opening address to its first assembly.

It is important to note that at this stage there were significant differences between the Unitarianism of England on the one hand and that of Ireland and New England on the other. The term Arian as used by Cooke was properly applied to the latter, as against the Humanitarian approach that the English Unitarians, following Priestley, had nearly all come to accept. The difference between the two lay in their view of the nature of Christ. For the Humanitarian, he was

simply a human figure, though still credited with the power to perform miracles, which furnished the evidence for giving credence to his teaching. For the Arians, Christ was a supernatural being, the Son of God but not himself God. In a famous statement entitled *The Creed of an Arian*, Henry Montgomery outlined his theology: one God, the Father; one pre-existent Mediator, Christ, who reconciled man to God, not by an atoning death (for guilt is personal and cannot be transferred), but rather by inspiring repentance leading to forgiveness. Man is a free agent, added Montgomery, able to choose both good and evil; there is no such thing as predestination, and faith and works are both important.[13]

Such a theology did not differ strikingly from that of Ezra Stiles Gannett, though the position of the two men within their respective movements did not remain the same. By the late 1830s Gannett was beginning to represent the most conservative wing of the evolving American movement, whereas Montgomery remained the spokesman for the mainstream of the movement in Ireland. Both men were suspicious of the radical trends within English Unitarianism as well as within their own movements, not only because these went far beyond anything they themselves could accept, but also because they saw such extremism as providing gratuitous ammunition to orthodox critics.

Since Unitarianism has so frequently emerged through an evolutionary process within existing religious movements, it would usually be quite arbitrary to set a date for its beginning in a particular place. There may have been some crisis that forced people to decide whether or not to avow themselves Unitarian, but this was normally preceded by a long process of conscious or unconscious development in a Unitarian direction. It was not a matter of deliberately concealing one's Unitarianism – though social pressures may have caused this to happen at times – but rather a genuine uncertainty as to whether one really was a Unitarian or not. 'Unitarians without knowing it' are not to be reckoned as part of this picture; but there were many who announced by their actions, and often by words as well, that they were not sure to what extent they were Unitarians.

It has been traditional in Western society to categorize people by religious denomination, though in other parts of the world people may cheerfully adhere to several different forms of religion simultaneously. The same thing happens in Western society more often than we usually admit, and makes it realistic to ask to what extent a person

was a Unitarian at a given time, rather than demanding a total adherence or none at all. Furthermore, personal religious convictions in a thoughtful person are in a continuous process of change, which again affects the degree to which a label is applicable. The compiler of a dictionary of Canadian biography has to decide how long or continuous a residence in the country is required in order for a subject to qualify; the writer of Unitarian history has a similar problem. And it is unwise to come to a conclusion on the basis of first impressions.

Illustrations of the problem may be found in nineteenth-century Canada, where Unitarians or prospective Unitarians frequently found themselves without any Unitarian congregation in which they could participate. In that age of almost universal churchgoing among the 'respectable' section of the populace, they often tried to make do with the least uncongenial of the existing alternatives. When William Hutton, son of one of the leading Unitarian ministers in Ireland, settled at Belleville in 1834, he immediately took a look at his options: Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican or Roman Catholic. There was really no choice at all. In spite of the bitterness that by now existed between the orthodox and liberal Presbyterians in Ireland, his only opportunity for religious fellowship on terms remotely acceptable lay in the Presbyterian church, which he persevered in attending despite his discouraging reception. 'I am not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper', he wrote to his mother, 'on account of my heretical opinions.... This is a serious deprivation.' After two years' experience he felt even more frustrated: 'Our Pastor is a great bigot. Says no one can hold Unitarian sentiments except through corruption of heart and wilful depravity. I am almost sick of going to hear him.'[14] Nevertheless, he continued to attend, and anyone unacquainted with his personal discussions with the minister might well have regarded him simply as a Presbyterian.

If one could not find anything positive at all within the ministrations of the existing churches, the only alternative was to go nowhere. This was the choice of two young Unitarians who settled a few years later at Severn Falls. 'We do not go to chapel, and I don't think I could make myself comfortable in anything but a Unitarian place of worship. We generally take a trip on the river in a boat.... This, then, is the way we spend Sunday: go abroad and see God's wonderful works in all their native grandeur, which is more congenial with my

taste than sitting under a ranting Methodist. I feel, however, the loss of chapel more than anything.'[15]

Only dedicated Unitarians such as Hutton could hold on to their convictions after years of such religious isolation. Theological scruples were more frequently outweighed by ties of friendship and marriage, and Unitarians were absorbed into other church associations. If a Unitarian congregation were later organized, this could produce a conflict of loyalties that was often resolved by simply staying away.

One man who successfully grasped both horns of this dilemma was John Frothingham. He and his brother Joseph had arrived in Montreal from Boston in 1809 to set up a hardware business. They were members of a liberal New England family that was to make a distinguished contribution through several generations to the developing Unitarian movement, though at the time of their arrival they would not have been using the Unitarian name. The Frothinghams attended St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Montreal, and became so much a part of the congregation that they stayed with it when most of their compatriots seceded to form the American Presbyterian Church. The minister evidently took a somewhat broader view than did his colleague in Belleville on the subject of admitting heretics to the sacrament. Though Joseph Frothingham died in 1832, for more than half a century his brother kept one foot in orthodoxy and the other in heterodoxy. Bitter disputes raged between the Unitarians and the Presbyterians; John Frothingham continued to attend both churches, though he was usually in attendance at St Andrew's. Both the Unitarian and the Presbyterian ministers were frequent guests in his home. His three children all became very active Unitarians; one of them entered the ministry. And when he died he left the Unitarian church $1000 in his will.

Was John Frothingham a Unitarian or a Presbyterian? The only reasonable answer must be that he was both, and that what was true of him was true of a number of others as well.

2

The Beginnings

Canada in the early nineteenth century did not provide the most promising soil for the growth of a Unitarian movement. The social climate of the day was hostile enough to bodies such as the Methodists, who had simply had the misfortune to enter Canada from south of the border, and who, though they might be suspected of republican sympathies, did not have to labor under the additional disability of being notorious heretics. Unitarians, as soon as their presence became known, came under fire both for their theology and for their political radicalism. A furious attack in 1833, after claiming that '"Unitarian Christianity" has ever, in England, been plotting the downfall of the constitution', went on to declare: 'They expressly claim kindred with the Mahometans.... "Unitarian Christianity" is but another name for speculative infidelity.... Burke in his reflections on the French revolution has recorded the zeal with which the Unitarian Preachers enlisted in the service of atheistic propagandism; and he relates some of their labours in endeavouring to confer upon their enslaved country the incomparable blessings of the lamp post, the guillotine, and legislative and executive sans culottes mobs.... The religion which produces such a race of revolutionary furies in one age will produce them in another. ... There is no ground of confidence whatever in systematic perfidy; and he who is deceived by it is a fool, and deserves to suffer.'[1]

Such was the welcome extended to the earliest Unitarians by influential circles in Canada. Some of the handful who arrived as part of the growing stream of immigration from the British Isles after the

close of the War of 1812 were indeed radical in their politics and iconoclastic in their religion. Most of those whose inclinations lay in that direction, however, made the United States rather than Canada their destination, as Joseph Priestley had done when driven out of England by political persecution in 1794. There they would find not only a thriving Unitarian movement, but a more congenial political climate. When William Steill Brown, Unitarian minister in Bridgwater, Somerset was about to sail for the United States in 1832 he publicly declared his admiration for the religious, moral and political situation in his chosen destination, adding that not only for himself but also for his children he wished 'to enjoy a situation so favourable, in my opinion, to the happy development of the moral and intellectual character.'[2]

No such panegyrics are recorded from Unitarians setting out for Canada. For the most part, these were people from humbler walks of life, more interested in finding a livelihood than in publishing blasphemies or overthrowing the constitution. Few of them left any record behind them, and although those who settled in Montreal and Toronto would at a later date have had the opportunity to unite with a Unitarian congregation, most of them were (in the language of their day) 'destitute of religious ordinances'. Frequent pleas went both to Boston and to London for a missionary to be sent to them; in spite of good intentions, however, nothing of this kind materialized until the following century. The British and American associations both lacked the resources to respond. Unitarian individualism in the nineteenth century meant that although those who took an initiative in starting a congregation could count on some modest degree of outside help, without such a local initiative nothing would happen.

Of the few avowed Unitarians living within the present boundaries of Canada in the first three decades of the century, the earliest known representative is Benjamin Bowring, who settled in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1811. He was a member of a family distinguished in the annals of English Unitarianism, his cousin being Sir John Bowring, author and diplomat, and at one time president of the BFUA. During his residence in St John's, Bowring built up the successful shipping firm of Bowring Bros., and was also active in the cause of political reform. He was one of the leaders in the agitation for a Newfoundland legislature, which was finally set up by the British parliament in the

Reform year of 1832, in spite of determined opposition from established interests on the island. Two years later Bowring handed his business over to his sons and returned to England.

Elsewhere in the Atlantic colonies, Unitarians were almost non-existent at this period. The Nova Scotia census of 1827 recorded only four in the entire province. There were certainly more than that in Upper Canada, but none of them proclaimed themselves publicly until early in 1828, when Captain John Matthews, a retired army officer who had been elected to the House of Assembly as a leading member of the Reform party, compounded his many offences in the eyes of the Establishment by announcing himself as a Unitarian during the course of a debate in the House.[3]

Only in Montreal did conditions exist that held out any hope of Unitarians getting together to start a congregation. The presence of Unitarians in the city was first announced to the public in 1821 when a correspondent to the *Canadian Courant* tried to tarnish the image of the newly founded Sunday School Union society by mentioning that it had Unitarians among its membership.[4] As a matter of fact, the twelve-member board of directors of this society, organized to distribute books and other materials for the use of Sunday schools of all denominations, included no fewer than four persons with Unitarian associations. Like John Frothingham (who was one of them), they also maintained membership in other churches. The president was Samuel Hedge, who had come from Boston in 1810; his brother Levi was a professor at Harvard and one of the leading protagonists in the New England Unitarian controversy.

Quite a number, in fact, of the Unitarian sympathizers during the 1820s were New Englanders – *les Bostonnais*, French-speaking Montrealers called them – who had come to the city primarily for commercial reasons. Many of them were in the hardware business, capitalizing upon the unrivalled reputation that American axes and other pioneering tools enjoyed in Canada. This was true, for instance, both of Frothingham and of Hedge. Most of them attended Presbyterian churches, which were not only the least objectionable of the existing choices, but also the most likely recruiting-ground for Unitarians, as they had proved to be in earlier days in the British Isles. A letter from Montreal to the AUA in 1830 asserted quite categorically: 'The class of people most favourable to Unitarian doctrines is the Presbyterians from the United States, or from England and Ireland.'[5] When the

Presbyterian churches of Montreal set up in 1827 a joint committee to press their claims for a share in the Clergy Reserves, three of the twelve signers of its report were men who accepted or were moving toward a Unitarian point of view: Horatio Gates, John Frothingham, and J. T. Barrett.

Gates was perhaps the most prominent New Englander in Montreal, and a long-time resident of the city. He directed a large importing business, and was a founder, director, and in due course president of the Bank of Montreal. Another long-time resident of American origin was Ariel Bowman, from whose bookshop on St François Xavier Street Unitarian literature was widely distributed. There was a considerable readership for such material: in 1828, its first year of publication, thirty subscriptions were taken out in Montreal to a Boston periodical, *The Unitarian Advocate*.

Not all the earliest Unitarians were from New England. John Molson, who had lived in the city for nearly half a century, came originally from England. He was one of the leading citizens, owner of the brewery and the St Lawrence steamboats, and before long, like Gates, to become a member of that pinnacle of the Establishment, the Legislative Council. (John Frothingham was also offered a seat on it, but declined.) How, why, and to what extent Molson became interested in Unitarianism is unclear, but for at least the final eight years of his life he involved himself in repeated attempts to get a congregation started.

The most vigorous promoters of the Unitarian cause had come from the other side of the Atlantic. There was P. H. Teulon, a hat manufacturer, who served for a time as secretary for the group in its correspondence with London and Boston. He came from a family background in which was represented the most radical aspect of the English Unitarianism of the period, pushing individualism, in some instances, to the extreme of repudiating corporate worship and prayer, arguing that religious gatherings should instead be for discussions of religion and ethics, and laying plans for social reform. Teulon saw in the Deists, of whom there were a few in Montreal, the natural allies of Unitarians – a point of view rejected with some horror by another prominent member of the group, Benjamin Workman, who denounced Deism in terms similar to those used by more orthodox citizens when speaking of Unitarianism.[6]

Benjamin Workman was the eldest of a large family (eight brothers

and a sister), which was to have a very considerable influence upon Unitarian development in Canada. The Workmans had been long established in Ulster, where they were close friends of Henry Montgomery and part of his liberal movement. Benjamin arrived in Montreal in 1819, and was followed a year later by his brother Alexander. Three other brothers – Samuel, Thomas, and Matthew – came in 1827, and finally in 1829 the remainder of the family, including the aged parents. (The mother lived to be 102.) Not only did this family influence Unitarianism: most of its members set their mark upon Canadian life as a whole. For the first ten years after his arrival, Benjamin conducted the Union School in Montreal, a pioneering experiment in education for both boys and girls – though not together! He handed over responsibility for the school to his brothers Alexander and Joseph in 1829, when he went into partnership with Ariel Bowman as editor and publisher of the *Canadian Courant*, which they purchased that year from its original publisher, Nahum Mower. Henceforward the Unitarians were assured of at least one friendly voice in the press. The *Courant* discreetly promoted liberal views in religion, and more overtly promoted the temperance movement, which was another of Benjamin Workman's favorite causes. In fact, he later attributed the closing down of the *Courant* in 1834 to economic pressures from the distillers.

Later in life Benjamin studied medicine at McGill, graduating in 1853 and eventually joining his brother Joseph on the staff of the Toronto Asylum for the Insane.

Alexander, the second brother, though he maintained a house in Montreal, went into business in Bytown as a hardware merchant in partnership with Edward Griffin, another Unitarian. Later he was for many years a member of the Ottawa city council, becoming mayor in 1860 and 1861. He took part in repeated but unsuccessful attempts to establish a Unitarian cause in Ottawa.

Joseph combined studies at McGill with his teaching at the Union School, graduated in medicine in 1835 and moved to Toronto the following year. There, after a short period of partnership with his brother Samuel in establishing the hardware firm of Workman Bros., he practised medicine and was in due course appointed Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum for the Insane – a position he filled with distinction for twenty-two years, pioneering in a more enlightened approach to the subject of mental illness. It was he who was to be

chiefly responsible for the establishment of the Unitarian congregation in Toronto.

Thomas and William went into partnership with John Frothingham, his hardware establishment then taking the name of Frothingham and Workman. Both became prominent figures in commercial and political life. Thomas became a vice-president of Molson's Bank, president of the Sun Mutual Life Insurance Co., and a director of the Canada Shipping Co. He represented the Montreal Centre constituency in Parliament until 1872, and returned three years later as member for Montreal West. William became president of the City Bank, as well as entering into substantial ventures in real estate, railways and shipping. He was elected mayor of Montreal in 1868 and held that position for three years.

These were the leading figures who began to get together in the 1820s to talk about forming a Unitarian congregation. It was not difficult for them to find out who was in sympathy with the cause. The Montreal of their day, with an English-speaking population of less than 15 000, was a small enough place for people to know each other fairly intimately. By 1828 they estimated that they had a constituency of about fifty. It was in the summer of that year that the first opportunity came to test public response without over-committing themselves.

The nearest Unitarian congregation was at Burlington, Vermont, at that period the only one in the state. Its minister, George Ingersoll, had been invited to conduct meetings in Ogdensburg, New York, and proposed to return home by way of Montreal. He would be available to conduct a religious service. The Montreal Unitarians were excited at the prospect, but there was one major obstacle. No location for a service seemed appropriate except a church building, and it was unlikely that any of the existing churches would be made available for such heretical purposes.

It was possible to exert a little leverage, however. Molson, Gates, and other Unitarians were not only respected citizens, but had also contributed handsomely to the building fund of the new American Presbyterian Church. More than that, they had endorsed its appeal to liberal friends south of the border, who had likewise generously responded. They now therefore presented a request for the use of the church on a Sunday afternoon with some expectation of a favorable

reception, only to be told that the building could not be made available to a 'professed Unitarian'. An approach to the Methodists drew a more evasive reply, but with the same practical effect. Ingersoll therefore had to content himself with a private gathering; discussion of the possibility of starting a Unitarian congregation, however, now moved into a more active phase. Teulon urged that they had only to persuade an effective minister to come and they would easily muster the resources to maintain him and put up a suitable building. Benjamin Workman was more cautious, saying that he had always been opposed to 'hazardous experiments' and that the failure of a premature attempt would leave them worse off than before.

Distribution of literature from London and Boston continued on an increasing scale. Correspondence with these Unitarian centres was supplemented by personal visits, and among the responsibilities undertaken by one of the most active Unitarians in Montreal while visiting England in the winter of 1831-32 was that of looking for a suitable minister.

The year of decision was 1832. It was not as propitious a time in most respects as four years earlier would have been. The economic prosperity of the earlier period was beginning to falter, as the depression of the thirties approached. Political discontent, which had been simmering for years, now began to seethe with growing frustration over arbitrary rule. Thomas Storrow Brown, another hardware merchant associated with the Unitarian group, was one of the promoters of a violently radical newspaper, *The Vindicator*, which fanned the flames of discontent. Daniel Tracey, its editor, was arrested early in 1832 for contempt of the Legislative Council and jailed for the duration of its session. On his release, he stood for election to the Assembly, and after a particularly bitter and violent campaign was declared elected by a majority of three votes. The result precipitated a riot, troops were called out, fighting led to bloodshed, and three men were left dead on the Place d'Armes.

There was a great outburst of feeling which would no doubt have gathered force over the summer but for a far grimmer preoccupation that was soon to fasten its hold over popular attention. For months the city's press had carried reports of the ravages of the great epidemic of Asiatic cholera, which had swept through Europe and made its way into the British Isles. Now the unsanitary emigrant ships that each year carried many thousands of new arrivals to Canada brought the

dreaded disease into Montreal in the second week of June. Hundreds of new cases were reported every day, and by the time the epidemic faded in the latter part of September the death toll had run into thousands.

It was into this scene that David Hughes and his family disembarked on July 25, after a nine-week Atlantic crossing. For eleven years he had been Unitarian minister at Yeovil, in Somerset, but now, at forty-seven, he had decided to try his prospects in Canada. He carried a letter of introduction to Teulon from W. J. Fox, foreign secretary of the BFUA. Teulon hastily got the family out of the cholera-infested dock area and set about informing his fellow Unitarians of the arrival of a minister. In spite of all the obvious problems, they decided that the long-sought opportunity had at last come, and at three days' notice a public service was planned for the following Sunday.

Once again the question of where to meet came to the fore. After their previous experience, the Unitarians doubted that they would be given the use of a church, but decided that it would be worth trying. To disarm opposition, they persuaded Hughes to announce as his text, 'Christ and him crucified'. The defenders of orthodoxy were not to be so easily placated, and the round of applications met with no greater success than before. This time, however, they were prepared. The Union Schoolroom was hastily fitted up as a temporary chapel, and an announcement placed in the Saturday issue of the *Courant*. So it came about that on Sunday afternoon, July 29, 1832, in the sticky heat of midsummer in Montreal and at the height of a raging cholera epidemic, the first Unitarian service in Canada was held.

About eighty people came. They were delighted. Hughes proved to be all they could wish for as a minister. Both he and they were prepared to enter into an arrangement to settle him as the regular incumbent. A search began for a suitable home for his family, and the congregation subscribed £60 to fit up a storeroom as a chapel, with a seating capacity of up to three hundred. He preached again on the following Sunday, and also began a midweek service.

Then tragedy struck. On August 9, Hughes left on the early morning steamboat to take his eldest daughter to a position with a family in Kingston. On the journey he suddenly developed the most virulent symptoms of cholera, was put ashore at Coteau du Lac, and died before nightfall.

His death precipitated the first public controversy over Unitarianism. It was duly reported in the *Courant*, and the obituary was reprinted, after the custom of the times, in the *Gazette*. It spoke of Hughes as a Christian and declared: 'He was called from the service of his Lord and Master upon earth to the more exalted and glorified realities of His presence, in the highest sanctuary.' The immediate response was a letter published in the more conservative *Herald*, asserting that Christ was not the Lord and Master of Unitarians, who could in no way be regarded as Christians. 'I would not say this much by way of argument with that sect, only to warn Christians against their soul-killing tenets.'

A Unitarian spokesman replied, pointing out that such calumnies toward a deceased minister had never before appeared in a Montreal newspaper. Unitarians had resided in the city for more than a quarter of a century, and had contributed generously to its charitable enterprises. There followed a statement that is noteworthy as the first exposition of Unitarian principles to appear in a Canadian publication. 'Unitarianism,' declared the writer, 'requires a firm belief in the one only living and true God, as he was declared to Israel by Moses and the Prophets, and preached to all nations by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It takes the Bible and *the Bible only* as the guide in forming religious belief, and adopts it as the only rule to which the Christian is subject in faith and morals.... It has been said that Unitarians deny Christ, whereas they accept him as described in the Holy Scriptures, and as such acknowledge him to be their Lord and Master, their Saviour and Mediator.' All this is standard Unitarianism of the period; so too was the conclusion that cited Locke, Newton, and Milton as distinguished Unitarians, besides 'a long catalogue of men eminent for learning and piety, to whom the world looks back with veneration and respect.'[7]

The shaken Unitarians were faced with the question of what to do next, now that they had equipped a building and begun services. Edward Cheney, one of their number, wrote immediately to Ingersoll, inviting him to come and be their minister. He, halfway through a successful twenty-two-year tenure with an established congregation, not unnaturally declined to exchange this for the uncertain prospects of ministering to a heterogeneous group of Unitarians in a pestilence-stricken city in another country.

But before his reply arrived, one of the ships from England brought

in a second Unitarian minister and his family. Matthew Harding was a very different kind of man from Hughes, though the two were well acquainted. He was a General Baptist,[8] and for years had been engaged in a type of ministry unknown among American Unitarians and unusual in England: that of an itinerant preacher in the Methodist style. He had travelled thousands of miles each year in the south and west of England, mostly on foot, preaching Unitarianism wherever he could find an opportunity. For the two years immediately preceding his arrival in Montreal he had, however, led a more settled life as minister of two small congregations in Cornwall.

Eager though they were for a minister, the Montreal Unitarians were not as a whole prepared for one of quite this type. His rough-cut speech seemed uncouth to those with memories of elegant discourses from New England pulpits, and few of the Americans came back to hear him a second time. Teulon and others with an English background would have been happy to see him stay, but they were unwilling to risk a split in the congregation. So within a month of his arrival Harding was on his way to Boston, carrying a letter commending him to the AUA as 'a truly pious man who would be useful in a settled situation', and asking urgently for an American minister to be sent to Montreal.

During his brief stay in the city, he had occupied the pulpit three times and dedicated the meeting room in which the services were held. He had also had an opportunity to display a skill in which he was a past master – that of putting down an orthodox heckler who tried to interrupt one of his services. On arrival in Massachusetts, he and his family were lodged under the hospitable roof of Henry Ware, Jr., Professor at the Harvard Divinity School and joint secretary of the AUA. Ware lost no time in responding to Montreal's appeal for a minister. In less than a month one of that summer's graduates from the Divinity School, Joseph Angier, was on his way north. He preached in Montreal for the first time on November 4.

Angier was twenty-four years of age, a quiet, cultured man with musical tastes but not outstanding in the pulpit. He was never formally settled as minister in Montreal, though he stayed there, with brief intervals during which other New England ministers substituted for him, nearly eighteen months. Services were held regularly in the room on St Henri Street. The morning attendance, averaging sixty, would have represented the established nucleus of the congregation,

whereas in the evenings there were between two and three hundred, many of them drawn simply by curiosity.

Plans were made to establish the church on a more stable footing. A Sunday school was established, and in the spring of 1833 a lot on St James Street was purchased as the site for a permanent chapel. A subscription list for a building fund was then circulated, headed by an offer of £100 from John Molson. Gates and Frothingham each promised fifty, as did Teulon, Brown, Cheney, and William Hedge. Other names appear for the first time in a Unitarian context on this document, and although they must have had some sympathy with the Unitarian cause, the full extent of their involvement must remain a matter of conjecture. J. T. Barrett had been Brown's employer at an earlier stage of his career in the hardware business. He was, like Workman, Hedge, and Frothingham, active in such interdenominational organizations as the Auxiliary Bible Society, the Sunday School Union Society, and the Religious Tract Society – at least, until 1832, after which time they became much less welcome in those circles. H. B. Smith was an importer and dealer in china and pottery. The large stone house he later built on Mount Royal is now used by the city for art exhibitions. François-Benjamin Blanchard is noteworthy as the only French Canadian to be involved at this early date; in fact, very few French-speaking Canadians have been involved at any stage in the Unitarian story. Dexter Chapin, merchant and banker, was, like Brown and Blanchard, one of the political radicals who went so far as to become implicated in the rebellion of 1837-38. Brown was the only one of them who actually took to the field of battle, as General commanding '*les fils de la liberté*'. The others were both arrested at some point or other, though eventually released.

Almost equally radical, but on the other side in the rebellion, was Adam Ferrie. A Scotsman and long-time champion of the people's rights in his native land, he had come to Montreal in 1829 and become one of the city's largest-scale importers as well as one of the founders of the City Bank. His warm humanitarian impulses had led him to donate his services in relief work for the cholera victims in the immigration sheds. A decade later he was persuaded to accept a place on the new Legislative Council of the united province of Canada.

Despite the support from such men, the building fund campaign of 1833 was a failure. The land had to be resold, and the society reformulated its plans on a less ambitious scale.

In October of the same year came the most savage onslaught to date against the infant cause. *The Settler*, a right-wing journal founded and edited by Adam Thom, published a bitterly sarcastic account of Unitarians as enemies not only of true religion but also of the political and social order. It spoke of 'the laudable efforts of "the whinemaster general of the province" (as a correspondent of the *New Gazette* designates the *Courant*) to convert the good city of Montreal to "Unitarian Christianity" and restore its degraded citizens to the true character and rank of humanity.' Warming to his subject, the writer asked: 'Why need we import religion from the warehouses of New England? And why need we import that species of it which has ever so singularly symbolized and claimed kindred with infidelity?.... By denying the fall and its consequences, and original sin, and the malignant character of human depravity, it takes away the necessity of the Christian scheme and rejects the character and offices of the Saviour as developed in that scheme, together with the applicability thereof to the moral condition and wants of the human race. Hence it is evident that the Unitarian God (such as they make him) cannot be the God of Christians.... The "Unitarian Christianity" reduces sin and its moral effects to mere unimportant circumstances, about which neither God nor man need be much concerned. And these things in my humble estimation, amply account for the facility its disciples have manifested in fraternizing with Mahomedanism, Deism and Atheism, and in being among the foremost in the ranks of revolution and anarchy.'[9]

Angier took it upon himself to reply. The *Courant* opened its columns, hitherto closed to religious controversies, and for five months the Montreal public was regaled to lengthy and involved theological debate. The cudgels were taken up on the orthodox side by a less violent writer, soon identified as John Bethune, rector of Christ Church and one of the leading Anglican spokesmen in Canada. Both parties argued on the basis of Biblical quotations, which they were prepared to acknowledge as authoritative, but which Bethune interpreted as evidence for the deity of Christ whereas Angier interpreted them as evidence for his subordinate and dependent nature. In Angier's words: 'You profess to believe in the Jewish and Christian revelations. I profess the same. You affirm that the doctrine of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ makes a part of that revelation. I affirm that it does not. This is the subject of debate.'[10]

As always, the debate was inconclusive. Alongside it raged a corre-

spondence from less temperate critics of Unitarianism, which led the editor of the *Courant* to comment that should they survive 'they will be held up to posterity as proofs of the barbarity of Canadian literature at the commencement of the nineteenth century.'

The *Courant* ceased publication in March 1834. By this time it had become evident that the Unitarians had failed to enlist the degree of support in Montreal for which they had earlier hoped. Part of their problem, no doubt, was the difficulty they experienced in being single-minded about religious matters in the presence of political or economic concerns. An example of the latter comes through clearly in the following note, written as the Unitarians made a last attempt to get themselves properly organized:

Friday 11 April 1834

Hon. J. Molson,
Sir,

It is thought desirable to organize an Unitarian Society, and a meeting is proposed to be called some evening the coming week to discuss this subject. It is respectfully submitted to you to name some evening when it may suit your convenience to attend.

Respectfully yours
William Hedge

P.S. I beg leave to say that our Clover Seed has arrived and we are now selling it @ 10 the lb.[11]

The meeting, if it took place, evidently produced no conclusive results. Shortly afterward, Angier left the city and returned to Massachusetts. After his departure, services were led for a while by members of the congregation. Ingersoll came up for one Sunday, and even Harding was invited back for a couple of services. But in July the cholera reappeared and raged even more violently than before, taking the lives of several members. Others left the city. When the epidemic receded in the autumn, one final effort was made. By this time Brown had succeeded Hedge as secretary, and the more peremptory tone of the letter reflects his rising military pretensions:

Hon. J. Molson,
Sir,

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Committee of the Unitarian Congregational Society at the house of Mr. A. Bowman this evening at 7 o'clock on business of importance.

By order,
T. S. Brown

Tuesday, 9 Sept., 1834[12]

It was too late. Gates and Teulon were already dead; Molson was to follow in a little more than a year. The economic life of the city was deteriorating. Brown and Blanchard went into bankruptcy and the latter moved to the Eastern Townships. The political climate worsened as events marched toward the rebellion of 1837. Brown put his economic energies into the *Banque du Peuple* and his political energies into the paramilitary *fils de la liberté*. As their General, he commanded them in a hopeless battle against British troops at St Charles, made off in the middle of the battle, and kept going until he reached Florida.

By this time the entire country was in such a condition that no one had time to give to organizing Unitarian societies. Two ministers passed through Montreal in 1838: William Wood from London and John Brazer from Salem, Massachusetts. Neither was asked to officiate at a public service, though the latter christened the children of two Unitarian families.

Elsewhere in the country the picture was no more promising. True, the number of Unitarian immigrants from the British Isles had gradually built up, but they were widely scattered in Upper Canada. Perhaps Matthew Harding, with his peculiar talent for working within such a situation, could have organized them into fellowships had the means existed for sending him there, rather than measuring out the remainder of his career in short-term pulpit supplies to the smaller churches of Massachusetts. But given Unitarian attitudes toward organization in Britain and America, the means did not exist.

In Toronto there was a small nucleus. Two of the Workman brothers had moved there in 1836; four years earlier, however, Toronto had

become the home of a Unitarian who was later to rise to the highest elective office in the country. He was Francis Hincks, youngest son of one of the leading ministers in Ireland. Of his four brothers, two were Unitarian ministers, two clergymen of the Church of Ireland. On arrival in Toronto, Hincks threw himself into the cause of social and political reform that he had learned from his father, and for which there was so obvious a need in the Upper Canada of the Family Compact period. Though vigorously outspoken, he was prudent enough not to become involved in the rebellion. In 1838 he became editor of *The Examiner*, a Reform newspaper, and was elected to the first parliament of the united province of Canada in 1841. This necessitated a move to Kingston and eventually, in 1844, to Montreal, where he was able to link up with the Unitarian movement.

By then the Montreal Unitarians had re-emerged, their dwindled numbers augmented by new arrivals. Prominent among these were two determined women who grew increasingly restless under the compromises forced upon their consciences in attending services at other churches. In 1831 William Hedge had married his cousin Elizabeth, youngest daughter of Professor Levi Hedge of Harvard and sister of Frederic Henry Hedge, one of the foremost Unitarian ministers in New England during the middle years of the century. She developed a close friendship with a later arrival, Elizabeth Cushing, whose father, John Foster, was for forty-five years minister of the First Parish in Brighton, Massachusetts, one of the congregations that moved into the Unitarian orbit. Her mother, Hannah Webster Foster, who later joined her in Montreal, had achieved fame as the writer of a well-known novel, *The Coquette*. Elizabeth and her sisters had inherited their mother's literary talents, and all three of them contributed frequently to the leading literary magazine of the time, *The Literary Garland*. She had married Frederick Cushing, also a Unitarian, who came to Montreal as physician at the Emigrants' Hospital.

It was through the efforts of Mrs Hedge and Mrs Cushing that, in 1841, William Ware, minister in Cambridge, Massachusetts was persuaded to come to Montreal for three weeks. He preached on the Sundays, held week-night meetings, and drew a substantial enough response to warrant the formation of a committee to explore the possibilities of trying once again to establish a permanent congregation.

Benjamin Workman and William Hedge were on this committee as

a matter of course, representing the long-standing Irish and *Bostonnais* sectors of the group. Among its other members were two more of the original Montreal Unitarians, John White (another hardware merchant) and Moses Gilbert. They were joined by Dr Cushing and by the first representative of a new species of Canadian Unitarian – one born and raised as a Unitarian in Canada. He was Luther H. Holton, who later became one of the most prominent figures in national life. Born in Upper Canada in 1817, he was named after Luther Hamilton, a Unitarian clergyman in New England. He was orphaned at an early age and became the ward of his uncle Moses Gilbert, a Vermont-born general merchant who placed him in Benjamin Workman's Union School. At the age of twelve Holton entered his uncle's business and thus began a career that was to carry him into the upper echelons of the commercial world, first in shipping on the St Lawrence and Great Lakes, later in railways. In 1854 he entered Parliament as a Reformer, and thenceforward devoted the major part of his time to political activities, promoting inside and outside the House the classical program of the nineteenth-century laissez-faire philosophy: political, economic, and religious liberty.

The committee quickly decided in favor of going ahead and enlisted William Ware's help in finding a minister. His recommendation proved to be a better one than his brother's had been a decade earlier, given the specific needs of Montreal. Henry Giles, who agreed to come for three months, was an Irishman, and a former Roman Catholic. As minister of a church in Liverpool, he had found himself in 1839 in the middle of the most famous Unitarian controversy of the century, standing alongside his colleagues James Martineau and John Hamilton Thom – two of the greatest names in British Unitarian history – to answer the theological attacks of a team of Anglican clergy. The debate drew capacity crowds to the churches concerned, and was subsequently published in a massive volume.

A year later Giles moved to the United States, where he established a reputation as a lecturer and essayist. A brilliant orator, he had little interest in the pastoral aspects of a minister's work, and never settled with a congregation for any long period of time. But the short time he spent in Montreal – April to August, 1842 – was sufficient to enlarge the congregation considerably, set it on its feet, and fill it with a determination to continue.

It was during Giles's ministry that the Montreal Unitarians decided

to place their organization on a formal and continuing basis. A meeting on June 6 unanimously endorsed a resolution that 'a Society should at once be organized', and on the twentieth of the same month, the twenty-four male members signed the constitution of 'The Christian Unitarian Society of Montreal'. This document began with a theological statement: 'a belief in the Unity of God, in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule of Faith and Practice are fundamental principles of Christian Faith.' John White and Luther Holton tried to add a provision that no one might have a vote unless he had formally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. This was defeated by an almost unanimous vote. The extent to which the influences of the old Puritanism still persisted is to be seen in the provision that the annual meeting of the society should be held on December 25 (unless that date fell on a Sunday), presumably on the grounds that this was a public holiday and no one would have any competing commitments.

The primary preoccupation was now to find a permanent minister and, in the meantime, to maintain the services on a regular basis. An immediate successor to Giles was provided through a stopgap arrangement with an unemployed Unitarian minister from England named William Rowlinson, a man of limited capacity who was at least able to provide them with a breathing space. He returned home at the opening of navigation in the spring of 1843, and his place was taken by William H. Lord, a young minister from Massachusetts. He was engaged for three months, but made so favorable an impression that some members wanted to persuade him to stay.

Meanwhile, negotiations had been going on both with the BFUA and the AUA. Some kind of subsidy was going to be necessary at the outset in order to support a minister. The BFUA offered them £25 a year toward the salary of a minister who met with their approval, but were unable to suggest a name. The AUA were helpful with short-term supplies but noncommittal with regard to long-term prospects. Hedge, who was firmly convinced of the superiority of American ministers, pleaded for action. He feared that there were misapprehensions concerning life in Canada among Unitarian ministers in the United States, who were notoriously reluctant to move beyond the neighborhood of Boston. 'We are not the "Ultima Thule" of civilization', he wrote, 'although we have Savages around us. Our scenery is unsurpassed by any in New England, our river is the outlet of Inland seas, and

although the hand of improvement is not visible in all our works, yet we have buildings that would do honor even to Boston.'[13]

A quite independent line of inquiry was being followed by Benjamin Workman. He wrote to his old friend Henry Montgomery in Belfast, and was in due course delighted when the latter replied that he knew exactly the right person, a man of twenty-seven who had just completed his studies under his personal supervision, who was willing to come to Canada, and whom he could wholeheartedly recommend. His name was John Cordner.

Workman gleefully went to the congregation with his news. They found themselves in a quandary. Lord's supporters wanted to see him appointed, and were able to defeat a proposal to extend a call to Cordner. Then Lord himself broke the deadlock by declaring that he would be unable to accept a call to be their permanent minister. In the first place, his health was so precarious that he might not even be able to continue in the ministry. And in the second place, 'as Canada is a British province, a minister from the Old Country would doubtless find himself in a more favorable position for successful effort, other things being equal, than one from the States. He would have the current of popular sympathies in his favor. He would have no prejudices to encounter and live down; and he would be likely to attract to his ministrations many who might otherwise be lost to the cause.'[14]

The way was now open. On July 10 a meeting of the congregation extended a call to Cordner with only one dissenting voice. Transatlantic communications being what they were, it was not until September that they knew for certain that he had accepted their invitation and was coming. By then, on the assumption that everything would go according to plan, preparations were well under way. A roster of ministers was organized to fill the pulpit after Lord's departure, including their old friend Joseph Angier who came for two Sundays in August. A committee was appointed to find a site on which to build a permanent replacement for the converted dwelling house on Fortification Lane, which William and Elizabeth Hedge had made available as a temporary meeting place. Hedge's appeals to Boston were now for help toward a building fund, and ended with a passionate plea for 'more zeal for the defence and spread of the great truths of Unitarianism.'[15]

3

The Cordner Era

The Unitarians of Northern Ireland were in festive mood as they gathered on September 15, 1843. They had by now settled down into a well-ordered existence as the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland – non-subscribing in the sense of refusing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, the standard of Presbyterian orthodoxy. Of the constitutent parts of this organization, the largest by far was the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster. It was the members of this body who had come together to celebrate not only the ordination of John Cordner three days earlier but also the accession of another congregation to their ranks. Before long the reports of the Synod would begin listing a new presbytery along with the existing ones: the Canada Presbytery, consisting for the present of the congregation in Montreal.

The certificate signed by Henry Montgomery stated: 'Mr. Cordner is now a regular Minister of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster ... whilst the Congregation at Montreal has been constituted a regular Congregation of the Remonstrant Synod.'[1] Benjamin Workman's dream had come true. Whatever radical excesses might muddy the waters of Unitarianism in England and America, the purity of the faith as he prized it would now be safeguarded by membership in the Irish movement. Just how many others in Montreal shared this point of view is not clear. Certainly it had not been a matter of public discussion.

The festivities in Belfast consisted of dinner and speeches. The man who was to set his stamp upon Canadian Unitarianism for the next few decades listened as a variety of speakers cited the new cause in

Canada as evidence of the spread of more enlightened forms of religion, wished him well, and commended him to their friends who would be relatively close at hand in the United States. These latter, naturally, represented the most conservative wing of American Unitarianism, unmoved by the Transcendentalist attempts to make religion a matter of immediate individual experience rather than a matter of tradition and history: Orville Dewey in New York, Ezra Stiles Gannett in Boston, the Ware brothers in Cambridge.

Cordner took their counsel seriously. When he arrived in New York a few weeks later he promptly called on Dewey, and then went on to Boston to make the acquaintance of Gannett. Both men became his friends and mentors, and in each case he turned down an invitation to preach so that he could have an opportunity to listen to them. In Boston he was much impressed, as Unitarians from the Old World always were, by the number and the prosperity of the Unitarian congregations.

His journey from Boston to Montreal took three days, by a combination of railway, stagecoach, and steamboat. Not for another seven years would the rail link between the two cities be completed; when that event occurred, making communication with the Unitarian centre in New England fast and easy, Cordner went down with a large party on a $5 excursion to mark the occasion. But at least his first experience of the journey was more comfortable than Matthew Harding's eleven years earlier, when it took five days by waggon-road, including a stopover in Vermont for the Sabbath, or John Frothingham's experience back in 1809, when part of the distance had to be covered on horseback through pathless woods.

He arrived in Montreal on November 4, a Saturday, and the following morning stood in his pulpit for the first time. The apprehension with which both preacher and hearers must have come to the service disappeared at once. Workman wrote to Montgomery: 'Our temporary chapel was crowded; and some, I believe, could not obtain admittance. The impression made by the exercises of the day is decidedly favourable.'[2] Even Hedge was enthusiastic; he reported to Charles Briggs of the AUA that Cordner was a good and satisfactory minister, pious, well versed in Scripture and theology, assiduous in his duties, and above average in eloquence.[3]

Montreal's first settled minister was a man of frail build whose health, never robust, had not been improved by long hours of unre-

mitting work and study. Ministers in those days often worked uninterruptedly without a vacation until a breakdown in health prompted a generous response from the congregation in providing a leave of absence and the means to enjoy it. Like many of his colleagues, Cordner was driven forward by a stern conscience that heeded the call of duty without making concessions beyond the most inescapable ones to physical infirmities.

He was totally dedicated to his vocation, in conformity with his own preaching: 'When the soul comes to submit itself meekly to God and accept his will as the joyful law of its life.... when self is crucified within, and all the poor and transient vanities which cluster around it are cast out, then will the holy spirit enter to put the seal upon our sacrifice, and confirm us as co-workers with God and with all godlike spirits in the universe.'[4]

A solemn, taciturn man, he was ill at ease in purely social gatherings, which he seldom attended if he could avoid it. But he was always on hand in situations of human need. Beneath his outward reserve lay a depth of warmth and sympathy experienced only by those who came to know him well. A bachelor till the age of thirty-six, when he did marry, it was to the daughter of a Unitarian clergyman, whose background would give her some insight into the nature of his inner drive and commitment.

In the pulpit or on the platform he was eloquent and even passionate in utterance, but his assertions were always backed by careful research and logical development. No one who heard him speak was left in any doubt as to what he meant or where he stood on an issue. Despite his own statement that he was no lover of controversy, he was usually in the midst of it, given the religious climate of the Montreal of his day, and always gave a good account of himself.

His temperament included little of the artistic or mystical; its prevailing emphasis was ethical and practical. In making this the primary expression of his religion, he was true to the temper of the times, amid the no-nonsense commercial empire-builders who comprised the core of his congregation. In fact, he had himself at first headed for a business career, before turning to the ministry. 'The active is a nobler type of life than the contemplative', he declared, 'and the merchant and mechanic rise far above the monk, even in his best estate, when they bring into their several spheres of active labour the filial recognition of the divine presence.'[5]

The outward expression of this temperament is to be seen in the zeal with which he threw himself into the various programs for social reform: in working for a non-sectarian system of popular education, in urging a more enlightened treatment of the insane, in ameliorating the conditions of the poor. His chief interest lay in those reforms that involved action through political channels. Though he was never a complete pacifist, the cause of peace lay close to his heart, and he went as a delegate to the great Paris Peace Congress of 1849. One of his favorite texts from the Bible, used many times, was the words in *Ecclesiastes*, 'Wisdom is better than weapons of war.' He gave his support to all movements for emancipation from oppression – the cause of the slaves in the United States, the victims of colonialism in India, the peasantry in his own native Ireland. No subject moved him more deeply than the need for moral standards in public life, a need that was often strikingly unmet in the Canadian political scene of his day.

Cordner's personal theology, which was to change very little during the thirty-five years of his ministry in Montreal, was essentially that of Channing, Gannett, and Montgomery. He maintained it against assaults from both sides: from the orthodox, who regarded it as degrading to Christ and perilous to salvation, and from the newer school of Unitarians who were not prepared to base their religion in the same complete way upon Christ and the Bible. In true Unitarian style, Cordner began with an appeal to reason. 'Nothing which is clearly against reason and the ascertained facts of science, shall be required to be held as true in theology.' However, 'true reason recognizes the limits of its own observation... and does not utter the word "impossible" in reference to anything' – that is, except to contradictions of the certainties of mathematics or morals, or the plain evidence of sense experience.

The reality of God is demonstrated by reason 'in earth, and air, and sky... in every pang of remorse for sin,... in every holy resolve and in every heavenward aspiration.'[6] This God is no mere philosophical abstraction, 'for man must have a personal God. A God of mere abstract qualities – a God impersonal – cannot be a God adequate to the wants of humanity.'[7] Although to love God means to love truth, justice, purity, and love, God himself is more than the sum of these moral qualities; he is a personal being. Moreover, he is one being – Cordner describes his theology as 'Christian monotheism'.

Reason also recognizes 'that revelation of God which appeared in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth.... That life proves its own divinity by the moral and spiritual impression it makes, and has made upon the life of the world.... As we look at the sun we require no farther proof of its existence than its own heat and light.'[8] Christ appeared as a pattern human life, showing how 'a son of man could live the life of a Son of God here upon earth.'[9] He is a teacher and inspirer and example, distinct from God and subordinate to him, a Savior indeed, but not in the traditional Christian sense of one who suffered in our stead, for 'most perplexing and perilous will it be for us if we rest in any thought which relaxes the strictness of individual responsibility in the matter of sin and righteousness.'[10] Christ is a Mediator between God and man, by 'establishing a system of motives, means and influences, to act upon the human mind and heart, to turn man from sin, and thus save him from the consequences of sin, to bring him into the way of holiness here, and thus, through the great mercy of God, secure him a heaven of happiness hereafter.'[11]

Cordner became a Universalist in the sense that he saw this heaven as the ultimate destination for all mankind. Sin, he said, will be punished. The punishment will endure until the sin is wiped out, which means for a finite length of time. Everlasting punishment entails an unjust disproportion between the offence and the punishment, of which God cannot be accused.[12]

The Bible occupied a very high place in Cordner's estimation, not as an infallible document literally inspired in every detail, but as 'the record of a series of revelations made by God to man, and made through prophetic men, spiritually quickened'. This series of revelations recorded in the Bible is '*progressive* in its character, rising from lower to higher, until it culminates in Christ... the last the grandest revelation of God expressed in a perfect human life.' In interpreting the Bible, we have always to go by the spirit rather than the letter – 'inspiration is to be felt rather than defined.'[13]

What are the outward characteristics by which a true Christian is to be recognized? First, by his *faith*, which is not to be thought of as a belief in propositions as manifested in acceptance of a creed, but rather as trust in a person. Faith in Christ arises out of our positive response to his spirit and life, and evokes an overwhelming wish to go and do likewise.[14] The second characteristic, significantly, is *truthfulness*, which is always necessary, though not sufficient: 'it must be combined with charity. The truth is to be spoken and maintained in *love*.'[15] This last is the ultimate test of the truly religious person, as required by Christ. 'Love God and man, he says, this is the chief thing, all depends on this.... Ask him how his true disciples are to be known, and you will hear him reply, by their love toward one another.'[16]

And there Cordner rested his case. Others might feel that some kind of inward enlightenment was the evidence of having 'arrived', religiously speaking, but his dry comment was that we would just have to wait and see how this experience affected the everyday living of the person concerned. 'The last test of true religion is to be found in its manifestation in character and life.'[17]

The congregation over which this man and this theology were to preside was still small, but growing. If it had no one with quite the same standing in the community that Molson and Gates had had a decade earlier, it contained many whose stars were in the ascendant and would come prominently to the fore in the years to come. In addition to the Workman brothers, Adam Ferrie and Luther Holton, there was by now a group of newcomers. Francis Hincks arrived in Montreal at the beginning of February 1844, and immediately became active in the congregation. Three leading figures in the business community had come in a short while earlier: Benjamin Holmes, Harrison Stephens, and John Young. Since these men were close associates in a variety of enterprises, it is unlikely to be coincidental that they all became part of the congregation at the same time; probably the chain reaction was begun by Sarah Stephens, who went to one of Henry Giles's services as a Presbyterian and came out a convinced Unitarian.

Holmes, like Cordner, came from Ireland. During the thirties he was manager of the Bank of Montreal; later, in partnership with Young, he established a large importing and wholesaling business. He entered political life as a Reformer, and it was his resignation from the House, masterminded by Hincks, that provided the occasion for the rowdy by-election in April 1844 that became a demonstration of the Reformers' strength in Montreal. He re-entered parliament in 1847 as LaFontaine's running-partner, after a campaign in which a Tory supporter had seized upon his Unitarian affiliation in an attempt to stigmatize him as an 'infidel'.

Stephens, a Vermonter by birth, had been in the importing business for some years when he went into partnership with Young in 1840. He

worked together with the latter in a number of ventures, including the promotion of the Caughnawaga canal scheme, and by mid-century was said to be the wealthiest Unitarian in Montreal.

John Young, who was to become the best known of the three, arrived in Canada from his native Scotland in 1826. In the import business he worked with a succession of partners, including Stephens and Holmes, and later joined with Luther Holton and Theodore Hart to found the Canadian and British Telegraph Company. He was also active in the fields of insurance and railway construction; his outstanding work, however, was as chairman of the Montreal Harbour Commission, in which capacity he was largely responsible for the creation of the National Harbours Board. Lord Elgin described him as 'the most enlightened merchant and the best political economist I have met with in Canada.' He too became active in politics and, when Hincks became premier in 1851, entered the ministry as Commissioner of Public Works. He subsequently resigned but continued to sit in the House. In the election of 1854 he was returned (two Unitarians and a French Catholic representing the three-member Montreal constituency), and served several more terms in parliament. From the time of his joining the Unitarian congregation in 1842 until his death Young was one of its leading and most active members; Cordner declared at his memorial service in 1878: 'He was eminently a public man, working without stint for the public, spending time and thought, and strength and means for public ends.'[18]

Not all the members of this original Unitarian congregation in Canada were captains of industry or persons prominent in public life. The nineteen signatories to the call to Cordner in 1843 included a barber and a shoemaker, a carpenter, a printer and an upholsterer. These were representative of a substantial but influential section of the congregation; Charles Dall reported William Workman as telling him that 'twould be utterly impossible to bring the high and the low of the Society together in any *social* gathering.' 'I hear the same,' Dall continued, 'even more emphatically from some very devoted men, mechanics and dressmakers who are in love with their minister, have made great sacrifices, and are ready to make more. All such rally around Benjamin Workman, who is a noble Christian if ever there was one.'[19] Benjamin Workman, by now in business as a druggist, was able to keep one foot in both camps, as was Cordner himself.

The congregation, as soon as Cordner had settled in, proceeded to

organize itself along the lines prescribed by the Remonstrant Synod. There was no need for an installation service as the Synod had already installed him; instead, the first step was to appoint Elders in order to set up a session, in comformity with Presbyterian usage. This accomplished, minister and congregation turned their attention to the major priorities facing them.

First, they had to protect themselves against the vigorous attacks their progress was provoking from conventional religious circles, and to circulate positive information about their church and what it stood for. Cordner immediately went to work to establish a monthly publication for this purpose. John Young put up £50 as seed money, and the first four-page issue appeared in January 1844. It bore on its masthead the slogan: Truth, Holiness, Liberty, Love. The title was appropriated from the Irish Unitarians, whose *Bible Christian*, 'designed to advocate the Sufficiency of Scripture', had for years been the organ of the Remonstrant Synod. Montreal's *Bible Christian*, however, contained practically nothing from Ireland apart from the name. Those contributions that were not from the pen of Cordner himself were overwhelmingly reproduced from the writings of American Unitarians of the older school: Channing, Ware, Peabody, Dewey and Gannett. A few contributions came from English Unitarians such as Fox and Aspland. The newer school of Unitarians on both sides of the Atlantic was represented, but always by devotional or ethical writings safely divorced from theological issues. Even Emerson found a place with his poem *Goodbye, proud world!*, which almost uniquely among his writings would have struck a responsive chord in the equally unsociable Cordner. Most issues contained poetry, compositions by Harriet Cheney and Elizabeth Cushing appearing from time to time.

The *Bible Christian* was avowedly polemical, subjecting traditional Christian doctrines to a penetrating criticism and propounding Unitarian alternatives. Its declared intention was to serve the needs of the scattered Unitarians beyond Montreal and the general public within the city, and it accordingly contained very little news of church activities, apart from public lecture series. Unitarian news from farther afield was mostly confined to speeches delivered at denominational gatherings, particularly the annual meetings of the AUA. There were frequent quotations from the more liberal representatives of the traditional churches in England and the United States whose views could command Unitarian approval, and descriptions of the personal evolu-

tion of a man such as Joseph Barker, who had moved over from Methodism to an essentially Unitarian position. For six years the *Bible Christian* continued to provide a public platform for Unitarianism while it was getting firmly established in Montreal.

The congregation's second immediate task was to replace its temporary quarters by a proper church building. Already before Cordner arrived a site had been secured. The old Frobisher estate of Beaver Hall was being subdivided, and the Unitarian congregation was one of three to purchase part of it for a church.

But first the funds had to be raised. The strain of supporting a minister was much reduced by substantial grants from the BFUA and the AUA; so, the congregation could turn its attention chiefly to the building fund. Economic prosperity had now returned to Canada after the bad times of the thirties; the congregation was growing (it reached a membership of two hundred during 1844), and it was with high hopes that the campaign was launched, headed with contributions of £100 apiece from Frothingham, Young, Stephens, and Holmes. Altogether, half the projected cost of £2000 was raised in the city; the remainder had to come from elsewhere. There were a few modest contributions from Ireland, but the period was a very inauspicious one so far as aid from the British Isles was concerned. The Unitarians there were fighting a desperate battle to hold on to their ancestral buildings in face of a determined attempt by orthodox churches to dispossess them on the legal grounds that they had been built and endowed by persons who were not themselves Unitarians. As the courts continued to rule against the Unitarians, they were finally saved only by a special Act of Parliament, the *Dissenters' Chapels Act* of July 1844.

It was, therefore, to the United States that the Montreal Unitarians looked as their most likely source of help; early in April Cordner left for a fund-raising trip to New England. The results were such as to confirm his favorable feelings about American Unitarians: he raised the other £1000 without difficulty. Work on the building began, and it was completed the following spring. Ezra Stiles Gannett made a special journey up from Boston to deliver the dedication sermon on May 11, 1845.

This original Unitarian church in Montreal, was, as a contemporary writer put it, 'a chaste structure, in perfect conformity with the simple

doctrines professed by its worshippers.'[20] It was in effect one of the classical New England churches, minus tower and steeple. Six columns supported a Greek portico at the front; inside it was finished in white with crimson curtains. It had a seating capacity of about 450.

No sooner had the building been opened than the Unitarians turned their attention to their third priority, that of extension beyond Montreal. As early as the first annual meeting in December 1842 they had expressed their sympathy with the Unitarians elsewhere in Canada who were 'destitute of religious ordinances', and had voiced the hope that at no distant time a supply of pastors would be available. Eighteen months later, Benjamin Workman took up this theme in a letter to the Remonstrant Synod. Having been so successful in procuring one minister from Ireland, he now had his sights set on another: 'We want one missionary *now*.... He would kindle the latent piety of our brethren into zeal, and would, I think, soon become a settled pastor among us – probably at Toronto. If our friends will raise funds to support a minister as a missionary for one year, ordain him as an evangelist and send him out, I am sanguine of success. For the love of the souls of your destitute brethren in Canada, put your hand to this important work.... We, in Montreal, can do nothing till our chapel is finished, but as soon as that is achieved, it is intended to organize a Central Missionary Society....'[21]

Nothing came of this appeal to Ireland. But the local initiative proceeded on schedule. Joseph Workman asked if Cordner would come to Toronto in July; his congregation concurred, and he came. They were spared the necessity of looking around for a meeting place, as one of the little band of known Unitarians in the city, a gasfitter named James Crapper, actually owned a church. He had purchased a building which had been used in turn by the Congregationalists and the Wesleyans, intending to convert it into a factory. When the idea of holding Unitarian services was mooted, however, he at once made it available.

Notices were placed in the press, and the first Unitarian services in Toronto were held on July 6, 1845. The attendance exceeded expectations, rising to more than a hundred in the evening. However, several leading citizens who had been expected to support the new venture, as they had been Unitarians before emigrating, did not put in an appearance. The more recent associations they had developed with other

churches were too strong – thus providing direct evidence in support of the arguments Canadian Unitarians had been using when requesting missionary aid.

But enough enthusiasm was engendered to bring about a meeting the following Wednesday at which fifteen people pledged themselves to found and support a congregation. Cordner, who had gone across the lake to enlist the support of the ministers in Rochester and Buffalo, came back to find not only the nucleus of a congregation, but also a choir, formed by a group of young Unitarians who had recently arrived from Birmingham, England, to support him at his services the following Sunday.

Toronto had at this time entered upon a period of rapid growth. From a population of 14 000 in 1841 it rose to over 30 000 in 1851. Attitudes toward Unitarianism were no more open than in Montreal – in some ways less so – but a congregation of reasonable size and strength now seemed to be in process of formation. It was very different from the one in Montreal. There were no persons who could be called wealthy; the group consisted almost entirely of blue-collar workers from various parts of the United Kingdom, with a sprinkling of small shopkeepers. Joseph Workman was the obvious leader for the group. He became secretary, with his brother Samuel as treasurer. When Cordner got back to Montreal he wrote an urgent letter to the British Unitarian journal *The Inquirer*[22] asking for a minister to come and pick up the work; by the time this was published in late August, however, Toronto already had a minister.

It was purely fortuitous that at precisely this time William Adam had been on his way from Massachusetts to Illinois to look for a church. As a result of Cordner's visit to the churches in New York state he became aware of the situation in Toronto and went over to investigate. After hearing him on the first three Sundays in August, the congregation invited him to become their settled minister. He immediately accepted.

Adam had had a colorful career. In 1817 he left his native Scotland to go out to India as a Baptist missionary. There he encountered Rammohun Roy, a remarkable figure who was promoting a reform of Hinduism along the lines of a monotheistic theology and a progressive social ethic, later to be organized as the Brahmo Samaj. Rammohun Roy had developed a warm feeling for Christianity and in particular for the personality of Jesus; having renounced Hindu polytheism,

however, he was quite unwilling to accept any Christian ideas that compromised the unity of God. Adam was asked to collaborate with him in a project to translate the New Testament into Bengali. The two got into serious theological discussions, and the upshot was that in 1821 Adam announced his conversion to Unitarian views. He set about establishing a Unitarian mission in Calcutta despite furious opposition from the other missionaries, among whom his reputation survived for more than a century as 'the second fallen Adam'.

After he finally left India, Adam served for a time as Professor of Oriental Literature at Harvard. The appointment of such a man as their first minister was a piece of rare good fortune for the Toronto Unitarians. All contemporary accounts agree that he was ideally suited for the job. In his sermons he concentrated on practical matters rather than on controversial theology, reserving the latter for doctrinal lectures on weeknights. The congregation grew, with an average attendance of fifty on Sunday mornings and double that number in the evenings. It was rumored that some of the professors at King's College were interested. There were attacks, of course, from other churches, particularly the Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, with the usual result that some people came out of curiosity to discover what these heretics were like and decided to stay. Relationships with the Roman Catholics, by contrast, were cordial: the difference in theology was so wide that neither party felt threatened, while the Catholics remembered with gratitude the way in which Unitarians elsewhere had fought for their civil rights.

At a practical level, there were immediate problems to be tackled. Crapper ran into financial difficulties and needed to realize his assets. This meant that if the congregation wanted to keep its church, it would have to buy rather than rent, as originally intended. It was by no means an ideal building – unsightly, ill-ventilated, and poorly located. But it did have the advantages of being cheap and available, in a city where pressures against the Unitarians would have made it difficult to find other accommodation. Adam followed Cordner's example and went on a fund-raising expedition, raising £100 in Montreal and nearly double that amount in the States, toward a total purchase price of £396.

In January 1846 the congregation adopted its constitution, which was in many ways considerably more forward looking than the one adopted in Montreal. Beginning with the assertion that 'the privilege

of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience is an inherent right of man, as a being responsible to his Creator for his actions,' the members unite 'in a Christian Society for the purpose of public worship', the leading principle of which shall be 'the maintenance of the free exercise of private judgment in all matters of belief, and the rejection of all tests, creeds or formal declarations of opinion.' Noteworthy among further provisions was one which specified that 'in all proceedings of this congregation, it shall be competent to females ... to attend all meetings of the congregation and to exercise the same privileges as members of this Society as are exercised by males.'[23] But the practical implementation of this provision came very slowly, and in Montreal, where no such gesture was made at this early date, women became members of the church's governing body before the same thing occurred in Toronto.

Adam's ministry lasted exactly one year, and the latter part of it was marred by recriminations, not with the congregation but with the AUA, which had been paying part of his small salary. Adam did not feel able to face the same financial hazards as a younger man, and in due course resumed his journey to Illinois, where he became minister of the First Unitarian Church of Chicago.

His departure left the congregation discouraged but determined to continue. The services were led by members in rotation, with a marked drop in attendance, while they looked forward to securing another minister 'whose perseverance and zeal shall enable him to contend successfully with all the difficulties connected with the hazardous enterprise of consolidating a numerous and vigorous society in these dark regions of the spiritual world.'[24]

In Montreal, progress continued. Now that he had a building adequate for sizeable meetings, Cordner launched a series of lectures on Unitarianism at the beginning of 1846. These were backed by an abundant supply of American Unitarian literature and a specially printed *Tract for the Times*. Predictably, these well-attended meetings drew a vigorous response from other churches. No fewer than three of them advertised lectures denouncing Unitarianism within a month, and as many articles on the same theme appeared in religious periodicals. A further dramatic touch was added when a minister of the Methodist New Connection, Robert Hassall, suddenly announced his conversion to Unitarianism and spoke on his change of views from the pulpit of the Montreal church. His former denomination reported:

'With mingled feelings of abhorrence and regret, we mourn over the apostate and the treacherous.'[25] Hassall, the first in a succession of ministers to transfer from other denominations in Canada over the course of the years, had come originally from England. When Cordner attended the Unitarian Anniversary Meetings in Boston that May, he left Hassall in charge of his pulpit. Later that year Hassall enrolled in the Meadville Theological School, a newly founded institution in western Pennsylvania jointly sponsored by the Unitarians and the Christian Connection. In his summer vacation he preached at the Toronto church, and subsequently served Unitarian churches in Massachusetts and Iowa.

During this same period the corporate legal rights of Unitarians in Canada were officially recognized. A bill to extend to additional denominations in Upper Canada beyond those already listed the right to own property and to entitle their ministers to officiate at marriages was introduced into the legislature early in 1845. In its original form, however, it carried the proviso that all those claiming this right should be required to declare their belief in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Montreal Unitarians raised a vigorous objection to this restriction on religious liberty, and it was withdrawn before the bill was presented for second reading. Shortly afterward an act was passed extending the same rights expressly to the congregation in Montreal 'denominating themselves Christian Unitarians'. It was not until a year later, however, that the Unitarians, the Christian Connection, and the Universalists of Upper Canada were similarly enfranchised in a bill which passed the assembly, but was eventually dropped by the legislative council in favor of an omnibus provision covering all denominations of Christians. In spite of the absolute refusal of many people in other churches to accept Unitarians as Christians, they were to be regarded as Christians in the eyes of the law.[26]

Unitarian attention now began to focus on the political and economic scene. 'Political Economy ... is properly considered as one of the Moral Sciences,' wrote a leading American Unitarian of the period[27] – a statement that Cordner would certainly have endorsed. The English Unitarians were in the forefront of the crusade for free trade, which gathered increasing momentum during the forties, backed by a powerful combination of principle with self-interest. It was far from clear, however, that free trade would be in Canada's interest. Most Montreal

merchants thought not. Nonetheless, Young and Cordner led the Unitarians in supporting the cause, on grounds both of humanitarianism and of enlightened self-interest. In his customary style, Cordner hailed the repeal of the *British Corn Laws* in 1846: 'Cheapen the food of the people, we say. Cheapen it as cheap as you can.... The moral result of such a course will be to make the people less disposed to be envious of the more favoured classes, more contented with their own lot....The progress of commerce is sure to check the prevalence of war.... Impose no restrictions upon it.... Hasten it in its onward and unfettered flight as it goes forth with healing on its wings, bearing the blessings of peace and mutual goodwill to the ends of the earth.'[28]

Very different feelings were evoked by other events of the 'hungry forties'. Reports of the hideous disaster in Cordner's native land brought on by the failure of the potato crop began to reach Montreal and stirred him to an attempt to mobilize public opinion in support of relief measures. At a specially announced Sunday evening service benches were placed in the aisles and around the walls in a vain effort to accommodate the throng as theological animosities were forgotten and the great Irish crowd streamed in to hear an Irish minister speak of famine in Ireland.

The results of the famine became evident in Montreal the following summer as ship after ship discharged its cargo of destitute and diseased emigrants. Dr Frederick Cushing, who a few months earlier had presided over the annual meeting of the congregation, worked night and day at the Emigrant Hospital till he, like many other similarly dedicated Montrealers, succumbed to the typhus brought in by its occupants. Alongside this scene of tragedy went economic distress for the entire community as the great depression of the late forties set in. The congregation was hard hit. In December of 1848 Cordner proposed a reduction of his salary by £50 to ease the burden; this was gratefully declined in favor of appointing a committee (including Hincks, who was by now in charge of the finances of Canada) to bring the church accounts back into the black. The effort was unsuccessful, and during the following year William Workman as treasurer found himself in the position of having to subsidize the church out of his own pocket. When Cordner repeated his offer a year later, it was accepted, in spite of the fact that he had taken four months' leave of absence during the summer at his own expense, going with George and Frederick, the next generation of the Frothingham family, to the

Paris Peace Congress, followed by a tour of Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.

1849 was a good year in which to be away. In some respects it was a replay of 1832. Even the cholera came back; William Workman made himself sick from sheer fright before taking off to Sherbrooke for the duration of the epidemic; his brother Benjamin actually contracted the disease, but recovered. The political discontent came this time from the right rather than from the left. The Montreal Tories, already reeling resentfully under an economic crisis for which they blamed the Liberal government in Britain and its Canadian collaborators, were outraged by the *Rebellion Losses Act*, which appeared likely to compensate people they regarded as guilty of treason. In scenes reminiscent of Birmingham in 1791, when Joseph Priestley's church and house, together with those of many other Unitarians, were sacked and burnt, an angry mob burned down the Parliament Buildings in Montreal and then attacked a number of homes, including those of Hincks and Holmes. The resentment found other channels during the summer, and Cordner arrived back just in time to see the publication of the *Annexation Manifesto*, in which a large number of the Montreal merchants, including Benjamin and William Workman, Luther Holton, and Benjamin Holmes advocated annexation to the United States as a cure for their woes.

Having shot its bolt in this measure of desperation, the discontent began to dissipate, and before long the first faint signs of returning prosperity began slowly to make their appearance. But one effect of the spring riot was a decision to move the capital away from Montreal. This meant that the congregation lost not only Hincks but also Hedge, who during the depression had managed to gain a secure position in the Receiver-General's office but now had to move with the government to Toronto. On arrival, he commented on the difference between the church he found and the one he had just left: 'The Society here is different from that as it has no men of wealth connected with it – generally poor, and it is from their hard earnings that they contribute their pittance.'[29]

Survival had not been easy for the Toronto congregation, now into its fourth year without a settled minister. In September 1849 they had received a visit from a prominent English minister, Russell Lant Carpenter, then on a tour of North America. At a meeting following the service that he conducted, 'most of the speakers seemed pained at the

apparent neglect which had been shown them in England. Though they were, almost all, natives of the British Isles, and under British Government, they received no replies to the applications they had made at home.' Before he left Canada, Carpenter took up their cause in a letter to *The Inquirer*, hoping to interest an English minister: 'If their friends in England would contribute to the support of a minister at Toronto, the Unitarians there would be quite willing that a proportionate part of his time should be devoted to missionary labours in some of the towns and districts near.'[30]

Factual evidence of the need for such a missionary was provided by the census of 1848. This showed a total of 678 avowed Unitarians in Upper Canada – far more than in Lower Canada – but fewer than one third of them lived in and around Toronto. As some census takers were reluctant to record people as Unitarians, and some Unitarians probably recorded themselves under the denomination of the church that they actually attended, these figures give a minimal picture of the constituency.

On receipt of the issue of *The Inquirer* containing Carpenter's letter, the Toronto Unitarians decided to strike while the iron was at least still warm by making a further appeal to the BFUA. They wrote endorsing his idea of a Toronto-based missionary, adding that they were looking for 'an efficient and pious minister' who would come for 'the love of souls' rather than 'the love of lucre'. 'We are at present wandering sheep: we want a shepherd to gather us into the fold – we are too lean for shearing before we have enjoyed the pasturage of the spring.'[31] This sensitivity to a prospective minister's motivations would hardly seem to have been warranted by the financial attractiveness of a ministry in Toronto, but neither love of souls nor love of lucre tempted an English minister there. When a minister was at last secured some months later he was an American: C. H. A. Dall.

Dall was an unusual man, imaginative and self-willed but deeply sensitive and liable to break down into nervous prostration when subjected to sustained criticism. These characteristics had not made for lengthy ministries in Unitarian churches, and since his graduation in 1840 he had held no fewer than six positions, punctuated by periods of ill-health. His stay of three and a half years in Toronto was to be his longest anywhere to date, but was followed by his lifework: a period of thirty years as Unitarian missionary in India. He there picked up the work begun by Adam, whom he may well have known

at Harvard. His wife was an equally remarkable person. Caroline Healey Dall was one of the foremost advocates of women's rights in her day, not only promoting the cause at public meetings but preaching from whatever pulpits were opened to her. Cordner was in general sympathy with her views and reprinted one of her speeches in the *Liberal Christian*, the journal he founded in 1854 as a successor to the *Bible Christian*, which had been a casualty of the financial crisis of 1849.[32] She stayed in the United States when her husband went to India, and thenceforward they met only when he made his regular five-yearly visits home.

Dall's arrival as minister brought a marked growth in numbers and vitality. By the time he had been there a year he was able to write: 'Should you pass along the finest business street here (King Street) you would read among the signs of our success and permanency such as the following: Brown and Childs, shoe and leather dealers; Workman Bros. and Co., hardware; Burgess and Leishman, clothing; Samuel Sleigh and Son, millers and bakers; Jno. Henderson and Co., importers of dry goods; Briggs, glass and lamp; Manning insurance co., Jno. Patton and Co., crockery and glass – and not far off, Russell and Fowler, druggists; Love, druggist; Sisson lumber; Manning and Coleman, planing mill; Goodenough, forwarding agent.'[33]

He might have added the substantial blacking, glue, and leather preservative business built up by Peter Rothwell Lamb, an English Unitarian who had been in Toronto since 1835, and whose family played an active role in the Toronto congregation for several generations.

With this modest commercial backing and soaring attendances at the services, the Toronto Unitarians began to turn their attention to the inadequacies of their building. It required real conviction to become a Unitarian in Toronto, they pointed out in a letter to the AUA, not only because there was so much public prejudice, but also because the church was 'a disagreeable looking, repulsive old wooden building in a back street and some distance from the main thoroughfare.'[34] The result was that 'persons in comfortable circumstances, who had previously been Unitarians, were found to seek out other Sabbath homes on coming to the city, giving the condition of the chapel as their reason.'[35]

The time had come for action. Finances were in a reasonably sound condition; the BFUA made amends for its failure to provide a minister

by contributing to Dall's salary, as it had done for Cordner during the forties. The AUA did the same. The congregation felt free to begin thinking in terms of a new church. When Cordner exchanged pulpits with Dall in September 1852 he gave eloquent encouragement, with the result that they subscribed $2000 to a building fund within a week. With the additional thousand they hoped to realize from the old building, this took them halfway toward the estimated cost of a new church. A lot on Jarvis Street, in a new section of the city, was purchased by four members, and Dall was sent to follow the well-trodden fund-raising route in the United States. But by now the New England Unitarians were becoming more cautious in their response to such projects, having supported a number of overambitious enterprises that had subsequently collapsed. The result was that although Dall got the money he was looking for, much of it was given on his personal assurance, based on earlier congregational decisions, that the building would be free of debt when opened.

When he got back to Toronto he discovered with dismay that arrangements had been made for Joseph Workman to hold a mortgage for £500 on the property. This precipitated a clash of principle that rapidly became a clash of personalities. Dall argued that he had given his word, and must insist that his promises be respected. Workman retorted that the pastor should not interfere in the secular affairs of the congregation. Sides were taken and feelings began to run high. Dall was fighting a losing battle, though the sympathies of the congregation were mostly on his side. Workman held title to the lot on which the church was to be built, and in any case it would not be possible to open it debt-free without a further increase in contributions to meet the escalating building costs, which eventually rose to $10 000 rather than the $6000 originally projected. Predictably, his health began to collapse toward a severe breakdown; before it occurred, however, he was able to get in his resignation, expressing the hope 'that when the chapel for which I have sacrificed so much is dedicated, I may stand among you as a friend, welcome without exception to all your hearts and homes.'[36]

But Dall was in no condition to attend the opening ceremonies in November 1854. He remained prostrate for most of the winter, and with the coming of spring sailed to take up his new duties in India. The new church, though built in the now fashionable Victorian Gothic style, was pleasingly unpretentious, no doubt because the congregation

lacked the means to make it otherwise. They now had a building but no minister, and although negotiations began with several prospective candidates, none of them came to fruition. Their predicament would have been more serious but for a quite unexpected stroke of good fortune which brought an able and experienced Unitarian clergyman to Toronto, though not as their settled minister.

They owed this happy circumstance to Francis Hincks, who by now held the office of premier. Like many other politicians of his day, he was careful to look after his relatives and friends to the best of his ability. A year earlier, when the Anglican diocese of Kingston was formed, he had used every available intrigue to promote the appointment as bishop of his brother Thomas, a bishop in the Church of Ireland.[37] The Anglicans, however, feeling that having one Hincks around was more than enough for them, elected another candidate. When University College, Toronto established its first chair of Natural History, the premier tried again, this time with greater success, in the interests of his brother William. One of the other candidates for this post had been T. H. Huxley, a rising star at twenty-eight years of age with recommendations from sixteen eminent British and French biologists, including Charles Darwin. Being brother to the premier was, however, as Huxley wryly commented when the appointment was announced, 'a qualification better than all the testimonials in the world.'[38]

William Hincks was at this time nearly sixty years of age. He had had a distinguished career in the Unitarian ministry in England, and had been the first editor of *The Inquirer*, the British Unitarian weekly. Building upon his lifelong scientific interests and on his experience of teaching at Manchester College, the training ground for most British Unitarian ministers, he had returned four years earlier to his native Cork as Professor of Natural History at Queen's College. Notwithstanding the questionable manner of his getting the position at Toronto, his performance there was creditable; he served as president of the Canadian Institute and editor of its journal, writing extensively on subjects ranging from botany and zoology to economics and psychology.

His arrival in Canada was marked by calamity: a shipwreck in which he lost all his personal belongings, including his papers, his library, and his botanical collection. In spite of the extra demands laid upon him by the loss of these resources for his professional work,

Hincks agreed to meet the Toronto congregation's request that he fill the pulpit in the absence of a settled minister – an absence that was to last four years. The various ministers who came for short periods after that and until his death in 1871 must have been daunted by the presence of someone so obviously their superior in knowledge and experience. He was a man in the tradition (and largely sharing the philosophy) of Joseph Priestley, combining in one person the talents of minister and theologian, historian and philosopher, radical politician and scientist. Besides his scientific writings, he was the author of several books on religion, and edited a translation of the New Testament. He campaigned vigorously for the extension of civil rights, for the abolition of slavery and capital punishment, for shorter hours of work, and for education in the constructive use of leisure. Peace, education, and temperance were among the causes to which he devoted time and energy. His son Thomas, also a Unitarian minister, wrote of him at his death: 'His love of truth, his intellectual honesty, and his fearless trust in freedom were leading traits of his character, and points of contact with those from whom he differed most widely in opinion.'[39] As a Unitarian of the old school, his influence upon nineteenth-century Unitarian theology in Canada was even more conservative than that of Cordner.

By now Cordner had been in Montreal more than ten years. He had marked the anniversary with a pastoral letter to his congregation in which he reviewed the progress they had made. Their numbers had increased threefold, and they had had a perceptible influence not only in the city but throughout the country. Outside pressures against them had not diminished, and it required real strength of character to maintain one's Unitarianism; it was not surprising that some people should have fallen away. It was still unfortunately necessary to continue their active protest against dogma, but they should not be lured into a mere sectarian zeal, which was not conducive to spiritual development. 'The only thing which gives us proper confidence in man or woman is the deep sense of the value of personal religion, and a serious earnestness on their part to make it their own.'[40]

The continuing pinpricks against the Unitarians were illustrated in an occurrence at the Montreal Mercantile Library Association, of which many of the leading Unitarians were members. Among the journals in its reading room was *The Christian Inquirer*, a New York Unitarian publication. Objection was raised to its presence; the committee of management decided to remove it, and its decision was upheld in a stormy meeting of the membership by a vote of 73-72. But at a later meeting this vote was reversed.

Cordner's marriage in October 1852 to Caroline Parkman, daughter of one of Boston's leading Unitarian ministers and sister of the historian Francis Parkman, had forged one more strong link with New England. These ties were further strengthened two years later when the Autumnal Unitarian Convention came to Montreal. This was one of the two annual Unitarian assemblies: the Anniversary Meetings in May were always held in Boston, but the Autumnal Convention took place in a different location each year. Though not without some apprehension about the radical theology that might be expressed by some of those attending, Cordner exulted in the coming to his city of more than three hundred Unitarians, including some of the most outstanding figures in the American movement. He himself delivered one of the major papers at the Convention, which also took note of one of the most pressing concerns of the day in the following resolution, passed by a unanimous vote: *Resolved*, That we return our grateful acknowledgments to those persons in Canada who have generously co-operated with the friends of humanity in the United States, in providing homes for the fugitives who have succeeded in effecting their escape from American slavery.'[41]

Benjamin Workman, now secretary of the congregation, watched with growing concern this shift of loyalties from the Irish to the American movement. Cordner told him frankly that he had not looked at the Synod's code of discipline for years, and furthermore that he did not feel bound by it since it had never been explicitly adopted by the congregation. At the annual meeting in December 1855 Workman brought the half-forgotten question out into the full light of day by moving that the congregation's Session be strengthened by the appointment of additional elders. The member on whom he had counted to second this motion declared instead that he had come to the conclusion that 'a Session, as he understood it, was a dangerous thing, and was capable of being made an engine of trouble and discord rather than a blessing to the Church.'[42]

The issue was postponed for further discussion in January, by which time it had assumed the proportions of a full-scale confrontation between Workman and Cordner. The latter wrote asking that the meeting should decide whether he was responsible in some special way

to the elders, rather than to the congregation at large. The congregation eventually voted that he was not, but more significantly they passed, with Workman as the sole dissentient, a resolution that they had always considered themselves to be an independent congregation, 'owing no subordination to the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster, or to any other Ecclesiastical Body.'[43]

The outraged Workman sent Cordner no reply to the question he had raised. Cordner thereupon resigned. The ensuing storm in the congregation resulted in the appointment of a committee to persuade Cordner to withdraw his resignation, followed by a letter with 222 signatures (including Workman's) expressing regret that circumstances had occurred to disturb their harmonious relationship and assuring Cordner of their appreciation and affection.

Workman did not take this defeat gracefully. Within a few months he was writing to the AUA that 'so long as the Rev. John Cordner remains pastor of the Montreal Congregation I will have nothing to do with agencies or other appointments that may bring me into intercourse with him, or with those partisans of his from whom I have of late received such insults and unmerited abuse.'[44] It was as well that he was able to move to Toronto later that year, for Cordner was to stay another twenty-four years.

When Workman wrote to tell the Remonstrant Synod of the congregation's resolution, the news was received with some surprise, 'inasmuch as there is documentary evidence of a most intimate union between the Congregation of Montreal and this Synod.'[45] A special committee was appointed to look into the matter; after addressing several letters to Workman without receiving a reply, it wrote directly to the church complaining of the 'seeming discourtesy' and adding that 'Synod, however much it might regret your secession, does not seek to retain you in its connection contrary to your inclination or sense of duty.'[46] In its reply the congregation regretted the seeming discourtesy, for which, however, it could not hold itself responsible as it had neither authorized Workman to write nor seen any communication from the Synod. 'As for our "secession" to which you refer: permit us very respectfully to say that we do not feel we have seceded from anything.' To avoid further misunderstanding they would respectfully suggest the propriety of removing their name from the Synod's roll.[47] This suggestion was duly followed, and the attempt to treat Canadian Unitarianism as a branch of the Irish movement came to an end.

Though the Toronto church had never had the formal affiliation that had earlier existed in Montreal, there too forces had been at work to shape the congregation according to the non-subscribing Presbyterian model, as is shown in the long-continued practice of appointing elders.

By this time prosperity had returned to Canada, as the great railway boom of the late fifties got under way. The Montreal congregation began to feel its increasing size and affluence. There had been several wealthy accessions to the cause; in particular, the Molson connection, having skipped a generation, was now renewed in the person of J. H. R. Molson, current owner of the brewery. A decision was made to rebuild, and this time there would be no pilgrimage in search of funds – they would handle the project themselves. It was not so much that the existing premises were not large enough, though their capacity was sometimes taxed, as that they were not imposing enough. So in 1857 the modest structure dedicated only twelve years earlier was torn down, and on its site the walls of a replacement in the worst mid-Victorian design were soon rising. The new building was occupied for the first time at Easter 1858, and was formally dedicated the following September. Although Gannett was invited back to participate, along with Frederick Frothingham, now minister in Portland, Maine, it was Cordner himself who delivered the dedication sermon. Characteristically, he called it "The Christian Idea of Sacrifice" – a thoughtful and constructive exposition of a fundamental religious theme, but couched in a format that threw down the gauntlet to the traditional churches: not 'the idea of sacrifice', nor 'the Unitarian idea of sacrifice', nor even 'a Christian idea of sacrifice', but '*the* Christian idea of sacrifice', driving the message home with the assertion that 'the conventional orthodoxy, resting in its vicarious element, does not come up to the proper Christian idea of sacrifice.'[48]

If the dedication sermon was an open challenge to Christian orthodoxy, the name given the building was an equally open challenge to the more radical Unitarians of the day. Following the example of several congregations in the United States, later to be followed also by at least one leading congregation in England, the Montreal Unitarians called their building 'The Church of the Messiah'. As against the idea of a purely human Jesus as a religious teacher and reformer this asserted that as Christ he had a considerably more significant role in the overall scheme of things: the appointed Mediator between God and Man.

Current building needs were now met both in Montreal and Toronto, but the Toronto congregation still had to struggle hard to keep its head above water. The mortgage they had been forced to carry by the effects of a strike while their building was under construction hung like a millstone around their neck, and made it difficult to maintain a minister even with AUA help. Hincks had persuaded them to advertise in England for funds to pay off the mortgage, but this had brought no response whatsoever. Benjamin Workman, on arrival in Toronto, promoted a sinking fund designed to raise the money slowly out of their own resources. Then John K. Karcher, a young American, made his one-year ministry memorable by solving the problem. He did so by introducing a variation into the time-tested practice of a fund-raising trip. The civil war in the United States made such a project there unpropitious; he went instead to England, and, to everyone's surprise, came back with funds that, when combined with a contribution from Montreal and a small residue raised locally, paid off the mortgage.

On Christmas Eve 1865, the Toronto church was set afire by a religious fanatic. Fortunately the blaze was brought under control before damage was very extensive, and the costs of repair were covered by insurance. A much more serious fire occurred in Montreal in 1869, when sparks from a massive blaze in St Andrew's Church across the street started a fire in which the roof and interior of the Church of the Messiah were gutted. The parish priest of St Patrick's Catholic church showed his feeling for a fellow-Irishman in trouble by extending an invitation for the congregation to hold services in his hall while its building was being reconstructed – an invitation that was gratefully accepted. A few years later the tower and spire, which had never been completed when the building was erected, were donated by J. H. R. Molson and his wife, Louisa, daughter of John Frothingham.

Cordner's health gave increasing cause for anxiety, and in 1859 he was given six weeks' leave of absence to recuperate in Europe. A succession of ministers filled the pulpit, including Philip Pearsall Carpenter, a remarkable man who was later to leave his mark on Montreal. He was a younger brother of Russell Lant Carpenter, and, after training under William Hincks at Manchester College, had ministered to Unitarian congregations in England. For him, however, Unitarianism was always at best the least objectionable among various unsatisfactory options. What he really wanted was to be a Christian free of

all creeds but passionately committed to a discipleship to Christ. 'That which distinguishes us', he had told his congregation, '... is simply that we allow each other liberty of conscience: that we put up with the danger of licentiousness, as did the apostles, for the sake of the inestimable privilege of being free to learn from the Lord alone, instead of having to square our convictions to the judgments of mere men.'[49] Though he became a personal friend of Cordner, he had little sympathy with the latter's doctrinal aggressiveness, and was paradoxically closer to the new school of Unitarians which saw the church in the same way as a place transcending rival theologies.

In 1859 he went on an extended American tour, but fell in love with Canada to an extent that brought him back in 1865 to spend the remainder of his life in Montreal. He preached occasionally for Cordner, but no longer regarded himself as a minister and usually worshipped with the Anglicans. Maintaining himself precariously by teaching, he devoted himself to his lifetime interest in conchology (his extensive collection of shells was presented to McGill). The cause to which he dedicated a major part of his energies, however, was the reform of the appalling sanitary conditions in Montreal. In painstaking detail he demonstrated how these were related to the incidence of disease and the city's disproportionately high death rate, and was instrumental in setting up a Sanitary Association under the presidency of William Workman, which had a modest degree of success in bringing about long-overdue changes. The battle continued to his deathbed: he succumbed in 1877 to typhoid fever.

His presence in the city was responsible for his sister Mary's visit in 1873. Mary Carpenter was one of the outstanding Unitarian social reformers of the nineteenth century, concentrating particularly on the status of women and on prison reform. The Montreal jail, she told the mayor and council, was 'the very worst I have ever seen,' and sent a strongly worded letter to the Governor General, Lord Dufferin. In his reply he promised improvements, adding, 'I cannot conclude without expressing my admiration of your courage and devotion in facing with such energy on behalf of our prisoners the difficulties which so few would encounter.'[50]

The Unitarians of Montreal were rocked by controversy in the mid-sixties. The subject was characteristic of the period. One of the results of the romantic movement was the gradual appearance in Unitarian circles of liturgies attempting to introduce more beauty and feeling

into services that had too often consisted largely of theological and moral lectures addressed to the congregation or to the Deity, punctuated by the singing of versified forms of the same subject matter. James Martineau and his friends in England, having successfully introduced a more warmly devotional hymnbook, had now produced a liturgy combining materials 'gathered in a catholic spirit from the devotional writings of every Christian age'[51] with original compositions of their own. Requests for the use of such a book in Montreal had persisted for a number of years. Cordner was resistant at first, reflecting the strong opposition to such forms of worship in the non-subscribing Presbyterian tradition. Gradually, however, he was won over to acceptance and finally support of the idea. In 1863 a committee reported in favor of trying the new service book from England. It was introduced shortly afterward for an experimental period, and at last in June 1865, a congregational meeting was called to determine whether it should be adopted for regular use. The importance of this meeting was indicated by the unusual feature that women members were invited as well as men. With Luther Holton in the chair, the committee introduced a motion that the service book be continued in use, the times and manner of such use being left to the discretion of the minister. After protracted debate, the vote was 76-34 in favor of the liturgy.

Within a month the minority seceded to form a separate congregation. It rented a hall, established its legal status, and held its first service on July 23. 'The services of the New Congregation,' it announced, 'will be strictly *Non*-liturgical.'[52] For the first four Sundays the preacher was the Toronto minister, J. R. Lavelle; they then secured the regular services of James Bayley, an English Unitarian minister who had emigrated the year before to join his three sons on a farm near Orillia. Benjamin Workman evidently had a hand in persuading him to go to Montreal; his ministry there did not last long, however, nor did the congregation. It suffered the usual fate of splinter groups united only by protest.[53]

Cordner characteristically refused to let the existence of this potential threat interfere with his plans. He had been urgently requested by the AUA to go for a few months to New Orleans to help rebuild the congregation there in the aftermath of the Civil War. His own congregation agreed in August to his going, and he went for the first four months of 1866, the AUA undertaking the responsibility for supplying

the pulpit in his absence. First-hand acquaintance with the effects of war reinforced his views on the subject; he went with the intention of preaching a gospel of reconciliation, and achieved a notable degree of success.

Meanwhile the question of a missionary to the Unitarians elsewhere in Canada had continued to gnaw at the congregation's conscience and was frequently on the agenda at annual meetings. By now it had become obvious that neither the BFUA nor the AUA was going to initiate any action on the matter; if anything was to be done, it would have to begin within the existing Canadian churches. The census of 1861 had shown that attrition was taking place, though Unitarians were still scattered all over Upper Canada. Some of them were able to hold their own, as the following letter from a farmer shows: 'I had a visit the other day from the parson of the Episcopal church. He wished me to join the church. I told him I was a Unitarian. He hoped only from education, not conviction. I told him, both.' In the ensuing theological argument, the Unitarian told the minister, 'I would sooner rest my happiness on my own conduct than on any one's else; that I did not see any justice at all in a good man dying in a bad man's place; and I thought it more affecting to see Christ as a high-souled, pure-minded man, going about divinely commissioned, revealing God's will and ways, doing good, rebuking sin, and dying by the hands of his enemies in consequence, than in God clothing himself in a mortal form, revealing his own ways, and then letting his creatures go through the farce of killing his body, and after that forgiving them all their sins because they had crowned them all by maltreating himself. This last is rather irreverent, but I could not help it. I think he thought me past praying for; so he left me, promising to call on his next visit to this place; but he has not done so.'[54]

But the rural areas did not provide the most promising setting for missionary work. Though the existence of Unitarians was known, their identity was not, except in a few cases. It made more sense to think in terms of holding meetings in the cities, where a new group might be gathered together. Discussions of missionary work had for a long time mentioned in particular Kingston, London, and Ottawa.

The first move took place when the Montreal congregation decided to give some modest support to William Knott, an English Methodist turned Unitarian who had begun training for the ministry at Manchester College and then, on moving to the United States, transferred to

Meadville. He spent his 1867 summer vacation in conducting a mission, holding meetings, and distributing tracts. The results were evidently encouraging enough for the congregation to go ahead with the formation of a missionary association, which raised more than $1000 for work of this kind. The next recipient of such support was N. C. Earl. Born in Northumberland county, Upper Canada, in 1832, he had spent ten years in the ministry of the Christian Connection before going to Meadville, where he graduated in 1868. The following year he returned to Canada and, apparently unaware of the Montreal missionary association, attempted in vain to persuade the AUA to support him in missionary work. Eventually he decided to undertake it 'on my own hook'. After an itinerant period in southern Ontario he settled down in London, where he held Sunday services and spent the week going from door to door distributing tracts, and selling copies of Cordner's recently published lecture series, *Is Protestantism a Failure*? The response was sufficient to keep him going – he claimed 150 at his services – but for a while he depended on voluntary contributions from his hearers to support himself. Later that year he was appointed city missionary by the Montreal congregation, but in the meantime his project in London petered out without leaving any permanent trace.

There is no record of any attempt at all in Kingston, but Ottawa was obviously the right place for a more serious effort. Not only was it the capital city of the newly created Dominion, but there were known and influential Unitarians living there. Cordner himself went up in the summer of 1867, hoping to repeat the success story of twenty-two years earlier in Toronto. Though the turnout for his services was good and a great deal of interest was shown, it was obvious that without someone working full-time on the spot little could be accomplished. For the next year Cordner tried to persuade the AUA to send someone to Ottawa. A Harvard student went for a short while in the summer of 1868, but no minister appeared until December of that year, when an otherwise unknown man named Harrison arrived in Montreal in a raging blizzard to discover that he had missed a letter from Cordner warning him that the prospects were so poor that he had better not come. He had no support from Boston, and, as he decided to carry on against Cordner's advice, could expect none from Montreal. When he got to Ottawa he discovered not only that 'this is an awful cold place', but also that 'those men who have been possessed with our spirit had their domestic felicity threatened by the presence of an Unitarian

minister' – their wives had formed strong religious attachments elsewhere.[55] The kind of resources that Unitarians were prepared to deploy were not, quite obviously, going to produce at this point a congregation in Ottawa.

Even these amateur attempts at missionary work now came to an end. Had the Unitarians been effectively organized to maintain able ministers on the scene, there is no doubt that by the time Confederation came there would have been a reasonably secure congregation in Ottawa, as well as in London and possibly in Hamilton, with a far stronger church in Toronto. But the hard facts were that both the BFUA and the AUA were undermanned, starved of the resources to give effective support to such a venture, and besieged with requests for help from closer at home. The Montreal congregation, the only one in Canada strong enough to support missionary work, usually had other priorities. So the effort lapsed, with the oft-predicted result that a majority of the Unitarians who came to Canada in the great wave of immigration between 1825 and 1850 were eventually lost to other denominations.

One reason for the lack of denominational zeal was that so many Unitarians were dividing their energies between a number of public causes, most of them socially desirable. Cordner had long given a lead in encouraging attention to social and political conditions as a high religious priority. From time to time he exploded with outrage when moral principles were flagrantly flouted in public life. One occasion for such prophetic denunciation was the corruption surrounding the Grand Trunk Railway, even though members of his own congregation were promoters of the enterprise.

Equally violent was his reaction to the oath-taking farce when the Cartier-Macdonald ministry took office in August 1858. The law then required that a member of parliament resign and seek re-election on assuming a new portfolio, except in the situation where he changed his portfolio within thirty days of his appointment. In accordance with the letter of the law but in violation of its spirit and intent, the entire cabinet avoided having to seek re-election by doing a reshuffle of offices the day after they had been sworn in. 'The people of Canada,' fulminated Cordner, 'designate and elect the men who manage our national affairs.... This being the case, we all become, in a measure, responsible for what they do or leave undone.... Let the people of Canada, then, look at the character of their own morality so it may be

seen reflected in the deeds of the men whom they have chosen to carry on the government of the country.... In the estimate of the Christian moralist what does such insincere oath-taking amount to? John Milton, in his treatise on Christian doctrine, defines perjury in two forms, one of which "consists in making a lawful promise under the sanction of an oath, without intending to perform it, or at least without actually performing it".'[56]

In the 1860s, when war between Britain and the United States had become an imminent possibility, Cordner tried to cool the rising tempers. Most Montrealers were hoping for a Southern victory in the Civil War, which would weaken the position of the rival seaports in the northern United States. Cordner saw the issue in moral rather than economic terms. In a public address that was not only published as a pamphlet in Montreal, but reprinted in England by the Union and Emancipation Society of Manchester, he urged resistance to all attempts to 'embroil in war the great industrious, peaceful and prosperous empire with which it is our privilege to be connected,' calling instead for 'fidelity to the noblest traditions of that empire which forbid us to aid or abet, by word or deed, the iniquity of slavery, or prop its falling fortunes on this continent.'[57]

This concern for human freedom in another country was paralleled by a concern for its preservation and extension in Canada. In 1867 Cordner became one of very few English-speaking Canadians ever to be invited to address *l'Institut Canadien*, the rallying-place for French-Canadian intellectual radicals that evoked such bitter opposition from the rising ultramontane power in the Catholic Church. Sharing a platform with the veteran *rouge* leader, Louis Joseph Papineau, he presented (in English) an eloquent defence of freedom of thought and expression, punctuated by the applause of an enthusiastic audience. He granted that some new ideas might be hurtful rather than helpful, but the most effective safeguard against harm being done lay in the cultivation of a love and respect for truth, not in any attempt to suppress ideas. The tradition in ancient China, he said, was to bind the feet, thus doing violence to the image of God; it would be a far worse offence against the divine order, however, to bind the head – the spirit – rather than the feet. He congratulated *l'Institut Canadien* on holding to the Gallican principle of breadth and openness as against the exclusive and domineering influence of ultramontanism.[58] Such an invitation and the use Cordner made of it can have done little to lessen Bishop Bourget's determination to crush *l'Institut Canadien*.

In 1868 Cordner marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of his coming. At a banquet to mark the occasion, Thomas Workman acclaimed the work he had done for congregation and city, and his influence throughout the country. Two years later, McGill University honored him with the degree of LL.D. But by now, though he was still in his fifties, Cordner was a prematurely old man. His health gave continual cause for worry; his eyesight eventually grew so weak that people could pass him unrecognized. In 1872 he offered his resignation. The congregation persuaded their 'beloved pastor', as he was now habitually called, to take a leave of absence instead, to see whether a visit to his native land would work an improvement. But it was obvious on his return that he could no longer carry on unaided. For a while supplies were brought in to handle some of the services. Then a young Harvard graduate, E. F. Hayward, came for a year as assistant. In 1876, however, the congregation accepted Cordner's recommendation that John Bremner Green be appointed as his colleague to carry the major share of the work of the ministry.

Green, now forty-one years of age, was a Scotsman who had learned the trade of a cabinet-maker in his native village, but had later emigrated to the United States, trained as Meadville, and served as minister to several churches. He therefore came to Montreal with considerable experience behind him, and for a while everything appeared to be going well. He organized a literary and philosophical group within the congregation called The Liberal Christian Union, which, in October 1876, began publishing a monthly paper, *The Rational Christian*. But he was no match for Cordner in the pulpit, and the congregation languished. By the fall of 1878 Cordner felt unable to face another Montreal winter and moved to Boston; with the New Year came his resignation. This time there was no option but to accept, and he was appointed honorary pastor, i.e., minister emeritus, at a salary of $1000. Green, now in sole charge for almost all of the time, asked for an increase in salary. A congregation that had been accustomed to having to persuade its minister to accept even as much as they had offered him, turned the request down. Green resigned, and the pulpit stood open. The Cordner era was over.

4

Allies: 'Christians' and Universalists

Since relationships with other religious bodies were usually far from cordial, it was natural that the Unitarians should look for friends with whom they might feel that they had at least something in common. Within the Quaker movement there were some members who took a liberal stand, and the movement actually split on this issue in 1829. Though their opponents were eager to fasten the label of Unitarianism upon these liberals, not without considerable justification in some instances,[1] they appear to have had no communication of any kind with the self-avowed Unitarians of Canada. There were, however, two other religious bodies in the country that shared enough of a Unitarian point of view to make it not entirely unrealistic to indulge in the recurrent dream to which Unitarians on both sides of the Atlantic gave themselves over from time to time – the dream of the coming Great United Liberal Church.

The first was a body of people calling themselves simply 'Christians', a product of the American frontier with its widespread demand for an uncomplicated approach to religion, free of theological subtleties and liturgical formalism. Their choice of name indicated their hope that they could provide a platform on which everyone could unite by restricting themselves to basic essentials and avoiding divisive dogmas. Such an attitude certainly appealed to Unitarians; as long ago

as the seventeenth century John Biddle, the 'father of English Unitarianism', had rejected all sectarian labels and asked to be thought of as a 'mere Christian'. In fact, of all religious bodies the Christians, or 'Christian Connection' as they were often called, seemed at first to be by far the closest to the Unitarians in outlook: 'They reject all human creeds, taking the Bible alone. They reject all doctrines which cannot be stated in scriptural language; consequently, they reject the doctrine of the Trinity, believing the Father alone to be God; that God is therefore one, and only one person, that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God; that the Holy Ghost is the divine unction with which our Saviour was anointed, "a divine emanation of God, by which he exerts an energy or influence on rational minds." They believe in Christ's pre-existence, in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, baptizing by immersion; and they reject the whole scheme of Calvinism.'[2]

At least the most conservative Unitarians could go along with all of this, except the baptism by immersion; however, there were other aspects of the life of the 'Christians' with which Unitarians felt less in harmony. Matthew Harding, who as an itinerant evangelist and a General Baptist could have been expected to feel most at home with the Christians, spent an evening with them and preached for them on his way from Montreal to Boston in 1832. He reported afterward: 'These people are most decidedly anti-trinitarians and Baptists, but so full of wildfire and fanaticism that I could not comfortably join their community. They will, however, after awhile, I trust, become more rational.'[3] Russell Lant Carpenter, observing them on his travels in 1849, noted politely that Unitarians might look on their labors with sympathy, but could not easily unite with them 'as they adopt, in Canada, many of those means of religious excitement which may be suited to a rude and scattered population, but which do not aid the spiritual growth of the more cultivated class.'[4] Another dimension of difference was recorded by Robert Hassall, again a man whose background made him basically sympathetic; indeed, he had for a while thought he might find a ministry among them. But on spending time at one of their conferences, he noted with dismay that they were so preoccupied with the inward and personal aspects of religion that they had little interest in social action.[5]

Nonetheless, the 'Christians' were in many regards quite close to the

Unitarians, a fact that was not ignored by the custodians of religious orthodoxy, who sometimes tried to denigrate them by pinning the Unitarian label on them. One of their congregations was established at Dumfries (now Cambridge, Ontario); a contemporary writer describing one of the episodes leading to its formation tells how some of the original settlers of the area had been there five years 'and had never had a sermon preached among them all that time. The nearest approach to it had been by a Unitarian, or Christian, who had once preached in their neighbourhood; but that was a kind of preaching on which they had no disposition to attend.'[6]

In 1828 the Christians claimed fifteen congregations in Upper Canada; twenty years later the number had almost doubled. Their chief centre was at Oshawa, where their meeting house was one of the most prominent buildings in the little town. When the Canada Christian Conference met there in 1845, Cordner received a fraternal invitation to attend and preach, which he did on the evening following his first successful meeting in Toronto. His reception was very cordial, and the links thus established resulted in the setting up of a distribution centre for the *Bible Christian* in Oshawa, from which copies of Channing's works together with Unitarian sermons and tracts were also made available to these new-found friends. Cordner returned to the conference at least once, but the passage of the years carried the two movements further apart rather than closer together. This was attributed by Cordner, probably with some justice, to the growing radicalism of Unitarians, which carried them away from the exclusively Bible-centred approach of the Christians. In 1870 he wrote, 'Latterly they fraternize with Unitarians less readily than they did some time ago. This hesitation comes from lack of sympathy with the temper of destructive criticism manifested by some who bear the Unitarian name.'[7] Whatever the reasons, the links became more tenuous and finally disappeared altogether as the Christian Connection followed its own line of evolution as one of the strands in the movement more generally known as the Disciples of Christ.

Relationships between the Unitarians and the Universalists, the second movement in which they saw friends and allies, evolved along quite a different line. Here the initial contacts came more slowly and with a greater degree of suspicion, but with the passage of time, the links grew stronger rather than weaker. Eventually, the Universalists,

now only a shadow of the thriving movement they once had been, merged with the Unitarians to form one united denomination in 1961. Thus the Universalist tradition in Canada became a part of the common heritage shared by the present-day movement.

The possibility of such a merger was not entirely absent from the consciousness of both Unitarians and Universalists at a much earlier period, though it may have seemed remote. At a time when Cordner was already fraternizing with the 'Christians', he was still able to write: 'Of the Christian Universalists, we know little....'[8] But a year later, in 1847, he was beginning to feel a little shamefaced about this ignorance of those who shared so much of his liberal outlook in religion, and he devoted several columns of the *Bible Christian* to an examination of why it should be that the two movements seemed so far apart. 'Where the fault lies, we presume not to say. The Universalists lay it at the door of the Unitarians. Unitarianism, they say, "has been the liberal Christianity of the aristocracy; Universalism, that of the common people." And we believe that, as a general statement, this will not be disputed.'[9]

Perhaps, he went on to suggest, better communication would overcome some of the problems. The two movements were in substantial agreement with each other, except on the one important matter of retribution in a future life for evildoers. 'All Unitarians assert and enforce this, while many of the Universalists deny it.' This was certainly a divisive issue, as Gannett had already pointed out in his dedication sermon at the Montreal church. After naming the grounds for dissociating Unitarians from one denomination after another, he had turned to the Universalists. 'As Unitarian Christians,' he said, 'we differ from the Universalist body.... All of us would reject any statement of belief which excluded the idea of future retribution.... As certain as is another state of existence do we make the experience of its retributive scenes, for this experience follows from the laws of our being....'[10]

But less than three years later Cordner was already coming to recognize that perhaps the Universalists were not as completely opposed to all ideas of retribution as the utterances of some of them had led him to suppose. It might be that possibilities of fruitful collaboration really existed. If cordial relationships with the 'Christians' had been possible, why not with the Universalists as well? But

'we would not wish to be understood as commending anything like an amalgamation of the two denominations. The time may come when such a course is seen to be desirable, but at present it is not.'[11]

The Universalists were in fact the largest denomination by a considerable margin to take a liberal stand in religion at this period. The provincial censuses of 1851 showed that they had rather more than 7000 adherents, as against 4000 'Christians' and 1200 Unitarians. Much the same ratio had been indicated in calculations made a few years earlier in the United States, giving the Universalists 600 000 adherents, the 'Christians' 300 000, and the Unitarians 180 000.[12]

The Universalists, like the Christians, had at the outset almost all come to Canada from the United States, though their origins were not as completely American, and the small British movement made its own contribution in Canada. The British Universalists traced their beginnings to Gerrard Winstanley and the 'Diggers' back in the seventeenth century, though they had no effective organization in England until the closing years of the eighteenth century, when the movement they had exported to America was re-imported in a more vigorous form. The one great distinguishing feature of Universalists was a belief that no members of the human race would be finally and irrevocably lost. Eternal bliss in heaven would be the ultimate destiny of all. They thus stood in opposition not only to the Calvinist view that God predestines a great part of humanity to everlasting damnation in hell, but also to the Methodist view that although there is nothing predestined about it, nonetheless this is indeed going to be the fate of those who do not of their own free will follow the road to salvation.

The Universalists, then, believed in universal salvation – hence their name. For them the world was sharply divided between Partialists, who believed that only part of humanity would be saved, and Universalists, who believed that the whole of humanity would be saved. As to whether there might be a more limited term of punishment after death, measured out in proportion to the sins of the individual concerned, Universalists were not agreed. Some (the Restorationist school) took the view that entry into heaven was not immediate and automatic, but would be preceded by a preparatory period of purgatory. Others (the 'Death-and-Glory' school) argued that through the work of Christ immediate bliss had been procured for all. Retribution for sin took place not in the hereafter but in this earthly life, whether we

recognized it or not – essentially the message preached in Emerson's essay on *Compensation*.

The Canadian Universalists nearly all belonged to the Restorationist school, but they nonetheless had to live with the reputation given their movement by the Death-and-Glory exponents. Christian zealots attacked them with the same furious denunciations as they used for Unitarians. Many of the converts at revivalist meetings were announced as former Universalists who had been led into lives of sin and degradation by the belief that they would not be punished for their wickedness.[13] It was frequently claimed that Universalist testimony should be given no credence in courts of law, for an oath was ineffective in ensuring truthfulness if one had no reason to fear God's punishment for breaking it. On the basis of abstract argument and in the teeth of the empirical evidence, it was alleged that Universalists must live shockingly depraved lives as a consequence of the pernicious doctrine they had been led to accept.

The Universalists responded that all they were trying to do was to take the Biblical teaching of the love of God seriously. The doctrine of everlasting torture in hell was patently inconsistent with belief in a God of love. By the time they began to move into Canada in the early years of the century many of them had also added a broad range of Unitarian ideas to their one great heresy. Hosea Ballou in the United States and William Vidler in England, the two most powerful men in their respective movements, began to preach what was in effect Unitarianism plus a belief in universal salvation. Although Vidler then moved over to join the Unitarians and tried to persuade his Universalist friends to do the same, the very different social and religious scene in New England blocked any similar development there. The Universalist movement not only maintained its independent identity but entered upon a phase of missionary expansion that carried it beyond the bounds of New England at a far more rapid pace than Boston Unitarianism could ever muster. Most of this expansion was in rural areas; unlike Unitarianism, Universalism never made any great headway in the cities, and, as Cordner observed, the two movements were kept apart by socio-economic factors at least as much as by any differences in theology. The Unitarians of Canada, coming as many of them did from a background in which these differences between the two movements were much less marked than they were in the Boston

area, still felt the effects of this class distinction. But they were felt more strongly in Montreal than in Toronto, where the Universalists were rapidly assimilated into the predominantly working-class Unitarian congregation.

In Scotland the Universalists had made some modest gains. Here again most of the converts were in the rural areas, though Neil Douglas, the leader of the movement, gathered a large congregation in Glasgow. When Vidler and his lieutenant T. A. Teulon went to Scotland in an attempt to persuade the Universalists to embrace Unitarianism they were vigorously opposed by Douglas, who was essentially a Calvinist with a view of the Elect that had been broadened to include the whole of humanity. Some of the Scottish Universalists stayed with Douglas. Others, particularly in and around Edinburgh, followed Vidler and became Unitarian Universalists. Those who came to Canada were mostly followers of Douglas.

If individualism was always a problem for the Unitarians, it was still more so for the Universalists, who were never in a position to plan any overall denominational strategy, or even to get an accurate picture of all the dimensions of their movement. Everything depended upon individual initiative in the local area. In their writings they showed a peculiar predilection for military metaphors: they called their publications *The Trumpet, The Banner, The Sentinel*; they told of battles and triumphs. If they were indeed an army, they must have been the most ill-organized and undisciplined troops in history. But they seldom acknowledged defeat. Even where by all objective standards they should long since have abandoned the fray, they still very frequently persisted with undaunted spirit, in keeping with the optimistic nature of their faith.

Among the settlers who moved up through Vermont into the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada early in the nineteenth century there were considerable numbers of Universalists, though at first there seems to have been little attempt at organization or preaching. The first Universalist preacher in Canada was Christopher Huntington, a man already seventy years of age when he came with his family to settle in 1804 at Compton, halfway between Sherbrooke and the border.[14] His son, who had fought on the American side in the War of Independence, was to take the Canadian side in the War of 1812. A great-grandson, Lucius Seth Huntington, was one of very few Canadian

Universalists to achieve national prominence, though many took an active part in public life at the local level. He was for many years Liberal M. P. for Shefford, sat in several cabinets, and was the person chiefly responsible for exposing the Canadian Pacific Railway scandals which brought down the Macdonald government in 1873.

Further accessions of Universalists arrived with the continuing waves of settlers, but not until around 1830 were they able to establish even the very loosely organized societies typical of the period. Itinerant preachers moved through the area from time to time, in some instances staying a year or more, but usually only a few days at a time in any one place. They held their meetings in schoolhouses, barns, and private homes, occasionally in the open air. One stayed a great deal longer: James Ward, a former Calvinist from New York, came in 1831 and stayed until 1848, working a circuit from Stanstead. He and others held meetings and services with some regularity in this eastern part of the area at Compton, Lennoxville, Shipton, and Ascot as well as at Stanstead. It would be misleading to describe these as congregations in the modern sense, though they were more than casual assemblies to hear a preacher, as many of the hearers were and had for a long time been personally committed to the teachings they heard.

The Universalists of Ascot felt well enough organized by 1833 to petition the legislature for the right to hold a marriage register. In the debate on the subject in the Legislative Council, George Moffatt declared himself 'opposed to granting privileges to loosely formed congregations – to sects that had no visible existence.'[15] Under the circumstances, this would have been a reasonable cause for caution, though no doubt the real feelings of the Council were more honestly expressed by the Bishop: 'He hoped that a Legislature which prevented by law the slandering of the name of an individual would still protect from blasphemy the name of God. . . . Privileges ought to be limited to Christians only' – and while his Lordship acknowledged that Universalists *might* be Christians, he proposed an examination into the extent to which they accepted the full teachings of the Scriptures. The Unitarian members of the Council, Molson and Gates, were both present at this session, but are not recorded to have made any comment. The Bishop's remarks were in fact fairly restrained by comparison with the views expressed in a church newspaper a few years later: 'Arians, Unitarians, Universalists, or other questioners of some part of

the creed, should be refused naturalization, the right to circulate literature, the ownership of land, or even the possession of a cemetery in which to bury their dead.'[16]

Another group of Universalist preaching stations or loose congregations existed to the west of Lake Memphremagog, at Dunham, Knowlton, Brome, Waterloo, and Warden. All of these, like the groups further east, were within thirty miles of the American border; at no time did Universalism push further than this into Lower Canada. Almost without exception its adherents were American immigrants, though one interesting reversal took place. At about the same time as Ward came to Canada, the incumbent of the Anglican parish in Lennoxville, C. F. LeFevre, began to preach a Universalist theology and was removed by the Bishop. He subsequently became a Universalist minister in the United States.[17]

In Upper Canada a similar immigration was taking place. Here the Universalists were part of the wave of settlers moving through the area north of Lake Erie on their way from New York state to the newly opened lands in Michigan and Wisconsin. Some of them were so impressed by the possibilities of this relatively unsettled part of Canada that they decided to go no farther.

The first Universalist congregation was organized in London, and as this was done with more formality than usual it is possible to give a precise date. On September 10, 1831 the Society elected its first trustees and the thirty male members signed the constitution, which declared: 'The object of this Society shall be the cultivation of peace and harmony, and the promotion of religion and morality among ourselves and our fellow men.'[18] Unfortunately, peace and harmony with their fellow men was not to be their lot; here as elsewhere they were the target of bitter hostility. This came to a head during and after the Rebellion of 1837, when the more unscrupulous of their adversaries took the opportunity to settle old theological scores by accusing the Universalists of being disloyal. Because they were Americans, the accusations sounded plausible to many. Alvaro Ladd, the secretary of the congregation, was arrested and condemned to death after a hasty trial in which no substantial evidence had been produced against him. After several months in jail, he was finally released, but his health was permanently damaged by his ordeal.

Even worse was the experience of another member of the society, Elijah Woodman. He had not been active in public affairs, nor was he involved in any way in the Rebellion. But sympathy with friends who had been thrown into jail led him to visit them, and he was promptly accused by the local Tories of trying to help them escape. He was himself arrested, and spent more than two months in jail before being released. Embittered by this experience, he left the country with the intention of seeking a new home in Wisconsin; upon arrival in Detroit, however, he became involved in the plan to invade Canada. When the invasion took place in December 1838 he was captured, sentenced to death, and eventually transported for life to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). Pardoned in 1845, he died on his way back to Canada.[19]

Elsewhere in the province, Universalism expanded slowly. Itinerant ministers held meetings in Hamilton in 1833 and again in 1835, but although on the former occasion one of the meetings went on till after midnight no permanent mark was left. The London society remained the only one in the province until the late thirties, when despite the troubled times several new developments took place farther east. One of these was the arrival in Canada of David Leavitt, who settled in Hastings county but travelled from one end of Upper Canada to the other preaching Universalism to anyone who would listen, while his wife and sons tended the farm that supported the family. Though not ordained until 1846, he was from the time of his arrival early in 1837 the leading spokesman for his religion in the province. Another person who began preaching at this period and made her influence felt at a more local level was Mary Ann Church, wife of a doctor who had settled at Merrickville. By dint of persistence she succeeded in building up a little congregation there. She never became an ordained minister, but was certainly the first Universalist woman preacher in Canada, and possibly the first of any denomination.

Also at the eastern end of the province, two little colonies of Scottish Universalists settled at this period. They had evidently been neighbors and co-religionists who had emigrated together, and settled at Ramsay and Dalhousie, under the leadership of William Houston. Their contacts with the Universalists of American origin were cordial but not extensive, and they eventually disappeared after an existence of rather more than a decade.

The 1840s brought the first ordained minister. A. G. Laurie was a Scotsman, but appears to have had no connection with the Universalists of his native land. He arrived in Canada from the United States in 1843, immediately following his ordination, and settled at first at

Simcoe – an unpromising location, he conceded, but a reasonably convenient base from which to move around 'a circuit of about 240 miles, the Western limit of said circle resting on London, C. W., and the Eastern reaching nearly to St. Catharines. Throughout this whole territory, Universalism is sprinkled like fleecy clouds on the bosom of a speckled sky. A spot here and there, with a desert between. In some of these spots, however, the herbage is indeed luxurious. In Smithville, Niagara District, for example, a small village containing a population of perhaps two hundred, but with a tolerably well settled neighbourhood, we have, if not exactly a society, at least the elements of a very promising one.'[20]

Before long, Laurie gave up trying to give regular coverage to this enormous area and moved to London, where he concentrated on trying to rebuild the broken congregation, together with a satellite group at Sparta, a few miles to the south. Under his energetic leadership, the London society was soon back on its feet, and by 1845 was erecting its own meeting house. The following year a second missionary arrived in the person of J. R. Lavelle (Lavell), who was to spend the remainder of his life in Canada, sharing with Leavitt the work of providing overall leadership in the western part of the province. At first he seems to have taken over from Laurie in Smithville, where a little congregation was meeting regularly in the schoolhouse. During this same period an uncharacteristic experiment in an urban setting had begun: a small group of Universalists met for a while in Toronto, under the ministrations of 'an aged Scotchman, name not given'.[21] However, after the Unitarian congregation was organized in the city, most of them habitually worshipped with it and were eventually absorbed into it.[22]

David Leavitt pushed hard to overcome the customary Universalist resistance to wider organization, and in 1844 succeeded in bringing together a founding convention to set up the 'Christian Universalist Association for Canada West'. They were granted the use of the Episcopal Methodist meeting house in Smithville for the occasion; the resulting message of thanks to its trustees for their 'christian liberality' was a refreshing change from the usual interdenominational recriminations. The first regular meeting of the association took place a year later in Leavitt's home territory at Belleville, and was evidently highly successful. 'Our meeting was truly "a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord", "a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined"; and from the reports of the delegates from the different societies, we were assured that the cause of truth is progressing in many parts of Western Canada. Her march is onward, and her triumphs are certain.

Though crushed to earth she'll rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers,
While error wounded writhes in pain.
And dies amid her worshippers.'[23]

For the next thirty years David Leavitt as secretary of the association organized these annual meetings. They lasted three days and normally included eight or nine sermons, open to the general public, as well as business sessions and social gatherings. Resolutions were sometimes passed on subjects of public concern; for instance, in 1852 the association urged total prohibition of alchoholic beverages and abolition of capital punishment. In 1848 the question was raised as to whether the Universalists should apply to the government for a share in the income from the Clergy Reserves; the resulting discussion dragged on from year to year and the issue was still unresolved when the Clergy Reserves were abolished eight years later. The association also assumed responsibility for ordaining ministers and receiving reports on their conduct; moral character was of far greater importance as a qualification than formal theological training. Leavitt was ordained in 1846, Lavelle in 1848.

Most often these annual gatherings were held in Bloomfield, Prince Edward County, where Leavitt had made his home and organized a congregation, or else at Smithville. After 1860, when Leavitt organized a new congregation at Port Dover on Lake Erie, this provided another alternative. Very occasionally the meetings were held elsewhere – once at Merrickville, once at Brougham, twice at Orono. Even when the London society was most active the association never met there. Laurie returned to the United States in 1848 and was succeeded by Lavelle, who not only maintained the London congregation but also travelled widely on horseback to keep up the missionary work. For a while he published a monthly paper, *The Gospel Messenger or Universalist Advocate*, to promote the cause. But after several years he moved back to Smithville, and the London society gradually faded out of existence, its building passing successively into the hands of the

Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Salvation Army before it finally burned down in 1888.

A favorite procedure for publicizing Universalism was the marathon debate against whatever spokesmen for the more conventional theology could be induced to participate. These were set up with all the elaborate rules and arrangements that now govern sporting events, and were no doubt regarded in much the same light by many among the large crowds that attended. Both Leavitt and Lavelle were past masters in the art, and few orthodox apologists stood much of a chance against them, irrespective of the abstract merits of the argument. Early in 1846 a two-day debate took place in the schoolhouse at Picton between Leavitt and David Oliphant, a leading figure in the Christian Connection. Three years later Oliphant was matched against Lavelle for a three-day contest in the Christian meeting house at Jordan, in the Niagara peninsula. The greatest of all these debates, however, took place in June 1853 at the nearby village of Fonthill, where a large arena was set up in the open air. A platform six feet high was built for the speakers, each of whom was given a table and writing materials. On the Universalist side was J. R. Lavelle; on the orthodox side G. P. Harris, a Methodist minister. Each nominated a moderator and the two moderators together selected an umpire. Debate took place each day from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a short interval for lunch. Each speaker was strictly limited to fifteen minutes at a time.

The weather was ideal for the two days of the debate. Upward of fifteen hundred people from the surrounding countryside came to hear the speakers tackle, on the first day, 'Do the Scriptures teach the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind?' and on the second day, 'Do the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless misery for any part of the human family?' No vote from the audience was called for at the close of the debate; they went away to reach their own conclusions on the basis of what they had heard. The entire debate was taken down in shorthand and subsequently published.[24]

Where opponents could not be drawn to a common platform, Universalists responded to their statements in writing. Early in 1853 a Methodist minister named Pollard launched an attack upon the Universalists and Unitarians of London, claiming that they were not fit to be school trustees because education should be directed toward producing Christian citizens. He was answered in a pamphlet written and published by Marcus Gunn, editor of the newspapers in St Thomas,

who at this stage in his varied career was an outspoken Universalist and was printing Lavelle's *Gospel Messenger* on his presses. Gunn accused him of trying to turn the common schools into sectarian institutions, and to suppress the civil rights of persons who were raising rather than lowering the moral tone of the community. How many Universalists or Unitarians, he asked, were to be found in penal institutions? The inmates of such establishments were far more likely to profess evangelical Christianity.[25]

One of the first steps to be taken by the Universalist Association of Canada West was to write to the congregations of Canada East inviting them to form a similar association. They had, however, no one with Leavitt's enthusiasm for such an organization, and moreover, their problems were different. Unlike the western churches, they were relatively close together in two clusters. The more easterly of these clusters was served by C. P. Mallory, a native of the area who was ordained in 1843. He quickly came to the conclusion that as none of the loose-knit congregations had the resources to establish and maintain a building, it would be preferable to establish one centrally located church to serve the entire area, though services would still be held in the local communities. The village of Huntingville was selected as the most convenient location, the congregations pooled their resources, and on New Year's Day 1845 the meeting house was formally dedicated. As there were no direct contacts with Unitarians, and the Eastern Townships were notably absent from the list of places (including Merrickville) that maintained local agencies for the Montreal *Bible Christian*, it is interesting to note that an outside observer refers to Mallory as the *Unitarian* minister in Lennoxville in a letter describing the dedication of the Huntingville church: 'A small society professing Unitarian and Universalist doctrines has just finished a very neat little chapel... but are able to employ a minister one Sunday in each month. This gentleman resides in Lennoxville, and labours amongst various small congregations within a circuit of 30 miles round.'[26] Mallory remained with this cluster until his death in 1882.

The western cluster developed more slowly, with a succession of short-term ministries among the scattered fellowships. Finally, in 1869, a similar pooling of resources resulted in the erection of a handsome brick building in Waterloo, which was dedicated early in 1871.

Away to the east, in the Maritime Provinces, Universalists were beginning to establish a foothold. This area lacked the large-scale

influx of American Universalists that gave the initial impetus in the Canadas; so the movement came into being chiefly through the efforts of missionaries working among the population already settled there. The same geographical distribution was, however, to be found in New Brunswick as in the Eastern Townships: the Universalist groups hugged the border closely, being confined to the valley of the St Croix.

As far back as 1820 the spread of Universalist ideas in the area was denounced from a pulpit in St Stephen. During the next few years a number of itinerant Universalists held meetings, either in New Brunswick or right across the river in Calais, Maine where a small Universalist congregation maintained a tenuous existence in the late thirties. But it was not until a colorful Methodist preacher named Amos Hitchings was converted to Universalism in 1840 that things really began to happen. Within a year a meeting house was built at Milltown, New Brunswick, a short distance up river from St Stephen, while Hitchings also organized a congregation in his hometown of St Andrews. His impression of what was happening was painted in vivid colors: 'Never before was there such an earnest inquiry abroad upon the ALL important subject, in this Province, as is at present manifest in this community and all the region round about. The true gospel leaven is in full operation, and a glorious work is gradually, yet permanently, advancing. The combined efforts of numerous popular sects are set in battle array against our infant cause; but with the advantage of popularity, money, and an incomparable and overwhelming majority in numbers they "prevail nothing" – and although they array all the bigotry and prejudice which they can command against us – and resort to the basest slander, foulest misinterpretation and defamatory declamation, and most unprincipled stratagems to take advantage of us and keep us down, thinking that the end justifies the means, yet our cause is onward, because "the battle is the Lord's". The omnipotent power of truth will prevail; and as well might you stop the rushing of a mighty river in its course to the ocean, as to arrest materially the inquiring spirit that is now abroad in these parts.'[27]

These enthusiastic prophecies had very little foundation in fact. It was true that when Hitchings had gone to Fredericton to petition for authority to officiate at marriages he had used the opportunity to address a public meeting attended (he claimed) by more than four

hundred people. But the new society that he said was coming into being there and discussing the building of a meeting house never materialized. When he left the province in 1842 his societies in St Davids and St Andrews promptly disappeared, leaving only a struggling little group in Milltown-St Stephen. This maintained itself largely because his successor for the next sixteen years was a medical doctor who was not dependent upon his modest salary as minister. In 1854 the church burned down, and was replaced a year later.

H. A. Philbrook, who came as minister in 1858, was a young and energetic man who soon drew capacity crowds to the little church. Like a number of his colleagues, he wanted to be a Unitarian as well as a Universalist, and was soon dividing his time between Milltown and the Unitarian church across the river in Calais. He made a Unitarian missionary journey around the province, holding the first meeting in Saint John in 1862, with an estimated attendance of over three hundred. But the prospects in a province where, in his words, to be a Unitarian was to be even more of an infidel than a Universalist,[28] were not very attractive. In 1866 he moved permanently to Calais, and the destruction by storm of the Milltown meeting house three years later completed the demise of the surviving remnant of the congregation in New Brunswick.

Developments in Nova Scotia followed a different pattern again. Here there was no American border to hug. The natural entrance to the province lay through the port of Halifax, which may be why this was the scene of the only long-term urban congregation in Canadian Universalist history. At first, it is true, there was little indication that the pattern in Nova Scotia would be any different from the usual one elsewhere. The fifty-five Universalists listed in the 1827 census were all in rural areas, well away from Halifax. When the first congregation came into being in 1834 it was at Pugwash, through the adoption of Universalist views by a Calvinist minister who had carried part of his congregation with him and was about to erect a meeting house. Itinerant Universalist preachers visited the Amherst area the following year and on several subsequent occasions.

They were guests of a remarkable person, Amos Peck Seaman, known to his contemporaries as 'King' Seaman. Born in Sackville, N.B. in 1788, he became in due course the proprietor of the greater part of the village of Minudie, across the Bay of Fundy on the southern shores of Cumberland Basin. There he worked farms on the fertile

marshlands called the Elysian Fields, and set up the first steam-powered grist mill in Nova Scotia. His large store sold a wide variety of commodities brought by his fleet of trading ships from New England and the West Indies. He also operated many quarries and controlled the Maritime trade in grindstones.

Though he was the only declared Universalist in the area, Seaman had a church built at Minudie that would not only provide for services by visiting Universalist ministers, but was also open for the free use of all denominations. Behind the pulpit hung a portrait of the Universalist pioneer, Hosea Ballou, and during the century and a quarter of its existence the church has in fact been used by a number of different denominations. When the Catholics demurred, Seaman built them another church on a nearby site. The Universalist building has changed little, outside or in, since it was built. The oldest surviving Universalist church in the country, it is still in regular use by the United Church of Canada.

But it was in and around Halifax that the mainstream of Universalist activities in Nova Scotia flowed. One distinctive feature here was the extent to which the development was the outcome of a purely local effort. There is no record of itinerant preaching in the city, and the only outside influence at the beginning was the memory of a visit to Boston made as far back as 1810 by a local resident, Mrs Eban Allen. She had heard Hosea Ballou preach and came home determined to do all she could to spread the new gospel. Slowly over the years she influenced a few people in this direction, but it was not until 1837 that two of her converts planned and announced a public meeting 'to inquire into the truth of Universalism'. As no one had been designated to give a clear lead at this meeting it broke up in some disorder, but it did have the effect of putting the convinced Universalists into touch with each other, and they decided to continue meeting. It was at this juncture that the leadership they needed unexpectedly emerged. An offer to serve as their preacher came from Dr W. F. Teulon, a well-known physician and lecturer who had also preached for the Methodists. He told them that before coming over from England he had at one point attended the Universalist church in London, and had through subsequent study confirmed to his own satisfaction the teachings he had heard there.

Public services began at once. Teulon preached on Sunday mornings and evenings in Halifax, and in Dartmouth in the afternoons. He

received the weekly collections as the reward for his labors. Though the congregation was small, it included a number of the leading businessmen of the area, prominent among whom was Conrad West, a merchant growing wealthy in the West Indies trade. The usual fulminations from other pulpits greeted the appearance of the Universalists upon the public scene; but nothing spectacular occurred until 1841, when a young and popular minister from England, Robinson Breare, shocked his Methodist congregation by announcing from the pulpit that he had become a Universalist. He had been reading Universalist literature with a view to refuting it, but had instead been convinced by it. The indignant Methodists at once dismissed him without bothering to pay the arrears they owed on his salary; the Universalists welcomed him and the followers he brought from his former congregation with open arms. This accession of strength could not have come at a better time, for the congregation had been making little headway and Teulon was asking to be freed from his duties in order to be able to devote more time to his own professional work. So Breare immediately received and accepted an invitation to become their first full-time minister.

The time now seemed opportune to think in terms of building a church, and a year after his appointment Breare took off for New England on a fund-raising trip. He was less successful than his Unitarian contemporaries, for the amount he raised did little more than pay his expenses; but the undaunted congregation decided to proceed on its own resources (mostly Conrad West's). Land was purchased early in 1843, and a year later the church was dedicated, with Breare preaching morning and evening and Teulon in the afternoon. The building was crowded to the doors for these services, as it was again a few months later when Breare responded to a Methodist minister who had publicly denounced Universalism as 'a damnable lie' and himself as 'a creature who preached the Devil's doctrine'. But in spite of the progress, all was not well within the congregation. Breare had been forced to inform them that unlike Teulon he could not subsist on freewill offerings and needed a regular salary, and after this was arranged the Universalists showed themselves no more prompt than the Methodists in paying it regularly. The resulting recriminations led to Breare's resignation in 1845, and the congregation wrote to Boston seeking an unmarried young man as the kind of successor they could afford. They got one, and he married Conrad West's daughter; but

still the question of his being regularly paid plagued his ministry, as it did that of his successors. It would appear that the congregation continually rested on its oars waiting for West to make up the deficits, which he usually did in the end. He held a mortgage for half the cost of the church building, which he released at the time of his death in 1858.

The fact that the Halifax congregation had not been brought into existence by a minister gave it a greater sense of independence in its dealings with its ministers than was true of other Universalist congregations. Its leaders were forceful characters who resented any suggestion of clerical domination and this, coupled with the recurrent financial problem, made for a long succession of short-term ministries. But the pulpit was normally filled, and sometimes filled with distinction. Nathanael Gunnison, who stayed from 1857 to 1865, was probably the most successful of the church's ministers. He had taken the precaution of informing the congregation in advance of his appointment that he expected to receive his salary regularly as a matter of principle, and he proceeded to demonstrate that he was earning it by a vigorous program of promotion and public controversies which built up the size and strength of the congregation. Another memorable ministry was that of Costello Weston, during which the original building was replaced by an imposing new edifice. By the time this was dedicated in 1874 Conrad West had been dead for some years, but his two sons, Nathaniel and William, together contributed $48 000 toward the total cost of $50 000.

The closing quarter of the nineteenth century found Universalism in Canada in a precarious condition. In spite of all the optimistic but unco-ordinated efforts of the earlier years, the movement had not grown. On the contrary, the census of 1891 showed barely more than half the numbers of forty years earlier.[29] Even in Nova Scotia the movement was declining. Lavelle moved over to the Unitarians in 1864 for a six-year ministry in Toronto, a period in his career that was never mentioned after he returned to Smithville later, combining it with the charge of Port Dover. Leavitt's health was giving way; in 1874 he was obliged to resign his key position in the Canada West Association, which promptly collapsed. Three years later it was revived as the Ontario Universalist Convention, and a new effort began to revive the flagging fortunes of the movement.

A number of factors combined to make the prospects unpromising.

The continued restriction of the movement to rural areas with a scattered population made it impossible to establish a self-sufficient base from which to operate. The influx of American Universalists that had fed the earlier growth had dried up by mid-century, and the only American Universalists now coming were the ministers, of whom the great majority came from south of the border. This in itself gave rise to public suspicion of Universalism as an alien movement – a situation that was not helped by some of the Americans. In a leading article in 1850 *The Trumpet* had proclaimed: 'There is a very general desire, we learn, among the people of all the British provinces on our Northern and Northeastern border, to have their country annexed to the United States. Our arms are open – our hearts are warm; and if separation from the parent Government and annexation to our own can be brought about by peaceable means, we say, with all our soul, let it be done. Welcome, neighbors; welcome to all that is good among us; welcome to all the elements of our success; welcome to a participation in all the causes which have given us our National greatness and prosperity.[30] It was just as well for the Canadian Universalists that this effusion had not appeared twelve years earlier.

Even more significant for the decline of the movement was the erosion of the old theological differences. In the days when a harsh and uncompromising Calvinism preached hellfire and damnation, the more humane Universalist doctrine brought comfort to many tortured souls; as other denominations gradually became more liberal, however, there seemed to be a diminishing need for a separate organization based upon this distinction alone. And stressing the other liberal elements of the faith made Universalism sound indistinguishable from Unitarianism – which was in fact the conclusion to which may people were beginning to come. Also among the causes of decline must be listed the magnetic attraction the movement always had for strange and eccentric persons, who were primarily interested in finding a platform from which to promote their pet panacea – political, economic or religious. Even where individualism did not extend as far as eccentricity, it meant a lack of commitment to the church as an institution. Those who claimed to belong often did not attend or, if they attended, they provided little or no financial support.

The new Ontario Convention had only three member societies when it began: Bloomfield, Smithville and Port Dover. All the other societies of the early period had by now disappeared. But within its first four

years the Convention gained three new churches, all as usual in remote rural locations. The first, built in 1878, was at Blenheim, a few miles southeast of Chatham. The second was farther west, beyond Leamington at a hamlet named Olinda, where the building was erected in 1881. The same year saw the building of the church at Nixon, fifteen miles from Port Dover. This last congregation was the most vulnerable of the three, being based solely upon the initiative and enthusiasm of one man, Robert Wood. It was described as 'a beautiful structure in the Queen Anne style, with a tower rising from one corner in which hangs a bell.'[31] The congregation remained in being until the death of its patron in 1894, when it became dormant; the building was sold a few years later. The other two new congregations were to survive the original three.

In Quebec too the latter part of the century saw new churches established and built as the older established societies were fading away. In 1888 a congregation was founded at Moes River, and its church was built five years later. The church at North Hatley was founded in 1886 and erected its building in 1895. But in spite of these local signs of progress it is unlikely that the Universalist movement in Canada would have survived very far into the twentieth century apart from the posthumous contribution to its welfare of two men. G. H. Lloyd of Union, Ontario left $13 000 to the Ontario Convention when he died in 1893. And William West of Halifax capped the large contributions his family had made to the local church by leaving $40 000, the annual interest of which was to be devoted to the extension of Universalism in Canada. The trustees appointed under the terms of this bequest met for the first time in 1888.

From this time onward very few Universalist activities took place in Canada without the backing of one or both of these funds. The Lloyd bequest was immediately applied to the sending of ministers to Bloomfield and Port Dover in a last effort to prop up these failing causes. But the Bloomfield story came to a close when the church burned down in 1899, and Smithville as well as Port Dover suspended activities in the opening years of the new century. The joint ministry at Blenheim and Olinda became the sole beneficiary of the fund until Blenheim too succumbed in 1938 and the Ontario Convention became synonymous with the Olinda congregation.

The West Fund supported a wider range of activities. The Halifax church benefited most. Few of its requests for help were turned down,

and by the 1930s the fund was paying the entire salary of its minister, which amounted to three quarters of the total church budget. One of the earliest West Fund projects in Halifax was the publication of the *Liberal Christian*, a well-produced monthly that appeared from 1890 to 1898, when it was suspended because its effectiveness in promoting Universalism was judged to be minimal. A more modest successor, the *Universalist Monitor*, appeared for a short while; its contents included summaries of some of the sermons delivered from the Halifax pulpit. In 1902, for example, F. F. Eddy expounded his views on atonement. Attacking the traditional doctrine of vicarious sacrifice as teaching that 'there is a way of cheating the Almighty,' he presented in its place the theme of at-one-ment. Jesus was at one with God, with truth, with humanity. We too can achieve the same, and thereby become saviors; Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, and Tolstoy were given as examples.[32]

William West's stipulation that his bequest should be used for promotional work 'in Canada' was taken seriously. Every one of the surviving Universalist congregations received help, some on a continuing basis for a period of time. Beyond supporting existing causes, the fund made it possible to implement the long-discussed extension projects. Its first appropriation in 1888 was for the support of Costello Weston, a former Halifax minister, in an effort to build a new Universalist congregation in Saint John out of the remnants of the Unitarian society there. After two years of labor, he had to confess failure and resigned. The next attempt was made by another former Halifax minister, W. A. Pratt, in London, Ontario. It had long been maintained that the embers of the earlier cause in that city were still warm, and could be fanned into flame by an energetic campaign. But when this was put to the test in 1890 the expected response failed to materialize. Subsequent missionary ventures were confined to the Maritimes. Several ministers toured Nova Scotia in the early years of the century, and a short-lived movement was established in Yarmouth. But the most spectacular missionary journeys were the ones undertaken by Charles Huntington Pennoyer.

Pennoyer, the most colorful personality in Canadian Universalism's declining years, was a native of the Eastern Townships and a direct descendant of Christopher Huntington, the earliest Universalist preacher there. He had an extravagant manner and boundless energy, which was totally dedicated to his chosen cause. Despite the accumulating evidence to the contrary, he could not believe that Universalism

was not on the eve of great expansion; all that was needed was that people should serve it with the same enthusiasm as he did himself. His ministries were mostly in the United States, apart from a period at Halifax from 1907 to 1914, but from 1931 to 1946 he was Superintendent of the Vermont and Quebec Universalist Convention, in which capacity he did his best to serve the cause in the Eastern Townships. The historian of the convention says of him that 'his reports show a certain pomposity – he never used one word if ten would do the job.'[33] Yet his eccentricities were regarded with some indulgence by those who recognized how deeply he loved the cause. In 1909 he founded the Canadian Conference of Universalists, Unitarians and Kindred Religious Liberals, a typically pretentious title for an occasional gathering of the Universalists from the Eastern Townships and the Maritimes. In his dreams, though, it had the potential for becoming a great coast-to-coast organization embracing Unitarians as well as sympathizers from the major religious bodies.

While still in Halifax, Pennoyer responded with alacrity to an appeal from a Universalist family in Harvey, New Brunswick. He helped them establish a congregation that in due course erected a modest meeting house. He also revived the long-extinct cause on the St Croix by organizing a new society at Moore's Mills, a few miles from St Stephen. In 1917 he spent his summer in Cape Breton, with hopes of organizing a society in Glace Bay. But his major effort came in 1930 when he persuaded the West Fund and the Universalist General Convention in the United States to sponsor a grand missionary tour through the Maritimes. He preached in the open air or in rented halls in more than a dozen towns, claiming audiences of five hundred in Sydney and three hundred in Charlottetown, with more modest turnouts elsewhere. Vast quantities of Universalist and Unitarian literature were distributed, in a re-enactment of the scenes of a century earlier when the itinerant evangelists drew crowds of entertainment-starved settlers. This was the final moment of glory; a few years later all traces of his efforts had disappeared except the little church at Harvey, which eventually stood derelict as a monument to a lost cause.

The whole movement was now on a downhill course. The Moes River congregation disbanded and sold its meeting house in 1915, after the Ayer glove factory moved to Lennoxville. A year earlier the Waterloo church had become a Masonic Hall. Huntingville struggled on under joint pastorates with North Hatley until 1951, when services

were discontinued. The building, however, remained, and has recently been restored by local effort as an historic landmark. In spite of the West Fund, Halifax too was going down. By World War II the average Sunday attendance had fallen to twenty, in a church that could easily accommodate three hundred and fifty. The minister reported in 1941 that the congregation had given up hope and would have voted to close down altogether if they had been able to muster a quorum to hold a duly constituted meeting.[34] Eventually the building was sold and the congregation shrank to half a dozen elderly people meeting in a house.

The available options had by mid-century reduced themselves rather clearly to three, each of which had already been taken in one or more places at a local level. Either the Universalists would quietly fade out of existence altogether, or merge with the United Church of Canada, or merge with the Unitarians. North Hatley, the only surviving congregation in the Eastern Townships, went through an agonizing period in the mid-fifties as it decided whether or not to join the United Church. A substantial section of the congregation was prepared to agree to this one-sided merger, which would in effect have meant ceding the building to the United Church. In the end the decision was that 'we do not want this one candle of liberalism to be hidden under a bushel of orthodoxy,'[35] but the church was weakened by the departure of those who did not agree, and maintained its ministry only by sharing with its nearest Universalist neighbor, across the border at Derby Line, Vermont. Among the factors keeping Universalism alive at North Hatley was the district's popularity as a vacation resort, bringing a number of American Universalists there regularly each year and making the summer months by far the most active ones in congregational life.

In other places the candle did get hidden under the bushel. A number of Union churches had been built in small communities where no one denomination could muster the resources to put up a building of its own. In some instances, Universalists had contributed heavily toward the costs of such churches, and had used them on a more or less regular basis in the same way as other participating denominations. But with the decline of Universalism, control of these Union churches tended to pass exclusively into orthodox hands. This happened, for instance, in Johnville, Quebec where the Universalists had shared a building with the Anglicans. Apart from North Hatley, which

was not a Union church at all (though it was the successor to one), the only exception to this course of development occurred at Moore's Mills, New Brunswick. Here the Union church had been so largely built with Universalist funds that the attempt to take it into the United Church shortly after that body was formed in 1925 was contested in the courts. The Universalists won the case, and costs of $1600 were assessed against the losers, which caused so much ill-feeling in the small community that the congregation was reduced to a tiny group of elderly people who were unable in any case to keep going much longer.

The possibility of a merger with the Unitarians loomed larger in Universalist thinking as time went by, though the earlier suspicions were never fully overcome. A number of ministers had campaigned for the idea, and some had anticipated its adoption by themselves moving over into Unitarianism. As early as 1865 Alexander Kent was trying to promote Unitarianism in Halifax; whether for this reason or for some other his ministry came to an early close. His namesake, George W. Kent, who served the same church from 1883 to 1888, was outspokenly Unitarian and also advocated such advanced ideas for the Halifax of those days as Darwinian evolution and the higher criticism of the Bible. Though some members left the church because of his views the congregation in general was prepared to tolerate them. Universalist ministers who entered the Unitarian denomination were not looked upon as defectors in the same way as they would have been had they joined the Presbyterians; they tended to be thought of as social climbers. W. R. G. Mellen, minister of the Unitarian church in Toronto from 1877 to 1882, was described as a 'former Universalist', but for his predecessor of a few years earlier, J. R. Lavelle, this Unitarian period was an interlude in a career in the Universalist ministry, and he seems to have been accepted back by the Universalists without comment. Such was not the case for C. K. Gibson, who left the Blenheim church in 1884 to become a Unitarian and applied the following year for readmission to Universalist fellowship. Demanding a satisfactory period of probation, the Ontario Universalists declared that 'he is still a member of the Unitarian denomination, and as such has no right to ask for the fellowship of our body.'[36] In other words, he could be one or the other, but not both.

There were few instances in the earlier period of Unitarians having joined Universalist congregations. Costello Weston complained in the

1870s that 'our church gets little sympathy and encouragement from such New England Unitarians as make their residence in the community. With one honorable exception, the cause of Liberal Christianity, as represented by our church in Halifax, has gained no support from this class. They come from Unitarian churches in Boston and elsewhere to give their influence, in behalf of High Churchism and Calvinism . . .'[37] Only one person from a Unitarian background served as minister to a Universalist church in the nineteenth century. William Knott, who had been Cordner's missionary in 1867, sought in vain for a Unitarian position after his graduation from Meadville the following year, and eventually regularized the temporary position he had accepted at Smithville into a normal ministry. His entire subsequent career was in Universalist churches, though he later stated that as a Universalist he was as much of a Unitarian as ever.[38]

With the passage of time the sense of mutual exclusiveness began to fade. In 1889 James Hodgins from the Unitarian church in Hamilton attended the Ontario Universalist Convention at Smithville and preached twice. J. T. Sunderland from Toronto did the same in 1906 at Olinda. In 1933 the Convention, again with the minister of the Hamilton Unitarians in attendance, received a report recommending that 'this Convention appoint delegates to correspond with the Unitarians in Ontario to work out a basis for closer co-operation looking to union.'[39] Though no action was taken, it was clear which way the wind was blowing. Pennoyer had long before this sought and obtained Unitarian fellowship without in any sense seeking to renounce his Universalist allegiance, and was vigorously supporting the cause of merger between the two denominations. A year or two earlier, two of the three ministers serving Universalist churches in Canada were Unitarians from Wales: T. Eric Davies (Halifax, 1925-30) and Evan T. Evans (North Hatley and Huntingville, 1927-35). When H. I. S. Borgford faced in 1936 a choice between going to a church of his own Unitarian denomination in the United States or to a Universalist church in his native Canada, he chose the latter.

By the time the long-continued merger negotiations between the two denominations in the United States came to fruition in 1961, there were only three Universalist congregations left in Canada (Olinda, North Hatley and Halifax), and they did not hesitate to follow the same course. Whereas the ratio of Unitarians to Universalists south of the border at the time of merger may have been around 5:2, in

Canada it was at least 100:1. Moreover, there were already a number of Unitarians included in the Universalist membership. In Halifax the situation had changed since the time of Weston in that most of the Unitarians moving to the city were coming from elsewhere in Canada rather than from Boston. They joined the Universalist church freely, and its numbers began slowly to increase again. Even the village churches shared in the same process; at Olinda 'most of the newcomers who seek out the church today already have some acquaintance or previous affiliation with Unitarianism.'[40]

During its century and a half of separate existence, Canadian Universalism made a positive contribution to the lives of thousands of individuals, and had some effect in softening the harsher aspects of orthodox theology. No ministers of the Anglican church would be ousted for Universalist ideas today, as LeFevre was in 1830. Though the Universalist ministers were usually ill-paid and often poorly supported, some of them made important contributions to the life of the wider community. Fidelia Gillette, who served the Bloomfield church in 1888 and 1889, may have been the first ordained woman minister in Canada. The American Universalists were pioneers in the ordination of women; others serving in Canada besides Mrs Gillette were Mary Hadley (Huntingville, 1913-15), Martha Jones (jointly with her husband at Olinda, 1901-04 and 1916-21), Albertie S. Phillips (Huntingville, 1916-18), and Rosalie West (Halifax, 1951-54). Mrs West was also one of comparatively few ministers to be a Canadian; American ministers predominated heavily. One minister was a native Canadian in the fullest sense: in 1871 the Ontario Association ordained George Moses of the Delaware Line Indian Reserve, near Hagersville, who had gathered a little congregation on the reserve, which he continued to serve for a number of years in a voluntary capacity. What was written of him at the time of his death in 1894 may well serve as the epitaph for his colleagues as well, and for the movement that they served with courage and dedication: 'Though the little church he formed . . . gradually succumbed to the difficulties of the situation . . . doubtless some souls were relieved and brought to higher levels of Christian faith by his labors.'[41]

5

The New Theology

The last quarter of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth saw the emergence of a powerful new trend within organized Christianity that brought some of its adherents much closer to a Unitarian point of view than had been the case at any time for a century or more. The manifestations of this new spirit were variously labelled Liberal Christianity, Free Religion, the Broad Church, Modernism, the New Theology. It affected all the major Protestant denominations, though not to an equal extent, and even for a while made some headway in the Roman Catholic church, till it was forthrightly condemned in a papal encyclical of 1907.

Though Christian liberalism was to some extent simply one aspect of the liberal spirit which was making its influence felt in all areas of life at that period, it was more specifically a response to the new discoveries that had been announced in two important fields of study. The progress of scientific thinking in the nineteenth century had undermined the cosmology which formed part of the traditional dogmatic scheme, moving far beyond the earlier jolts that cosmology had received at the hands of Copernicus and Galileo. Geological studies were showing that the antiquity of the earth extended far back beyond what was implied in the Biblical accounts accepted by Christians, but an even more significant change in thinking was called for by the growing acceptance in intellectually respectable circles of the Darwinian theory of evolution.

The second major influence was that of what came to be called the Higher Criticism of the Bible. For years a succession of scholars,

mostly German, had been piling up a mass of evidence to show that the Bible, so far from being an infallible document dictated in every detail by God, was in fact the product of a great many fallible human beings all of whom showed the influences of their own time and place. In particular, it was demonstrated that these human beings borrowed considerably from the existing religious and philosophical ideas of their day.

Three directions could be taken by those raised in the old traditions who were now confronted by these challenges. They could declare war, denouncing the new ideas as a soul-destroying device of the devil and proclaiming anew the traditional dogmas of the church. This was the initial reaction of most Christian spokesmen. The further removed they were from the sources of the new thinking, the stronger this response was likely to be. Thus in Canada the number of Christians open to an acceptance of evolution and the higher criticism was for many years smaller than that in England or in the United States.

The second, and opposite, reaction was to accept both the new ideas and the conservatives' declaration that they were totally incompatible with continued religious belief. The result was what was termed 'loss of faith', a condition poignantly expressed by the expatriate Canadian scientist G. J. Romanes. The tradition of the Deists and Freethinkers was now powerfully reinforced with the growth of the new attitude of mind for which T. H. Huxley coined the term 'agnosticism'. Only a small minority at first took this road, though it included many persons of first-rate intellectual ability.

The third reaction was that of the liberal proclaimers of the 'New Theology'. What they were looking for was an acceptable synthesis that would enable them to combine the results of scientific inquiry and biblical criticism with what was essential in their religious tradition. The old cosmology, which had been overthrown by recent researches, they did not regard as essential. This they were prepared to discard; the spiritual and ethical teachings they saw as comparatively unaffected. The whole question of just how to reinterpret Christianity along these lines became a major preoccupation during the latter part of the century.

Unitarians, naturally, were among the first to accept the new ways of thinking. In comparison with the orthodox, they had few changes to make in order to do so. Sir Charles Lyell, the leading English pioneer in geology, and Charles Darwin were both associated with the Unitarian movement, while Unitarian scholars were active in popularizing the results of German biblical criticism in the English-speaking world. Some Unitarian leaders recognized the opportunity that had now come to set up a broadly based liberal movement which would embrace members of various churches; the attempts made to establish such movements, however, met with a negligible degree of success. The opprobrium of being associated with such notorious heretics as the Unitarians was a further embarrassment that most of the embattled liberals in other denominations were unprepared to add to their existing problems. As matters stood, many of them were in danger of being put on trial for heresy. Some heresy trials took place in Canada as elsewhere, and the outcome or the threat of such trials was sufficient to move a few ministers over into Unitarianism.

The Unitarians of Montreal noted the signs of the new spirit. When the first issue of J. B. Green's *Rational Christian* appeared in 1876 it contained an offer of a free copy of Channing's works to any settled minister or theological student in Canada. More than a hundred applications arrived within nine months. The paper itself achieved a circulation of 2500 and was read from coast to coast. At the same time a newly arrived Congregational minister from England caused a furore in Montreal by preaching the New Theology, and within a year another man, described by Cordner as reputedly the best-educated and most widely read Methodist minister in the country, was arraigned before the authorities of his church for the same offence.[1] Even in Canada the liberal religious spirit was spreading.

Into this scene Montreal's new Unitarian minister fitted perfectly. William Sullivan Barnes, who arrived in September 1879 for a trial period of six months and was to stay for thirty years, had been a Baptist minister in Massachusetts until the evolution of his thinking coupled with his insistence upon declaring his beliefs openly and honestly forced him to move over into Unitarianism. Both biological evolution and the higher criticism of the Bible had become part of his general background of thought, to be quietly accepted rather than proclaimed as a challenge. For ten years he served as minister of the Unitarian church in Woburn, Massachusetts, before coming to Montreal at the age of thirty-eight.

Like Cordner, he was an outstanding preacher. He resembled him also in being by nature a somewhat shy and diffident person, but unlike his predecessor he did not compensate for this by aggressive-

ness in public. Like Cordner too, he was plagued throughout his life by chronic ill-health. But there the points of similarity ended. A quarter of a century earlier, Cordner had written, 'Theology must pass through the stage *polemic*, before it can arrive at the state *irenic*.'[2] If he himself had represented the earlier stage, Barnes certainly represented the later one. At the close of his fifth year as minister, the congregation in paying tribute to 'our beloved Pastor' (a title he had already inherited after so short a time) spoke of his 'rational, eloquent and charitable' manner of preaching and added 'whilst speaking the truth as he sees it boldly and clearly, not a word has ever escaped his lips that would ... hurt the feelings of any who might differ from us in belief.'[3] Cordner could never have had that said of him.

In terms of the disjunction between the rational and the romantic, Cordner leaned to the rational, Barnes to the romantic. Barnes was thoroughly in touch with all the new ideas of his age, but for him the essentials of religion lay not in intellectual systems but in a practical way of life. This way of life expressed itself more adequately through the arts than through logical argument. And living was itself an art, in which one could draw for guidance upon the experience of those in the past who had shown the greatest degree of skill in this art of living. Paramount among these for Barnes was Christ, and it was in that sense that he was a Christian. Christ, to use an expression that has gained currency since his day but expresses his attitude exactly, was his guru, showing the way to the higher ranges of religious living in unity with God. His own personal life illustrated this. In a remarkable tribute to one who was neither leaving them nor on the verge of retirement, the congregation stated in its annual report for 1886: 'we recognize more and more in the uprightness and unselfishness of his life the illustration and interpretation of that pattern life he so eloquently sets before us in his words.'[4] The private records of the period confirm that this was no insincere formality.

Barnes was fortunate in that the need for recognition and acceptance that was so deeply rooted in his sensitive nature was in so large a measure actually met. He was generally recognized as the most outstanding pulpit orator in the Montreal of his day, and drew large crowds of people who had no wish to identify themselves with Unitarianism. Unlike Cordner, who had been in the habit of writing out his sermons with great precision, he spurned the use of a manuscript,

relying instead upon his fluent command of language. He had the pulpit taken out of the church (it was presented to a Catholic church) and substituted a reading desk and platform, which gave him greater freedom of movement while speaking. In his hands the liturgy which had originally caused so much trouble, but was by now firmly established in the affections of the congregation, became an art form that brought the services to life and touched the participants to the deepest levels of their being.

Astonishingly, in view of the previous history of inter-church relationships, Barnes was within two years received into membership of the city's Ministerial Association. 'Nothing,' he wrote, 'could exceed the goodwill of these gentlemen as I have experienced it, not only in the meetings of the Ministerial Association (in which I am received in full equality – or I would not be in it at all) but elsewhere. From one point of view this may not be too well for us. The liberality which I find in many pulpits around me (and it is not surpassed in Massachusetts) makes it more difficult for us to build up our particular church. Nothing like opposition for that.'[5]

This cordial reception from other clergy was not to last, for the Ministerial Association later amended its constitution in such a way as to exclude him, but his analysis of the problems created for building up a Unitarian congregation was accurate. The fact of the matter was that however inspiring he may have been as a person, Barnes was not the man to promote Unitarianism. At the conclusion of his thirty-year ministry the effective strength of the congregation was little more than one third of what it had been before he began.[6]

It has to be added that the conditions under which he embarked upon his ministry were unhelpful, to say the least. Cordner's failing health and his inability to see eye to eye with Green had left the congregation in a weakened state, and the city and country were in a brief intermission in the worst and longest economic depression of the century. Actual or imminent bankruptcy faced many members of the congregation, and people were leaving the city. The church revenues were in a parlous condition, with persistent deficits. Though attendance at services soared with the coming of the new minister, this was not paralleled by a growth in membership. People felt free to attend without severing existing ties to other congregations, and Barnes was not enough of an institutionalist to let this concern him unduly. The

older generation of Unitarians who had played such a prominent role in public life was dying out, and comparatively few people of like standing were coming in to fill their places.

For the first three years of Barnes's ministry Cordner was still resident in Montreal; in fact, his signature headed the list of names on the formal invitation to Barnes to become permanent minister in January 1880. The two men participated jointly in the funeral service for Luther Holton later that year, and Cordner occasionally returned to the pulpit. His final appearance showed him in characteristic form. The brutal Phoenix Park murders in Dublin by extremists in the cause of Irish independence had caused a wide reaction in Canada, where popular sympathy with the Irish cause (coupled with shrewd political calculation on the part of Sir John A. Macdonald) had resulted only a short time before in the passage through Parliament of a resolution commending to Britain the policy of Home Rule. Cordner deplored the violence, and then declared that its roots lay in British policy in Ireland, 'which pressed with iron hand on the poor and hard-working peasant population and gave every advantage to the wealthy landowner... a policy which drained tens of hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling from an impoverished working tenantry, to be spent in luxury and worse than luxury by the landlords in London, Paris and elsewhere in European capitals.' Warming to his theme, he thundered, 'Against the cry of sacredness of property we urge the sacredness of humanity.'[7]

Montreal Unitarians were not to hear very much of this kind of preaching for some years to come. Cordner retired permanently to Boston a few months later, and remained there till his death in 1894. Barnes's sermons dealt with the inner life and with personal discipleship to Christ. It was not that he was unconcerned with public life, but he approached it in a different way. When the great smallpox epidemic ravaged the city in 1885, for instance, he was treasurer of the special emergency committee to deal with the situation.

Congregational life remained on an uneventful plateau. The apparent growth of liberalism in other religious circles, which had so excited Barnes in his early years in the city, proved to be no more than a flash in the pan, and by 1888 he was confiding to English visitors that liberal Christianity had to make a very hard struggle for existence in so bigoted a place as Montreal.[8] The congregation's attention came to be focused more and more on its own internal concerns. Numbers

were decreasing, and only the presence of non-members at the services prevented attendance from being depressingly small. The decline was blamed on the monumental building erected so enthusiastically thirty-five years earlier. Despite its imposing appearance, it was sadly lacking in all amenities beyond those required for church services. The Sunday school had to meet in a low, dark, damp basement, and there were no comfortable rooms for social gatherings. Moreover, the location was becoming increasingly inconvenient for many members of the congregation.

At a special meeting of the congregation in 1894 Barnes drew these facts to their attention, and there was a unanimous vote to empower the trustees to sell the premises and take steps to move to a more suitable site. A 'property for sale' sign went up on the church tower, only to be removed a short while later because of its adverse effect upon the church's public image.

As a matter of fact, it took an unexpectedly long time to implement the decisions. Not until eleven years later was a new site on Sherbrooke Street purchased, and in November of the same year the old church was sold. The cornerstone of the new building was laid on October 20, 1906, and on the first Sunday in 1908 it was formally dedicated with Samuel A. Eliot, president of the AUA, as the preacher for the occasion. In spite of the ambitious nature of the project, the building was opened free of debt. In part this was due to a generous last-minute donation by G. W. Stephens, but it was also a tribute to Barnes's skill in making the new church so largely a memorial shrine to those who had been members of the congregation since its founding. No fewer than ninety-two memorials were either incorporated into the church at the time of building or added later, including magnificent stained-glass windows. The one in the chancel facing the congregation was a memorial to J. H. R. Molson, who died in 1898. When his widow (who donated the window) died twelve years later, she bequeathed the church $20 000.

Cordner was duly commemorated in the communion table, in the lights over pulpit and reading desk, and in a special room named in his honor, originally intended as a vestry. But just as the entire Beaver Hall Hill church had in a sense been a monument to him, so the new church was a monument to Barnes. His artistic sensitivity underlay the entire concept; the English Perpendicular style reflected the impact upon him of the many visits he had made across the Atlantic, and

after his death in 1912 he was specifically commemorated in a huge stained-glass window in the east transept. The other monuments in the church included a reading desk in memory of Luther Holton and a tablet on the wall commemorating R. S. Weir, author of the English text to *O Canada.*

As in the case of his predecessor, the state of Barnes's health had for years been a cause for anxiety. Last-minute substitutes had sometimes to be found for the pulpit, or services cancelled, but Barnes himself continued to insist that he was able to cope. A group of younger members, led by Nevil Norton Evans, professor of chemistry at McGill, tried in 1902 to persuade him to accept an assistant, but after initial acquiescence he came out forthrightly against such a proposal, and at an emotion-packed congregational meeting it was denounced by his supporters as a device to get rid of him. The whole idea was dropped, only to be revived six years later when the strain of the work for the new church had taken further toll of his health. This time he followed Cordner's example in suggesting instead a colleague who might in due course become his successor. The committee appointed to search for such a person recommended Frederick Griffin, a lifelong Unitarian who had served for eight years in his first ministry at Braintree, Massachusetts. Griffin, however, refused to come unless he had full charge, and again following Cordner's example, Barnes resigned to become minister emeritus. At the same time he too was the recipient of an LL.D. from McGill.

Canada's second Unitarian church, that in Toronto, continued to wobble uncertainly forward during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. J. R. Lavelle, who had served as minister for six years at a salary scarcely higher than those paid by his little Universalist charges in rural Ontario, resigned in 1871. The congregation's resources were totally inadequate for them to call the able leader they needed to rally what liberal sentiment existed in that oppressively conservative city. In fact, it was doubtful whether they could afford any minister at all. At this point Cordner came to their rescue, bringing pressure to bear upon the AUA to designate part of his congregation's denominational contribution specifically for work in Canada. The result was a substantial subsidy toward the salary offered in Toronto. This made it possible for a call to be extended at the end of 1872 to A. R. Kennedy, a former Toronto Anglican who had

become a Unitarian in New England. Kennedy's return to Canada was not a happy one. He was deeply conscious of his isolation in a hostile environment, which was compounded by a growing disenchantment with Unitarians and Unitarianism. His old associates were constantly urging him to return to his former faith, and he was so obviously susceptible to their pressure that conjectures as to how long the process would take became part of popular gossip. In the end he surprised everyone by moving over, not to the Anglicans, but to the Presbyterians.

Fortunately, he was followed by a succession of three comparatively able ministers, who built up the congregation a little in spite of the adverse conditions of the times. There were few breaks in the prevailing economic depression that had settled like a cloud over the country, but the chief obstacle was Toronto's intense opposition to progressive forms of religion. A Presbyterian minister who ventured a little too far in a liberal direction was forced to recant publicly. Unitarians were regarded as infidels, and were totally excluded from any inter-church activities. A very noticeable proportion of the crowds streaming along Jarvis Street on their way to Sunday services made a deliberate point of crossing to the other side of the road rather than pass the doors of the Unitarian church.

W. R. G. Mellen, who came as minister in 1876, was a former Universalist and had earlier succeeded Nathanael Gunnison as American consul in the Maritimes. He was able to muster the resources to restore and improve the neglected church building, and generally strengthened the congregation's morale. This, coupled with a temporary improvement in the economic picture, made it possible to offer a substantially increased salary to his successor, Hilary Bygrave, who came in 1881. In Bygrave, Toronto at last got its long-sought English minister, but not from the BFUA, for he had been a Congregational minister in England and had become a Unitarian after emigrating to the United States. He was a poetic and sensitive man, but ready to fight back when rebuffed by the orthodox. He in turn was succeeded in 1887 by Alexander Bowser, a native of New Brunswick who had gone to Boston at the age of sixteen, become a Unitarian, and spent the following ten years in putting himself through an educational process, which not only equipped him for the ministry but turned him into (as a contemporary Toronto observer described him) 'a man of

scholarly attainments . . . and of great literary culture. . . . He was gentle in spirit, very sympathetic, and with a lively appreciation of humour, so that his society was very congenial, especially to young persons.'[9]

According to the same account, the congregation of the period was 'composed of some of our best known and most influential and upright citizens, men of irreproachable character. But it is a small congregation. The force of intellectual power necessary to an acceptance of Unitarianism is not sufficiently well distributed to make this a popular church, yet there is evidence to show that very many people in other churches in their hearts believe a different creed from that preached, and which they yet pay for.'[10] Among the leading figures in this little congregation, the aging Benjamin Workman continued to play a prominent role until his death in 1878. The secretary was G. M. Rose, printer and publisher; new strength was added by the arrival of the Bertram family of Unitarians from Edinburgh. John Bertram sat for some years in the House of Commons as a Liberal member, in which role he was later followed by his brother George. Another accession to the congregation in 1879 was Dr Emily Stowe, the first woman to be licensed to practise medicine in Canada.

With painful slowness the Toronto Unitarians were consolidating their strength. The AUA's district association (the Unitarian Conference of the Middle States and Canada) held its meetings in the city in 1888, putting Unitarianism on the map in the same way as the Autumnal Convention had done in Montreal thirty-four years earlier. In 1889 a second congregation was established as a missionary enterprise supported by the AUA in the western suburbs, meeting in a rented hall and staffed by short-term ministries. The outlook seemed more promising, and the last thing needed was the dissension and schism that came in 1892, the second year of the ministry of T. C. Jackson. When a congregation splits, the causes are usually assigned to philosophical or theological differences, but it is more frequently true that clashes of personality are primarily responsible. Certainly this was the case in Toronto. Jackson's supporters claimed that he was being hounded for 'radicalism', but he appears to have been totally lacking in tact and discretion, and consequently to have alienated many of the most influential members of the church, including those on the more radical wing.

At a series of stormy congregational meetings Jackson's resignation was sought, obtained, and then allegedly rescinded. The eventual outcome was that he and his supporters within the congregation withdrew and sought sanctuary in the new suburban church, which had for the previous few months been under the direction of his brother. This splinter group survived only one year, collapsing after Jackson left the city and the ministry. In spite of appeals to the dissentients to sink their differences and come back 'to keep open in Toronto at least one church where the standard of a rational Christianity shall be lifted up from Sunday to Sunday and from year to year,'[11] very few of them returned.

The seriously weakened congregation now faced an uncertain future. While Jackson had still been holding his services in the suburban church, the AUA had felt obliged to come to their immediate assistance by providing them with a temporary minister, W. F. Furman, but after this they were on their own. In 1893 they called Henry Woude as their minister.

Woude was one of the more colorful figures in the Canadian Unitarian story. Born in England half a century earlier, he had moved at an early age to the United States, where he had for some years been on the stage before turning to the ministry. He had made himself an authority on literature, and though his religious views were not widely welcomed in Toronto he won immediate recognition as a lecturer on literary subjects. A series on Shakespeare sponsored by the school board drew attendances in excess of eight hundred.

The congregation, recovering from its recent trauma, was enthusiastic about its new minister. 'We can but imperfectly express our sense of the privilege we have enjoyed as hearers of his eloquent and powerful discourses, at once as satisfying to the questionings of the free mind and so inspiring to the devout heart.'[12] But resolutions alone could not support him, and his salary was paid only by an increase of $2000 in the mortgage on the church building. When this relief ran out, there was no alternative to a substantial reduction in salary, and in June 1896 Woude resigned. He had made a valiant effort to rally the forces of the congregation, but the circumstances of the time were insuperably against him.

Each new minister on arrival in Canada had been impressed by the need for missionary work. 'From all parts of Ontario the cry comes for light,' wrote Bygrave in 1881: 'I hear of several towns where there is an opening for us if only we had a missionary and some means to give the thing a start.'[13] It was evident, given the urban character of the

Unitarian movement, that only the larger towns offered much real promise, and there were not many of these. The census of 1871 showed only five cities besides Montreal and Toronto with a population in excess of 20 000: Quebec, Halifax, Saint John, Hamilton, and Ottawa. Of these, Quebec could be disregarded as offering any realistic prospects for Unitarianism, while in Halifax the Universalists held the franchise for liberal religion. The remaining three towns became the chief targets for Unitarian extension, and churches were established in all of them before the turn of the century.

The earliest of these, surprisingly, came in Saint John. This city, despite its intensely conservative religious institutions, was not without promise for Unitarianism; an American visitor recorded in 1874: 'I was surprized on arrival to find it a place of so much importance. Population from 30 to 40 thousand. I know of no city of so much business activity in proportion to its numbers.... I find here persons of wealth, intelligence and refinement, and some of them are earnest Unitarians.'[14] These Unitarians were Americans engaged in the lumber business, possessed of considerable means but individualistic to the point of eccentricity, and not disposed to open their purses without considerable persuasion. Their expectations, however, ran far beyond the resources they were prepared to provide. They managed to persuade the AUA that Saint John was a favorable field for missionary work, and during the summer of 1874 a succession of ministers was sent to hold services and public meetings. Among them was J. B. Green, at that time minister in Chelsea, Massachusetts. He entered vigorously into controversies with the orthodox in the columns of the local press, and the results were striking enough for hopes to be raised that a minister might be settled in Saint John that year. But no applicant for such a position was in view, and with the autumn the supply of visiting ministers dried up.

By the following year the economic situation had worsened, with the result that the local people were far less optimistic. The business of one of the leading Unitarians, E. L. Jewett, failed, casting a pall over all planning. But a determined summer missionary arrived in the person of Eli Fay, minister at Taunton, Massachusetts. He entered with zest into the work, more than holding his own in newspaper controversies and drawing crowds of the curious to his services. This, he wrote to Boston, was a great way to spend the summer: 'I think our ministers who are well and strong, instead of lounging through their vacations at fashionable watering places or mountain homes, *ought* most gladly and gratuitously to seek out and supply just such places as this.'[15]

Fay was almost too successful. By late September he had conjured The First Unitarian Society of Saint John into being, with an initial membership of just over thirty. But when the gratified members of the new society rewarded him with a pressing invitation to become their settled minister, he was at the same time flattered and dismayed. They offered him the equivalent of $2000 a year (more than twice the amount the Toronto congregation was paying at that time), but this was less than half his salary in Taunton. He wavered, not seeing his way clear to make such a sacrifice and not wanting to vitiate his earlier efforts by a categorical refusal, with the result that hopes of his being eventually persuaded persisted for a full year, till he finally ended them by moving to a church in England. His undoubted talents, priced beyond any realistic appraisal of what the Unitarians of Saint John were prepared to pay, set an artificially high standard by which the new congregation judged its prospective candidates. As one of them wryly commented, 'the requirements of Societies and the qualifications of ministers are apt to be widely different.'[16]

Even more serious was the AUA's acquiescence in Saint John's practice of hearing a succession of candidates before deciding whom to invite. The predictable result was dissension in the congregation, as each man found his own partisans. But in the end compromise became necessary, the ideal person for the job obviously not being available. By November they were prepared to accept S. B. Rawson, a retired professor from a Universalist theological school. They liked him well enough as a person, and the content of his sermons was of high quality, but his delivery was so tedious that by the summer of 1877 they were willing to start the stream of candidates again. Finally, at the end of the year, they again compromised and settled for John Wills, an Englishman who had emigrated to the United States after his cotton business had been ruined by the Civil War, and had been ordained to the Unitarian ministry only four years previously at the age of sixty-five.

Wills set to work to build up a viable congregation. But the odds were stacked against him. There was the city's inhospitable religious climate. There was the continuing business depression. And then, six months after his appointment, came the disastrous fire that destroyed

the greater part of the city. Seventeen Unitarian families were among those burned out of their homes.

The AUA came to the rescue with a modest grant toward the congregation's budget. Wills hoped for a while that they could turn adversity to good account by purchasing a site in the central area cleared by the fire and building a church above business premises, which would make it self-sustaining. But this idea came to nothing. As though the congregation did not have trouble enough, internal discord erupted. They had drawn, as Unitarian congregations have frequently done, the malcontents of the community, united only in their rejection of orthodox creeds. There were Spiritualists and Swedenborgians besides the traditional Unitarian Christians, and problems soon arose. The minister, as usual, became the target for the feelings that were generated. He was accused by some of being too conservative, by others of being too radical. He upset some prominent members by baptizing three children at the request of their parents. The split came in October 1878 when the Spiritualists withdrew amid public recriminations. The following month Wills resigned.

His successor was even less successful. In less than eighteen months Roland Wood alienated a fair proportion of the remaining members and left a divided congregation when he resigned in the spring of 1880. In fairness to him it should be added that although he contributed to the unhappy situation, an unconscious death wish seems to have been at work within the congregation, stultifying the efforts of Francis Thacher, who came immediately to attempt a salvage operation. After two years he gave up, and the society gradually slid into dissolution. Many of the members swallowed their pride and returned to the churches of their former allegiance.

It was to this scene that Costello Weston came in 1888 as a Universalist missionary backed by the West Fund in Halifax. He was no stranger to Saint John, having earlier exchanged pulpits with both Rawson and Wills, and he had high hopes of turning a Unitarian failure into a Universalist success. But after eighteen months he too gave up, overcome not only by the poor response but also by the death of his wife.

His resignation came in February 1890. Only a few months later the picture in Saint John was radically changed by an unpredictable happening. One of the city's Presbyterian ministers, Dr Archibald MacDougall, had become infected with the New Theology, and the

resulting controversy had forced him out of his pulpit, taking with him a substantial number of his congregation. At first they functioned as an independent Presbyterian congregation, and adopted the name of the Montreal Unitarians, The Church of the Messiah. Then they took the course that MacDougall felt honesty demanded, first affiliating with the Unitarians and then publicly announcing themselves as such. To his dismay, each of these moves resulted in a falling away of some of his following. 'I had no idea,' he wrote, 'that people would take so much exception to the *name*.... I had hoped that the name would be a source of strength rather than weakness, as I had no idea of the prejudice which existed in the minds of the people.'[17] To add to his problems, MacDougall failed to rally the support he had expected from the 'old Unitarians' because he held his services in a downtown location rather than in the suburban area in which most of them lived.

There was only one way, MacDougall concluded, to establish a Unitarian congregation on a firm footing. It must have a building of its own to give it status and stability, and to convince the doubters that Unitarianism was there to stay. One of these doubters was quoted as saying, 'I left my church (Congregational) three times in this city and joined the Unitarian movement; it proved a failure, and after waiting for years I returned to my church, and will not leave again until a church building is assured.'[18] The resources, added MacDougall, were there if they could be tapped. The wealthiest man in the city was a Unitarian, and there were others with sizeable incomes.

MacDougall now submitted an unorthodox proposal to the AUA. If they would pay his salary, making him their missionary, he would immediately get a church built, being free to canvass for funds without any suggestion that he was raising his own salary. They could discontinue the arrangement at any time if he did not fulfil his promise to get the church built within two years. Moreover, he would try to get the congregation to give substantial support to the AUA, which could be applied toward what they were paying him. After some hesitation, the AUA agreed, and the project moved forward.

Times were still bad, and fund raising was not easy. But MacDougall was a determined man. He had already decided to leave the city and seek a warmer climate when his assignment was completed, but in the meantime he devoted all his energies to getting the church built. He made a personal visit to Halifax in support of his application for a grant from the West Fund, and after some debate as to the

propriety of using Universalist money to build a Unitarian church he was given $500. He got a loan from the AUA's Building Loan Fund, and the rest was raised locally. By the latter part of 1894 the walls of the church were rising. In May 1895, when the building was almost complete, an arsonist attempted to destroy it, but the fire was discovered by workmen and extinguished before any substantial damage was done. June 3, 1895 was a memorable day. Four Unitarian clergymen from New England participated in the dedication ceremonies – and MacDougall preached his farewell sermon.

Saint John now had a building but no minister. Two months later, J. B. Green returned after twenty-one years. He was the first of four ministers to serve the little congregation during the following decade. But Saint John continued to provide an inhospitable soil for Unitarian growth. In 1900 the membership was reported at only thirty-five and the path was downhill. In 1906 they gave up. The congregation was dissolved and the building sold. The AUA, which over the years had invested a total of $13 215 in Saint John, received the proceeds. They amounted to less than $2000.[19]

The cause at Saint John had never loomed very large among the interests of the Unitarians in the established Canadian churches. It was quite otherwise in the case of Ottawa, where the field lay fallow for a decade following the abortive efforts of 1867-68. The national capital seemed an appropriate place to establish a congregation, particularly as it was becoming the home of a fair number of independent thinkers who might be expected to respond favorably to Unitarianism. J. B. Green, coming to Montreal within two years of his missionary work in Saint John, was eager to undertake something similar in Ottawa. First of all, however, he had to convince Cordner, who at this point in his career showed little of the same enthusiasm. As Green put it, he himself might be apt to get up too much steam, but his venerable colleague was first rate on the brakes. 'Dr C. is the best man in the world, but a perfect wet blanket on anything like missionary work.... I never found a man more desirous of being found on the side of success or more afraid of being on the side of a failure.'[20]

Cordner agreed to try again, however, as long as Green did most of the work. The next move was to muster the financial backing for the attempt, which was achieved by repeating the procedure used to raise the Toronto minister's salary in 1872. Part of the Montreal congregation's contribution to the AUA was earmarked for extension work in

Canada. Green then got in touch with the known Unitarians in Ottawa, who by now included not only the old pioneers Alexander Workman and Edward Griffin, but such new arrivals as Edward Fisher, professor of music at the Ladies' College, John Bertram, M.P., and Senator Adam Hope.

On February 25, 1877 the venture was launched with two services by Green. One hundred and forty people turned out in the morning, including many doctors, lawyers, and members of parliament. The afternoon attendance was substantially higher. Thus encouraged, Green spent the following week in building up personal contacts and preached again on March 4. Next Sunday it was Cordner's turn, and the time for finding out how many of those who turned out to hear a preacher were prepared to commit themselves to the work of building up a congregation. Seventeen people signed up. The following week Green came back again and a further sixteen names were added. Problems began to arise almost immediately, however.

What everyone had had in mind up to this point was the formation of a Unitarian congregation similar to those in Montreal and Toronto. The subscription list that was drawn up spoke of a church in which the members would enjoy the advantages and privileges of Unitarian fellowship and worship, and would engage in the study and practice of Christian truth and life free from all dogmatic bonds and ecclesiastical domination. But among those who turned out in response to the Unitarian announcements, there were not only liberal Christians, but a substantial number of people who could be described as freethinkers, rationalists or humanists. They had been alienated from traditional forms of religion and were not at all sure that they had any interest in non-traditional forms, except as a subject for study and discussion. Most of them were liberal in spirit, and in that sense natural allies of the Unitarians. But in another sense they were competitors for the same constituency to which Unitarianism might have been expected to appeal, and it was far from clear that Ottawa was yet a large enough city to be able to maintain both movements.

After several meetings at which an attempt was made to find a common platform that would be acceptable to both groups, the attempt was given up as hopeless. Eighty or ninety years later the kind of program the freethinkers had in mind – Sunday morning meetings with a lecture, discussion, and music if available – was to become precisely the pattern followed by many humanistic Unitarian fellow-

ships, but the committed Unitarians of Ottawa in 1877 wanted a church with liberal Christian services of worship. So they proceeded to organize the First Unitarian Church of Ottawa and called F. W. Holland as their minister on a trial basis. He spent the month of June in the city, but it soon became evident that the response was not sufficient for the congregation to be able to maintain itself from its own resources, and little outside assistance could be expected. Holland's engagement was therefore terminated. Perhaps he was not the best person for the job; according to Green, he 'put his foot in it,' but he himself complained that Green had misled him as to the numbers of committed Unitarians in Ottawa.[21]

Sporadic efforts continued. When it appeared that Wills was going to leave Saint John, Green tried to interest him in trying his hand in Ottawa, and he actually visited there in December 1877, drawing a good attendance to the services he conducted. But he decided that at his time of life what he wanted to do was to return to an established congregation in the United States. Green himself went back in the spring of 1878, but the situation remained unchanged. Without outside help to maintain a minister in the city, the Ottawa Unitarians gave up.

The freethinkers, now that they had been made aware of each other's existence, however inadvertently, by Green and Cordner, decided to go ahead with their own organization, and in May they established The Progressive Society of Ottawa, whose members would 'pledge themselves to one another to pursue truth in the spirit of charity, with a view to its application as far as possible to their own lives, and to its triumph in the world.'[22] It began holding regular meetings on Sunday mornings. Usually the speaker was one of the members, and the subjects for discussion covered a wide range of theological, social, political, and philosophical interests. The leading figures in the organization appear to have been W. D. Le Sueur, a senior civil servant well known in literary circles for his many contributions to Canadian and British periodicals; W. A. Ross, whose distinguished career in education and law had by now made him a judge of the Carleton county court; and Joseph Martin, a teacher and lawyer who was later to achieve prominence in the political life of Manitoba. The initial membership of fifty-three (almost exclusively male) included a number of others who had made their mark upon the life of the city and country. A reading room and library were established before the end of the year. Members of the Society later gained some

notoriety when they rose to the defence of Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the famous American freethinker and critic of Christianity, who came under furious attack from the orthodox in 1880 when he visited Ottawa in the course of his Canadian lecture tour.

The Progressive Society lasted until 1894. None of the original Ottawa Unitarians joined it, and very few of its members subsequently joined the Unitarians. One exception was George C. Holland, who with his brother Andrew was for many years the official reporter for the Senate, and wrote another English version of *O Canada*.

It was not until after the Progressive Society had disappeared from the scene that yet another (and this time successful) attempt was made to establish a Unitarian congregation in Ottawa. In the meantime, a church had come into being in Hamilton. For years there had been talk of such a possibility, but nothing was done until 1889, when Peter Bertram, who had moved to Hamilton, took the initiative by inviting Alexander Bowser to come down from Toronto to try out the local response. It was sufficiently good for a hall to be rented, and for a while Bowser came down regularly. Then D. W. Morehouse, secretary of the AUA district, came to the city, and on May 12 a congregation was formally organized. It called as its first minister J. C. Hodgins, a student for the Presbyterian ministry who had just become a Unitarian and was ordained in Hamilton. His vigorous efforts produced a marked growth in the congregation, which by 1891 felt strong enough to buy a lot and build a church, supported by financial aid from the AUA and from Montreal. The corner stone was laid by William Sexton, described as 'the patriarch of the congregation' and a former member of the provincial legislature.[23]

Six months later, in March 1892, the building was opened and dedicated as Unity Church (Unitarian) with no fewer than five Unitarian ministers participating. Hodgins was not among them, however, for he had resigned to continue his studies, and J. H. Long, a native of Hamilton who had also been a theological student – this time for the Anglican ministry – was ordained and appointed in his place. Long stayed for four and a half years but was by no means as successful as his predecessor. In the end he was asked to go and after a short stay on the west coast returned to Hamilton in his former profession of law.

By this time the congregation found itself in a financial predicament. Even the very substantial subsidy they had been receiving from

the AUA toward their minister's salary no longer seemed sufficient. The Toronto congregation, after the resignation of Woude, was in a similar situation, and the two churches decided to combine their resources for a joint ministry. This arrangement produced no more than the minimum necessary to bring a young American, Oscar B. Hawes, who had just graduated from theological school. For five months he travelled weekly to Hamilton for Sunday evening services and then, convinced that he was spreading himself too thin, insisted on confining his work to Toronto. The Hamilton congregation, after abortive attempts to find another minister, accepted the offer of Peter Bertram to serve temporarily as lay preacher.

In Toronto Hawes was more successful. He was a person of some brilliance, and shortly after his arrival founded the Browning Club, which was generally acknowledged as an enrichment to the cultural life of the city. Its meetings drew a substantial attendance from university circles. Hawes also ran a boys' club at the church, to provide educational and social activities for boys coming from an underprivileged background, and took an active role in civic affairs, associating himself with the successful campaign to have the streetcars run on Sundays.

One thing Hawes did not succeed in doing was to put the church finances on a firmer footing. The ending of the dual arrangement with Hamilton had put an unbearable strain upon them, resulting eventually in his resignation in 1900.

As the nineteenth century drew to its close, the prospects for Unitarianism in Canada seemed far from encouraging. Toronto had lost its minister and lacked the means to look realistically for another. The same was true in Hamilton. The little cause in Saint John was floundering. The Montreal church, which six years earlier had voted to rebuild, had been unable as yet to implement its decision, and was plagued with falling attendances and a sick minister. Only in Ottawa did the situation appear more hopeful. At the beginning of 1897 a new local initiative had produced a visit to the city by D. W. Morehouse, secretary of the AUA Conference of the Middle States and Canada. He was sufficiently impressed to arrange for a succession of visiting ministers to follow him, all of them, inevitably at that time, from the United States. Their preaching and the resulting press controversies brought Unitarianism once again into the public eye in the national capital. As

in Montreal sixty-five years earlier, an attempt was made to suggest that there was something vaguely unpatriotic in being a Unitarian. 'That Unitarianism is held as a religion by a large society in Yankeeland is a sad fact,' wrote a correspondent to the *Ottawa Citizen*, 'but this makes it none the more inviting, and Canadians want none of it.'[24]

The Unitarians were sensitive enough to such criticism to feel a need to respond. George Holland wrote a letter pointing out the long associations of Canadian Unitarianism with the British movement; a visiting American minister in June took care to close his services with the singing of 'God Save the Queen'. It was fortunate from all points of view that after the congregation was formally organized on February 25, 1898, it was able to call as its first settled minister a man who was not only a Canadian but a native of Ottawa. Since becoming a Unitarian, Albert Walkley had won some distinction in his New England ministries, and had written a number of widely circulated books. He was able to go to Ottawa only as a result of a substantial subsidy from the AUA, but he went to work with a will and promoted vigorous growth in the congregation. He also became active in the public life of the city. Like his colleague in Toronto, he came out strongly in favor of Sunday streetcars, and, as in Toronto, the plebiscite on the subject produced a majority in favor.

The newly established congregation turned its energies toward getting its own building. Financial assistance was secured from the AUA and the BFUA, and from individual well-wishers. Mrs J. H. R. Molson in Montreal was a major contributor. Local supporters included not only the Unitarians themselves, but a number of others who took an interest in the progress of liberal thinking. Lord Strathcona donated $150.

The result was that the closing event of the old century for Canadian Unitarianism was the dedication of The Church of Our Father (Unitarian) on October 28, 1900, with a number of leading ministers in attendance, and a congregation of more than 250. It was built of stone in a modest and pleasant style described as 'the cottage style of architecture'. Alongside the pulpit, painted on the wall, was the declaration which came as near as Unitarians could come to a creed, and which confronted newcomers to Unitarian services everywhere in Canada and in most places elsewhere at this period. It had been composed

THE NEW THEOLOGY: MINISTERS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS TRANSFERRING TO UNITARIAN MINISTRIES IN CANADA; 1879-1914

Name	Origins	Previous Affiliation	Became Unitarian	Unitarian Ministries In Canada	
W. S. Barnes	U.S.A.	Baptist	1867	Montreal	1879-1909
H. Bygrave	England/U.S.A.	Congregational	1875	Toronto	1881-86
J. C. Hodgins	Canada	Presbyterian**	1889	Hamilton	1889-92
				(Toronto	1916-43)
A. MacDougall	Canada	Presbyterian	1890	Saint John	1890-95
J. H. Long	Canada	Anglican**	1892	Hamilton	1892-96
A. Walkley	Canada/U.S.A.	Reformed Episcopal	1878	Ottawa	1898-1901
J. T. Sunderland	England/U.S.A.	Baptist	1873	Toronto	1901-06
				Ottawa	1912-13
R. J. Hutcheon	Canada	Presbyterian	1901	Ottawa	1902-05
				Toronto	1906-13
C. W. Casson	Canada/U.S.A.	Methodist	1898	Ottawa	1904-07
H. F. M. Ross	Canada	Presbyterian	1904	Winnipeg	1904-07
A. M. Walker	U.S.A.	Methodist	1904	Saint John	1904-06
V. J. Gilpin	Canada	Methodist	1904	London	1905-08
H. G. Smith	U.S.A.	Presbyterian	1907	Ottawa	1907-09
W. A. Vrooman	U.S.A./Canada	Congregational	1909	Winnipeg	1909-11
A. J. Pineo	Canada	Baptist*	1909	Vancouver	1909-11*
				Victoria	1909-11*
				Winnipeg	1912
				Edmonton	1912-13
H. E. Kellington	Canada/U.S.A.	Methodist/ Congregational/ Universalist	1909	Victoria	1910
G. W. H. Troop	Canada	Anglican	1909	Ottawa	1910-12
S. E. Lindridge	England/U.S.A.	Anglican	?	Victoria	1911-12
J. B. Morgan	Canada	Baptist	?	Edmonton	1912*
				Victoria	1912-17*
H. J. Adlard	England/Canada	Methodist	1912	Moose Jaw	1912
				(Ottawa	1918-21)
H. Westwood	England/Canada/U.S.A.	Methodist	1909	Winnipeg	1912-19
C. T. S. Bullock	U.S.A.	Union	1911	Ottawa	1914-17
G. C. Sharpe	England	Methodist	1909	Vancouver	1914-15
C. F. Potter	U.S.A.	Baptist	1913	Edmonton	1914-16

*Lay Preacher
**Theological Student

Intervals between a minister's becoming a Unitarian and entering upon a ministry in Canada usually mean supplementary theological education and/or ministries in the U.S.A. As against the twenty-four names listed above, eighteen men whose training was solely for the Unitarian ministry came to Canadian churches during the same period, but some of these had earlier transferred as laymen from other denominations.

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by James Freeman Clarke, an American minister who had died a few years earlier, and it summarized the main points of Unitarian belief as follows:

> *The Fatherhood of God;*
> *The Brotherhood of Man;*
> *The Leadership of Jesus;*
> *Salvation by Character; and*
> *The Progress of Mankind, Onward and Upward Forever.*

As late as 1936, when the Ottawa church was being redecorated, the painter made the mistake of re-lettering the last line 'upward and onward forever', and after lengthy discussion as to whether this alteration made any difference it was voted to have the original wording restored.

A fuller and more original summary of Unitarian thinking at the end of the century had been written by W. S. Barnes for J. Castell Hopkins's *Canada: an Encyclopedia*, published in 1898: 'The Unitarianism of today, both in Canada and elsewhere, stands for rational and spiritual religion. . . . Comprehending diversities of belief it is respectful of all that is sincere and good. . . . Unitarians distrust intellectual tests or conditions of fellowship, and encourage freedom of conscience, private judgment and the fellowship of good-will. At the same time, while free in its thought, Unitarianism does not make "free thought" a dogma or finality. It is spiritual in its faith, affirmative in its message,

and Christian in its devotion to Christ as Master in the spirit and symbol of the true and blessed life.... It regards inspiration as the vital presence of the "immanent God" who has never ceased to draw near to aspiring and obedient souls. It regards human nature as "not ruined but incomplete" and "eternal life" as a quality of being which is realizable now and here.... It lays stress upon the religion of daily life... it accents the ritual of conduct, and believes in "the Holy Spirit of cheerfulness, charity and peace".'

The first day of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the most spectacularly successful ministry in the annals of Canadian Unitarianism. Encouraged by what had been accomplished in Ottawa by the application of a substantial subsidy at the right time, the AUA decided to try the same policy in Toronto. It brought to the city one of the best-known Unitarian clergymen of the day, Jabez T. Sunderland. Born in England fifty-nine years earlier – 'I am an Englishman,' he proudly declared in a letter to a Toronto newspaper – Sunderland had been taken at the age of two to the United States. He had lived there since, apart from travels that had taken him to many parts of the world. He had represented BFUA for a while in India, where he had not only built up closer relationships with the liberal religious movements, including the Brahmo Samaj, but had also made a study in depth of economic, social, and political conditions. Before coming to Toronto he had had a brief ministry in England.

His early affiliation and first ministry were with the Baptists, but continuing studies in religion and science carried him rapidly into an acceptance of the New Theology and made him a Unitarian. His most outstanding ministry was at Ann Arbor, the university town in Michigan, where, for twenty years from 1878, he was one of the leading protagonists in what was called 'the western issue'. This was one of the major debates in nineteenth-century American Unitarianism, ranging those who saw their movement as essentially an expression of liberal Christianity against those who wanted to make it a creedless ethically based organization that would not insist upon an acceptance of Christianity or even of theism. Sunderland, taking the conservative side, argued that 'we have tried to make our movement so broad that its constant tendency has been to lose all cohesiveness, or significance, or inspiration, or power, or value.'[27] Yet his conservatism was very different from that of Cordner a generation earlier. His Christianity was based upon evolutionary theory and a comparative study of religions,

so he saw himself as the inheritor of an ongoing and progressive tradition, rather than as an individual who had been argued into an acceptance of an intellectual system by pure logic.

In this, Sunderland reflected the new consensus that was growing up among many American Unitarians in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. This, however, was regarded with deep suspicion by many Unitarians in Canada, particularly in Montreal, where it was seen as an erosion of the time-hallowed foundations of Unitarian faith. At least in Toronto Sunderland would have no occasion to enter into debates with those who wanted to free themselves from all associations with Christianity. In fact, it was he himself who was to be under constant attack from the orthodox as an enemy of Christian truth. He plunged straight into the fray with a sermon to mark the first Sunday of the new century, which he called 'The Better Christianity Coming'. This better Christianity, as he described it, would be a religion of growth and progress – hospitable to new knowledge, to untrammelled thought, and to the exercise of reason as the means by which God reveals his truth to man. It would discard much that formed part of the currently popular expressions of Christianity, but would abandon nothing from the past that was of continuing value to the moral and spiritual life.[28]

Sunderland came to Toronto at a time when the New Theology, around which controversy had raged for more than a quarter of a century in England and the U.S.A., had at least begun to penetrate the thick conservatism of the Canadian religious scene. Heresy trials were beginning, and a growing number of liberals were raising their heads more boldly in other denominations. Evolution was an idea that could be mentioned openly; Sunderland's lectures on this subject, later published under the title *The Spark in the Clod*, drew such crowds to the Toronto church that the chief of police warned him against the dangerous overcrowding of the building. He had already contributed to the discussion of Biblical criticism in his book *The Bible: its Origin and Growth*, as well as in other publications. He was also an outspoken representative of the third major characteristic of the New Theology: its insistence upon the responsibility of Christians to work for the remoulding of social, political, and economic life in pursuit of the ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

In five and a half years Sunderland transformed the Toronto congregation from a little group of dispirited people into an embodiment

of his own conviction that Unitarianism was the religion of the future, and that as the old orthodoxies lost their hold upon the people they would surge into the Unitarian churches. New members did in fact begin to appear at an accelerating pace, rising to a level of ninety in Sunderland's final year. For the first time the congregation was placed on a stable financial footing. Sunderland persuaded W. B. Hamilton, who, as owner of a prosperous footwear business, was the wealthiest member of the congregation, to put up $500 toward paying off the $3000 mortgage, on condition that others raised the remainder. The AUA agreed to continue its subsidy if this could be accomplished within two years. It was. On November 21, 1904, a celebration dinner was followed by a ceremony in which lighted candles were brought in by members of the various church organizations and applied to the mortgage till it was reduced to ashes. In the same year the debt-free building was renovated and improved, and little more than a year later a new organ was installed.

Some leading figures in the life of the city were to be seen at the church, either as speakers or participants in the ancillary activities or as regular members. Maurice Hutton, principal of University College and a descendant of Unitarian ministers in England and Ireland, was a Sunday-night speaker; so also on numerous occasions was Goldwin Smith, who was a personal friend of Sunderland and a substantial contributor to the mortgage fund. Edward Fisher, who had moved down from Ottawa to found the Toronto Conservatory of Music, was an active member and brought in a galaxy of musical talent that included Paul Hahn, one of the outstanding cellists of his day.

Sunderland's sermons made news. They are said to have been more widely reported than those of any other Canadian clergyman at the time. Week by week they took up many columns in *Saturday Night* as well as in the daily newspapers. If they made good reading, they were even more impressive when heard from the pulpit. 'It is delightful,' wrote one press reporter, 'to listen to Mr. Sunderland's mellow, rich-toned voice, and better still in this age of wandering barren preachers to follow his march of logic and opulent train of ideas.'[29]

The subject matter was not confined to personal religion or controversial theology. Sunderland spoke out on behalf of improved educational opportunities, temperance, women's rights, organized labor, and international peace. He denounced the excesses of the uncontrolled capitalism of his day. But the cause that stirred him most deeply was

that of the victims of Western imperialism. Civilization, he pointed out, was born in Asia, as were all the great religions. In comparison with the civilization of the West, that of the East had 'the greater simplicity, the greater naturalness, the greater poise, and the greater power to satisfy.' It had 'less absorption in material things and more in spiritual.'[30] Sunderland expressed his resentment at the indignities inflicted upon the Chinese by the superior military might of Western nations, but he felt even more strongly about the situation in India with which he was so well acquainted. He was a friend of Tagore and Gandhi, and denounced British rule as 'drawing away the wealth of India to enrich people in England.' Such utterances continued the tradition begun in Toronto by his predecessors Adam and Dall, and also echoed the scathing denunciations of British imperialism in India made by Cordner half a century earlier. The British authorities in India responded by banning his pamphlet *The Truth about India*.

In Toronto too he provoked a reaction. Alarmed by the progress of liberal religious thinking in the city, the custodians of orthodoxy brought in an American revivalist, R. A. Torrey, for a massive campaign at the beginning of 1906. His assaults upon liberals in general and Unitarians in particular drew a spirited counter-attack from the Unitarian pulpit, with crowded congregations and an influx of new members.

In 1905 a Toronto publishing house issued a book to mark the centenary of the birth of James Martineau,[31] the famous English Unitarian, written jointly by Sunderland and his wife, Eliza, who, with a Ph.D and a distinguished career in education, was at least as well known as her husband. He continued to write, but not as prolifically as he would have liked to do, and it was the opportunity for greater leisure in which to do more writing that he could not resist when in the spring of 1906 he received an invitation to the church in Hartford, Connecticut. To the dismay of the Toronto congregation, he resigned with effect from October.

No time was lost in finding a successor. Five years earlier, after the resignation of Walkley from the Ottawa church at the end of 1901, Sunderland had participated in the installation of his replacement, a young man who had just excited a great deal of local and national attention by leaving the Presbyterian ministry to become a Unitarian. R. J. Hutcheon, a native of Ontario, had for the previous six years been minister of a church at Almonte, only a few miles from Ottawa;

so, he was in effect staying on the spot to preach the beliefs that had taken him out of Christian orthodoxy. He hoped to be able to do this in a positive way, for he saw it as the mission of the Unitarian church 'to rebuild the house of man's faith, which is fast falling into ruins all about us.... Our true work is not tearing down – plenty of other forces are already doing that – our true work is to reconstruct.'

This was not exactly the way his erstwhile colleagues saw the situation. His motives were impugned in a newspaper that spoke of the Ottawa congregation as 'beckoning to him with jewelled fingers.'[32] This slur was in fact wider of the mark than the comment of a local minister who told him that the Ottawa Unitarians were a band of agnostics who had not paid their minister,[33] for without the substantial aid they were getting from the AUA the support of a minister was still beyond their means. His old associates now shunned him, and he was refused membership in the Ottawa Ministerial Association although, as he pointed out, he differed from some of those who were already members only in that he was more open about his liberal beliefs. He discovered, as MacDougall had done in Saint John, that adopting the Unitarian name turned a difference of degree into a difference of kind.

The beliefs that caused such a reaction were certainly such as to cause consternation among the orthodox. The published summaries of his sermons show him as saying of the Bible 'that large portions of it have no value whatever for the present day... that its morality in many places is low, that its religion is often crude and idolatrous, that its heroes are frequently sensual and cruel.'[34] Of Jesus he declared: 'The only interest in Jesus that is permanently valuable is the moral, religious, and social interest in him as a great prophet of the soul, as a great leader of those who would live in the spirit, and as a great preacher of social righteousness.'[35] His view of God was so radically immanentist as to be close to pantheism: 'He is... the inward principle and ground of the world's being.... He fills all things as full of Himself as the laws of their natures will permit.... As well might the fishes ask where is the sea, or the birds where is the air, as for man to ask where is God. This infinite ever-present indwelling spirit is love. ... Truth, righteousness and love constitute his very essence.'[36]

For four years he maintained his Ottawa ministry, exchanging pulpits with Sunderland on several occasions. When he submitted his resignation in April 1905 it was because he wanted to go to Harvard

to improve his grasp of problems of social ethics, which he was convinced the church should tackle. He wrote appreciatively to the congregation: 'I have experienced what it is to preach in a pulpit that is really free, and if I am not self-deceived I have found it the most fruitful experience of my life. It has been a great stimulus to me to have almost daily converse with so many earnest and thoughtful people on the different subjects in which they were individually interested. The minister of this congregation has not to do with many people, but he has to do with people who are highly individualized, and must be touched in his intercourse with them on many sides of his nature. I count myself fortunate that in my early manhood I have been brought into intimate association with so many diverse personalities, and that I should have been for a time the key-stone as it were which kept the arch together.'[37]

The congregation responded by saying that they would miss him not only for his pastoral ministrations but also as a personal friend. Though, like Sunderland, he was primarily an intellectual ('our religious life', he once said, 'has been too often arrested at the stage of feeling.... It must... pass on to the stage of thought and action')[38], he had a genuine warmth in his relationships.

It was this man who was persuaded, at the end of his year at Harvard, to follow Sunderland in Toronto, and he stayed there until 1913, when he went to Meadville as professor of the philosophy of religion – a position he held for the remainder of his career. He lacked the charismatic power of his predecessors both in Ottawa and in Toronto, but worked effectively to maintain congregational life at an active level. Among the new members to join the Toronto church during his ministry was the painter Arthur Lismer, who came to Canada in 1911 from a British Unitarian background.

Hutcheon was succeeded in Ottawa by Charles Wesley Casson, son of an Ontario Methodist minister and himself a Methodist minister for a brief period before turning to social work and eventually to the Unitarian ministry. Casson was a restless man, who never settled down for long in any undertaking, but tackled each new assignment with zest, energy, and imagination. An aggressive spokesman for Unitarianism, he was possessed of impressive oratorical gifts and an even greater skill with the pen. When the Torrey revival campaign that had clashed so spectacularly with Sunderland in Toronto moved on to Ottawa, Casson showed himself as ready as his colleague to return

blow for blow. Deriding 'that peculiarly close intimacy which Dr Torrey claims to have with the Almighty,' he continued, 'The waves of a century's higher thought have not reached or rippled the placid puddle of his mind.'[39]

Like Hutcheon, he was an ardent defender of the labor movement, but at the same time he exuded the go-getter spirit characteristic of this expansionist period in Canadian life. 'Wherever religion has taught the virtue of contentment and the providence of poverty, and the people really believe it, there is least of progress.... It is a man's duty to become rich, if he honestly can... money is power and privilege.... If one can get rich in a day it is foolish to toil for years.'[41]

The outstanding accomplishment of his two-year ministry was the development of the Paragraph Pulpit. This began as a paid advertisement that appeared daily in the *Ottawa Citizen*; before long it was appearing also in the Kingston *British Whig* and eventually in more than seventy newspapers on both sides of the border. Its style is illustrated in the following: 'Don't skulk! In the name of God don't skulk! Be what you believe; confess your convictions; quit being a sham. You are not to be blamed for your belief, however broad or narrow it may be. Only confess it boldly. Be true to the truth as you see it.'

To finance the Paragraph Pulpit, Casson set up the Canadian Unitarian Press Propaganda Society, for which he obtained contributions from the AUA, the BFUA, and many individuals. It reached thousands of readers and brought in many letters of inquiry. Eventually it proved too expensive a project to be kept up, but it marked the transition from the labored expositions of the nineteenth century to the 'spot commercials' of the twentieth. It was supplanted by the even more succinct and much less expensive Wayside Pulpit, which was developed by another Canadian who had moved to the United States. Henry Hallam Saunderson, who came to Toronto as Hutcheon's successor but stayed little more than a year, not only originated the idea but himself wrote the messages for the posters that appeared week by week outside churches all across North America.

The success of Casson's enterprise took him in 1907 to Boston as secretary of a new publicity department of the AUA. In this role he revisited Ottawa two years later on his way to conduct the Unitarian version of a revival campaign in Winnipeg. Back in his old pulpit, and with the Governor General and his aides in attendance at the service, he delivered what a newspaper reporter called 'one of the most forceful sermons ever heard by an Ottawa congregation.' The theme was 'The Religion that Canada Needs'. Denouncing the idea that Heaven was a free gift to be handed out by a religious sect as gifts were handed out through political graft ('getting something for nothing through standing in with a party'), he declared that Heaven had to be earned. The great thing to be emphasized in religion was justice. No one could die for another's sin. A man must suffer for his own sins and gain his own happiness.

'There is talk of developing purely Canadian goods and manufactures,' Casson concluded, 'and yet we have imported our religion. We need to realize that we have within ourselves the power to live high and noble lives – to realize that we have in us the divinity of Christ. We need a religion of service, not a religion of ritual.'[42]

The Governor General's reaction to all this is unfortunately not recorded. Casson reappeared two years later for a period as editor of the *Citizen*, and yet again in 1926 when he resumed for a year his ministry at the Church of Our Father. With all his limitations, his brief but lively spells of activity in Canada provide a welcome contrast to the catalogue of wasted opportunities.

During the pyrotechnics in Toronto and Ottawa, the Montreal church stood aloof in a state of dignified stagnation. It was still the only congregation in Canada to be self-supporting until 1905, when the Toronto church attained the same status. Meanwhile the church in Saint John had sunk beyond recall and the one in Hamilton, as at most points in its history, was in a sorry state. Its almost exclusively working-class congregation resembled many to be found in the industrial towns of England, where two or three wealthy Unitarian industrialists paid the bills for a church that was used by their employees without any great feeling of personal responsibility for maintaining it in being.

The trouble was that in Hamilton there were no wealthy Unitarian industrialists. The closest equivalent lay in the benefactors in Montreal who had contributed handsomely to the cost of their church, and the AUA, which had been regularly paying half the minister's salary. This latter arrangement had never been one about which the Association was entirely happy, and it had encouraged the abortive experiment of a joint ministry with Toronto in 1897. Nonetheless, it again extended its help in 1901, when Frederick Preston was called as minister. But

when after two years there had been no marked change, the AUA decided that it had higher priorities for its financial allocations and cut off the grant, suggesting once again that Hamilton could not really afford a full-time ministry and should combine with Toronto.

Preston, however, was a strong believer in congregational autonomy, irrespective of the financial situation. Encouraged by him, the congregation responded to the AUA's ultimatum by selling its building to the Hamilton Conservatory of Music. This enabled them to pay their debts, balance their books, and erect a more modest building on a cheaper lot, besides keeping their minister for a further year. But the respite was only temporary, and at the beginning of 1906 Preston resigned.

After his departure, the question of a shared ministry came up again. The congregation entered into an arrangement, not with Toronto, but with Buffalo, New York, where W. Delos Smith was minister of the Parkside Church. He came over for Sunday evening services in Hamilton, which were so enthusiastically received that within six months he was persuaded to resign from Buffalo and move to Hamilton. He was a powerful preacher with a magnetic personality, and drew a considerable following; this did not, however, reflect itself in increased contributions to the church, and soon the old cycle began over again. The AUA grew restless about the size of its subsidy, and became totally exasperated by the turn of events in 1909. The grant had been renewed on condition that Smith would be allowed to work when needed as a missionary in Western Ontario. The need arose when the congregation in London found itself without a minister and called urgently for outside help. The AUA asked for Smith to be released to conduct Sunday evening services there and to do a certain amount of work during the week. The Hamilton response was that this would be 'ruinous' to themselves, and they turned the proposal down. By the time the Association was able to bring enough pressure to bear to cause this decision to be reversed, the London society had closed down.

The unhappy AUA cut down the grant, and Smith soon moved to another church. He was succeeded by an English minister, Felix Taylor, who in spite of much personal sacrifice met with no greater success. The city of Hamilton greeted the preaching of Unitarianism not with hostility but with an almost total indifference. Taylor returned to England in 1913. Apart from a brief and unhappy experience a few months later, he was the last Unitarian minister Hamilton was to see for a long time.

The short-lived London congregation, which had sent out the call for help, had come into existence in 1904. The AUA had not regarded the prospects as particularly encouraging, but local initiative carried the movement forward. Victor Gilpin, another Methodist minister who had been drawn into Unitarianism through the New Theology, left his Ontario charge for a year at Meadville, then established himself in London as the centre for a wide-ranging Unitarian circuit. He gave himself over to the work in what he called his 'appetizing field' with an enthusiasm reminiscent of that of the Universalists half a century earlier. Besides fitting up rooms in London for regular services and social events, he held fortnightly services in Woodstock and Galt, and preached in half a dozen other towns at least once a month. The groups he gathered were colorful, though their potential for building up a Unitarian movement might have been open to question. 'One group,' he wrote, 'is scientific, one is conservative, another is radical and contains a Nihilist. . . . one is modelled after the Puritan and yet another is evangelical, and all are liberal.'[43]

Under Gilpin's leadership the London congregation grew, and in due course moved into its own building. This was the Chapter House, an imposing piece of Gothic architecture originally designed as the headquarters for the Anglican diocese of Huron. It was purchased with AUA assistance and dedicated as the home of the Unitarian congregation in April 1907, with George H. Badger, secretary of the Middle States and Canada Conference of the AUA and President Southworth of Meadville Theological School as the preachers for the occasion. Everything promised well, but it hinged on the continuing presence of Gilpin. He overstepped the mark as far as effectiveness in London was concerned when he followed the example of his colleagues in Toronto and Ottawa in campaigning for Sunday streetcars. The plebiscite on the subject carried, but he became the object of such bitter vindictiveness that he resigned at the end of 1908. Not long afterward he died of typhoid fever. The congregation did not long survive him. It lacked the internal strength to carry on without a minister, and so yet another attempt in London had ended in failure.

The fall of 1907 brought an event that was to have an indirect but significant effect upon the development of Canadian Unitarianism. This was the great Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston sponsored

by the precursor of the present International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). It drew 2400 delegates from eighty-eight member-groups scattered throughout the world, including liberal Jews, Muslims and Hindus as well as a wide variety of Christian denominations. The BFUA sent a strong delegation headed by its general secretary, W. Copeland Bowie, and these British Unitarians took the opportunity to visit all the existing Canadian churches on their way to Boston. The personal acquaintance thus made was to bear fruit in the next few years.

One showpiece of the Canadian Unitarian scene was the new church in Montreal, almost complete but not yet open for services. With its opening at the beginning of 1908 and the appointment of a new minister shortly afterward, the Montreal congregation experienced an upsurge of a new life.

Griffin, although he stayed eight years, was never completely at home in a Canadian environment. He was a trenchant preacher who maintained Barnes's irenic approach to religion without diluting his own liberal witness. A number of ministers from other denominations accepted his invitation to speak from the free pulpit of the Church of the Messiah. They included two world-famous British liberals. The first, in 1910, was John Hunter of Glasgow. A year later he was followed by the man generally acknowledged as the High Priest of the New Theology, R. J. Campbell, Minister of the Congregational City Temple in London. Campbell had not only written the definitive book on the New Theology; he had also founded a special order, the Pioneer Preachers, to proclaim it to the general public. When later he retracted his views and became a high Anglican, the Pioneer Preachers became a Unitarian organization. Montreal's Congregational pulpits were not, for one reason or another, open to Campbell when he came in 1911, but the crowds wanting to hear him speak in the Unitarian church were so enormous that tickets had to be issued to control admission. It was perhaps the crest of the wave so far as the New Theology in Canada was concerned.

The death of W. S. Barnes in 1912 produced an unprecedented display of public affection for a Unitarian preacher. Typical of the tributes to his memory was the editorial comment that appeared in the *Gazette*: 'He was the foremost apostle in Montreal of that deepest spiritual life in which religion and beauty, the reverential love of God and the understanding love of man, are merged in an inseparable unity. That his apostleship was not more widely and more timely recognized was the fault of the times and not of himself. It was his fate to uphold the light through a period when English Montreal was more utterly immersed in the sordid considerations of sudden prosperity than at any other time in her history.'[45]

As this period of prosperity gradually drifted toward depression and then war, the exuberance that had marked much of the Edwardian era for Unitarianism in eastern Canada slowly abated. Even in Ottawa the scene quietened down. Casson was followed by a scholarly minister who had been for some years a professor of theology in a Presbyterian seminary in the United States. He withdrew after eighteen months when the opportunity came up to become minister in his home town of Northampton, Massachusetts. He in turn was followed by an ex-Anglican minister, G. W. H. Troop, son of a well-known clergyman in Montreal. His father came up to Ottawa for the installation, commenting that while he could not endorse Unitarianism he could endorse honesty, contrasting his son's open avowal of his convictions with what he considered to be the culpable crypto-Unitarianism of some of his colleagues in the traditional churches.

After two years of somewhat undistinguished ministry, Troop like Hutcheon decided to go to Harvard for further studies. He subsequently ministered to Unitarian churches in England. At this point an exciting possibility appeared over the horizon. Sunderland was free and willing to come to Ottawa as a temporary supply. The congregation worked hard during the opening months of 1912 to try to convert this into a regular settlement, and in May Sunderland agreed. It was only six years since his great ministry in Toronto. But things were not the same. Sunderland was now over seventy years old and his wife had died. He still had a great deal of vigor and was to remain in the active ministry another fifteen years, followed by nine years of productive retirement. But he did not have the impact in Ottawa that he had had in Toronto. Sunday mornings brought a small group of regular attenders to the church rather than great crowds of strangers. But he was much loved by the congregation, which felt bereft when in his second year he announced his resignation in order to make another protracted tour of Asia to be followed by a spell of writing.

The day for a major breakthrough based upon the New Theology

was drawing to its close. Canada as a whole had little inkling of just how fast the clouds of war were gathering, but when the storm broke, the optimistic liberalism of the New Theology was to be one of its earliest casualties.

6

Expansion In The West

Evidence that there were at least a few Unitarians in the sparsely populated area to the west of the Great Lakes began to appear in the 1870s. The Post Office Missions run by the Montreal and Toronto churches began to receive scattered inquiries, and Green's *Rational Christian* had subscribers all the way across to Vancouver Island. The census of 1881 reported fifty-four Unitarians in British Columbia – a considerably higher proportion of the population than anywhere else in the country – whereas Manitoba had twenty and the territories between only five.

In 1871 John C. Kimball, who had just become the AUA's minister-at-large in the Washington Territory, made one visit to Victoria and held well-attended services in the City Hall. Among his hearers were several Unitarians from England. But there was no systematic attempt to put down roots until 1884, when George H. Greer, who was working a circuit from Tacoma, went once a month to conduct services in Victoria. As usual, there was a fair turnout of the curious, but very few people appeared to be ready to co-operate in working to build up an established congregation. So, after a year, he gave up. His efforts had not been entirely in vain, however, for among his hearers was a young English immigrant, W. W. C. Pope, who subsequently decided to enter the Unitarian ministry and served churches in his native land for over thirty years.

The earliest Unitarian movement to take root in the West came from a quite unexpected source. During the last quarter of the century there was a great wave of emigration to North America from Iceland, bringing rather more than one fifth of the island's entire population. Some of them settled in the American states of Minnesota and North Dakota, but most of them came to Manitoba and, later, to Saskatchewan.

Unlike most immigrant groups, who brought with them very conservative forms of religion, the Icelanders were well-educated people with an independent cast of mind. For centuries they had been saturated in the themes of the old Norse mythology, which had modified the claims of Christianity to be an exclusive vehicle of religious insight. Iceland had followed the general course of the Protestant Reformation in the Scandinavian countries, with an established Lutheran church. Their Lutheranism was, however, modified both by the influences of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and by the native spirit of the population, so that it was considerably more liberal than the corresponding movements in continental Europe. Poets and theologians of the nineteenth century were acclaimed for voicing the hope of universal salvation, and the people as a whole were more interested in practical religion than in the technicalities of speculative theology.

There was a religious culture-shock when they arrived in North America. The Lutheranism of the areas in which they settled came chiefly from Norwegian and German sources, and was intransigently orthodox. To seek fellowship from this quarter meant a step to the right. On the other hand, the only possibility of liberal fellowship lay in association with the Unitarians, which meant a step to the left. Polarization inevitably followed, accompanied by feelings of guilt over the breaking of ethnic solidarity. The bitter recriminations that resulted were to poison relationships within the Icelandic community for many years to come.

An Icelandic Lutheran Synod was established in 1885, with some nominal concessions to the liberals in an attempt to bring in as many of them as possible. Its consistent policy, however, was to move the theological outlook of the Icelanders into line with that of North American Lutheranism as a whole. The dismayed liberals now found a spokesman in Bjorn Petursson, a farmer who had had theological training in his youth and had served for a number of years as a

member of the Icelandic parliament. As a result of conversations with Kristofer Janson, a Norwegian Unitarian minister in Minneapolis, Petursson came to think of himself as a Unitarian. He secured aid from the AUA in 1887 to publish in Icelandic some of the Unitarian pamphlets that Janson had already rendered into Norwegian, and gave up farming to undertake lecture tours in the Icelandic settlements. A year later he became a member of a 'Cultural Society'[1] established by the Icelandic poet Stephan G. Stephansson for free discussion of religious and other topics along the lines laid down for Felix Adler's Ethical Culture societies.

In 1890 Petursson moved to Winnipeg with the support of the AUA and began holding Unitarian services. The following February the First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg came into being, with twenty-two charter members.

Petursson was a quiet, dignified man, more interested in reasoned discussion than in the emotional tirades characteristic of the religion of his day. His services were followed by discussion periods in which anyone was free to participate. The religion he preached was the standard Unitarianism of the late nineteenth century, presenting a human Jesus who was the Son of God in the same sense as all of us are children of God, but by his example and teaching illustrating a way of life that we are called upon to follow. The Lutherans naturally greeted what to them was a downgrading of Christ with extreme hostility, depicting Petursson and his successors as 'the paid tool of American infidelity, labouring zealously toward the goal of unchristianizing the nation.'[2] Petursson responded to such taunts by pointing out that Unitarians had more faith in God than Lutherans, not less, because they believed that He would not condemn a single soul to everlasting damnation in hell. If Christianity consisted in supporting the moral and religious teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, then Unitarians were among the leading practitioners of Christianity.[3]

The Winnipeg congregation slowly grew. Its minister published a translation of Minot Savage's popular *Unitarian Catechism*, which set forth the leading Unitarian principles in an easily readable form. In 1892 they were ready, with the AUA's help, to build their own church, and on Christmas Day held their first service in it. But less than a year later, Petursson died at the age of sixty-seven.

Meanwhile another liberal movement had been developing in the area known as New Iceland, on the western shores of Lake Winnipeg.

Magnus J. Skaptason, a liberal minister from Iceland, arrived there in 1887, and moved rapidly in a Unitarian direction. Matters came to a head when in 1890 he preached a sermon that was frankly Universalist. He was expelled from the Synod, precipitating a crisis that resulted in the withdrawal of five congregations to form a separate conference, while a sixth was divided. The new conference made application for affiliation with the Unitarians, which brought a visit in 1892 from T. B. Forbush, representing the AUA. After Petursson's death, Forbush suggested to Skaptason that he move to Winnipeg. This he did, and served the Winnipeg congregation until 1899.

The finding of acceptable ministers for the expanding movement was an obvious problem. The language barrier precluded bringing any in from the outside, except from Iceland, and though there were liberal ministers there, few of them went as far as the Unitarians. The Icelandic Unitarians realized that they were going to have to produce their own ministers, and at the end of the century they entered into an arrangement with Meadville under which Johann P. Solmundsson of Gimli and Rognvaldur Petursson of Hallson, North Dakota were enrolled as students. On graduation, Solmundsson served the Winnipeg church for a year and then moved to the Gimli circuit; Petursson, after a supplementary year at the Harvard Divinity School, became the settled minister in Winnipeg.

The new century began with a conference at Gimli to organize a more inclusive association of liberal churches. It drew delegates from Minnesota and North Dakota as well as from Winnipeg and five congregations in the inter-lake area. F. C. Southworth, soon to be appointed president of Meadville, represented the AUA. At the association's second conference, held two years later in Winnipeg, three more congregations were represented and the delegates voted unanimously to call their organization The Western Icelandic Unitarian Association.[4] Its declared purpose was 'to promote freedom in matters of religion and to awaken and uphold in the hearts of men rational living and inspirational ideals, in love to God and service to man.'[5]

Progress continued. A monthly publication, *Heimir*, was started in 1904. Its religious articles deliberately avoided polemics and were as non-controversial as was possible in that explosive environment. But it concentrated chiefly on literary subjects and built up a substantial circulation. Rognvaldur Petursson's preaching usually followed the same policy of avoiding divisive theological issues as far as possible,

proclaiming a positive liberalism rather than the negative critique of orthodoxy that was in vogue in some Unitarian circles. The congregation in Winnipeg grew. Changing residential patterns in the city added urgency to the need for a new building, which materialized in 1905 when President Southworth came up from Meadville to preach at the dedication service. It was reminiscent of an Athenian temple, though its direct inspiration was the church in Baltimore where William Ellery Channing had in 1819 publicly accepted, defined, and defended Unitarianism.

More students were trained at Meadville. Gudmundur Arnason graduated in 1908 and Albert E. Kristjansson in 1910. It now became possible to provide more adequate ministerial coverage for the scattered adherents. Arnason became minister in Winnipeg in 1909, releasing Petursson to become field secretary for the AUA in the area – a co-ordinating missionary position. Kristjansson went to Gimli, following the retirement from the ministry of Solmundsson, and made it the centre for a circuit including the newly formed congregations at Mary Hill and Otto. Some two hundred miles of travel by horse and sleigh were required to cover this circuit. The loose organization at many of the rural preaching points made it difficult to determine just how many 'congregations' there actually were. In some places there were simply groups of people who gathered to hear a Unitarian preacher. Some of them were convinced Unitarians; many others were undecided and uncommitted. The social ostracism that was often dealt out to Unitarians by the orthodox made it inadvisable to be publicly committed unless one were fully prepared to face the consequences. In many ways the situation resembled that faced by Universalists in the rural Ontario of half a century earlier. The census of 1911 still recorded only 888 declared Unitarians in Manitoba, but by 1921 this figure was nearly to double – 1541, as against 1083 in Ontario, the next highest provincial total.

Though most of the Manitoba Unitarians recorded by the census were Icelanders, not all of them were. The great wave of immigration that brought more than a million people to the prairies in the first decade of the century and transformed places such as Saskatoon, Calgary, and Edmonton from frontier villages into thriving cities included its quota of Unitarians. Some of them came from Eastern Canada. Felix Taylor in Hamilton was complaining about the problems he faced as a result of the constant draining away of his young

people to the West.[6] Some of them came from the United States. But most of them came from the British Isles. On his visit to Calgary in 1913, Copeland Bowie counted Unitarians from half a dozen different English congregations.[7] In Winnipeg itself, 'the Gateway to the West', the same was true; Horace Westwood reported that when he arrived there in 1912 a majority of the committed Unitarians had come recently from England, mostly from the industrial cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire.[8]

The conditions of seventy years earlier were repeating themselves in the West, as these Unitarians arrived in a land where no sympathetic religious movement awaited them. The language barrier precluded any contacts with the Icelanders. The larger and better organized denominations, backed by resources provided elsewhere by wealthy congregations whose imagination could be touched by 'the challenge of the West', were sending in missionaries and building churches to await the immigrants as they came. Reporting from the spot, Westwood said: 'The great denominations of England and of Eastern Canada regard the Canadian West as their greatest English-speaking missionary field. As fast as they can procure funds and as speedily as they can obtain men, they are pouring them into the Canadian West. Last year fifty young men came from England to enter the Methodist ministry in the Canadian West. What is true of the Methodist Church is also true of the Anglican and the Presbyterian bodies.'[9]

It was not true of the Unitarians. Once again, the exaggerated individualism of the movement and its lack of overall organization stood in the way of effective action. When Unitarians did act, what they did was usually too little and too late. Frank W. Pratt, who understood the situation better than anyone, wrote: 'I grow sick at heart when I compare what is being done with what ought to be done. We are missing an opportunity which will never come to us again, because a country cannot be young but once.'[10] He felt that an annual expenditure of $15 000 was the absolute minimum required to begin to meet the need. But at no point did Unitarian investment in Western Canada even remotely approach such a figure. Copeland Bowie of the BFUA was driven to call, like so many before him, for individual self-sacrifice as the only way in which leadership could be provided: 'As I travelled from place to place in Western Canada I gradually became convinced that if half a dozen able, zealous, sensible Unitarian ministers, not too old to learn, would go out to Western Canada in the spirit of apostles and pioneers, they would succeed, *with hard work*, in establishing self supporting congregations in the course of a very few years. Are there no young men in the Unitarian ministry with the adventurous spirit of the pioneer ready to offer themselves for service in Western Canada, prepared to take the risks which the farmer and the ordinary man of business are compelled to take when they resolve to settle in a new country?'[11]

In fairness to Bowie, he was not suggesting that ministers should go out entirely unsupported. Though men seldom came forward in response to such appeals, when they did they were subsidized to an extent that at least guaranteed them regular meals. But as in Eastern Canada during the same period, most of the ministers who were prepared to accept the risks in a Unitarian mission church were New Theology converts from other denominations.

The first of these was H. F. M. Ross, who left the Presbyterian ministry and secured a subsidy from the AUA to begin working in Winnipeg in April 1904. The times seemed auspicious, for the city had more than doubled its population within five years. Ross placed advertisements in the newspapers and rented a hall for services. The response was small, but it included one person who has to play a significant role in Winnipeg Unitarianism for many years. This was Arthur W. Puttee, M.P., the first representative of labor to be elected to the federal parliament. He had won a Winnipeg seat in 1900, running for the Independent Labour Party, and his felt boots had caused as much of a sensation in Ottawa as Keir Hardie's cloth cap had done at Westminster. Born in England of Baptist parents, he had become a Unitarian through reading during his adolescence, but had never until now established contact with any organized Unitarian movement. On his way by train from Ottawa to Winnipeg, he came across Ross's announcement in the *Free Press*, and hastened to respond.[12]

Puttee's outlook took as its point of departure not simply the need for a better economic deal for labor, but the essential dignity of all human beings and the requirement for justice and fair play. When on May 22 a Unitarian congregation was formally organized, his enthusiasm for the cause coupled with his warm humanitarian spirit made him a natural person for the office of president. But the little congregation's progress was painfully slow. Outside help was largely limited to letters of encouragement, apart from a consignment of disused hymnbooks from Toronto. After nearly three years of effort, Ross

became thoroughly discouraged and resigned in January 1907. Though he stayed in the city, occupying important positions on the staff of the *Free Press*, he severed all connections with Unitarianism and eventually returned to his original denomination.

The congregation became dormant. But within six months hopes revived. The BFUA party heading for the International Congress in Boston planned to visit all the Canadian congregations, and, though the main body stayed in the East, one of its members went to Winnipeg. He was W. W. C. Pope, who more than twenty years earlier had taken part in the unsuccessful venture in Victoria. In consultation with him, the Winnipeg Unitarians addressed an appeal to both the BFUA and the AUA for help in getting a congregation firmly established in the city.

This appeal was sent at an opportune moment. Copeland Bowie, as the chief executive officer of the BFUA, had been impressed by what he saw of Canadian Unitarianism, and in Boston went into a huddle with his counterpart, Samuel A. Eliot of the AUA. After eighty years of sporadic and separate efforts in Canada by the two associations, the groundwork was laid for a unified approach. Eliot went so far as to suggest that they should jointly sponsor a Canadian Unitarian Association, which would at least on paper assume responsibility for missionary work in Canada.[13] This was an idea that had been around for a long time; it had the obvious merit of disarming orthodox critics who were fond of attacking Unitarianism as an unwanted American import. But it had never seemed very practical, at least to the people who would have had to act on it. In spite of his missionary zeal – he had urged the establishment of new causes in places ranging from Sydney, N.S. to Sault Ste Marie – Sunderland had in 1902 expressed his conviction that the Canadian churches were too few and scattered to support such an association.[14] Once again in 1907 this aspect of the project was quietly dropped, but the BFUA and AUA did agree to send a missionary (the Americans preferred the term field secretary) to Western Canada, with each association contributing half his salary. The AUA was charged with the responsibility of supervising his work. It was also agreed that his first task would be to respond to the appeal from Winnipeg.

The newly appointed field secretary arrived in Winnipeg late in 1908. He was Frank Wright Pratt, formerly minister of the Unitarian church in Hopedale, Massachusetts. In the New Year he was followed

by Charles Casson, who conducted an energetic one-week preaching mission. The Unitarian movement began to gain some momentum in Winnipeg, though there was no spectacular advance. The nature of the constituency was a perennial problem. New arrivals in the city often joined the church and then after a few months headed onward to points farther west. But slowly an established congregation began to take root. E. G. Steinthal, son of one of the leading Unitarian ministers in England, took over the Sunday school from the American Consul Carl Loop when the latter was transferred to London. Felix Taylor, prior to his settlement in Hamilton, conducted services during the summer of 1909 while Pratt made an exploratory journey into his vast territory, holding meetings in Brandon, Regina, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Calgary. In October, ten months after his arrival in Winnipeg, he himself joined the westward procession, moving to a new headquarters in Calgary and handing over the ministry in Winnipeg to W. A. Vrooman, a former Congregational minister in the city who had just transferred to Unitarianism. At the same time an appeal went out to hundreds of Unitarians in Britain and the United States inviting them each to purchase one or more square feet of a building lot at fifty cents a square foot as the first stage in getting a church built.

Vrooman was unfortunately by no means an ideal person to carry on the kind of work Pratt had been doing, but he was the only person available. Again and again Pratt wrote back to Boston asking why first-class ministers could not be attracted to this pioneering field, and though he did eventually succeed in getting one or two, he usually found himself in the position of a voice crying in the western wilderness. Winnipeg's building lot at least was secured in June 1910, but the next two years constituted no more than a holding operation. Pratt had enough work on his hands elsewhere to keep him fully occupied.

Even before he arrived in Calgary, he received word of developments on the West Coast. Earl Morse Wilbur, who combined the positions of Dean of the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, and AUA field secretary for the Pacific coast, visited Vancouver during the summer and conducted a service. The response was not particularly encouraging, but the seed was sown, and an enthusiastic propagandist for Unitarianism came forward in the person of Albert J. Pineo, a science teacher in a Victoria high school. Pineo was a native of Nova Scotia, where his family had been estab-

lished in pre-loyalist times, and had until recently been an active lay preacher for the Baptists. He had long been interested in the New Theology, and in all aspects of liberal thinking. Convinced that the time was ripe to begin Unitarian congregations in Vancouver and Victoria, he wanted to take the initiative.

Grateful for his clergy pass on the railway, Pratt hastened to confer with him and help plan the strategy. He would have preferred to do the initial work himself rather than entrusting it to a person with no Unitarian background, but he had committed himself for the present to working on the prairies. He was able to enlist the co-operation of H. E. Kellington, a one-time Methodist minister from Ontario who had later become a Universalist and was now staying with relatives in New Westminster. On the principle that a prophet is without honor in his own country, it was agreed that Pineo should have responsibility for the movement in Vancouver and Kellington for that in Victoria.

Pineo was driven by an indomitable optimism and was eager to make the first move as quickly as possible. Disregarding the advice of the few known Unitarians in Vancouver, who wanted to hold off until the New Year, he launched his venture with a service on December 19, 1909. The first members were signed up right after the service, and from then on he conducted services regularly, gradually gathering a congregation. Kellington, following the same procedure, held his first service in Victoria on January 16.

Pratt was meanwhile testing the response all over the western prairies. He held exploratory services in Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Moose Jaw, as well as a regular monthly service in Calgary. Though there was a fair response, and individual Unitarians were discovered in many places, it became obvious as time went by that in attempting to work so wide a circuit he was spreading himself too thin. A more intensive effort in one place was called for, and the obvious focus for such an effort was his home base in Calgary. So apart from a four-week trip to the coast in October, he spent most of his time at home during the 1910-11 season, and this concentration of attention began, as in Winnipeg, to produce results. A regular Sunday afternoon forum was held in a downtown theatre, addressed by a variety of speakers on the major social and political issues of the day. Pratt added a religious dimension to the proceedings by reading and interpreting passages from the Bible. Four or five hundred people usually turned out for these meetings, and thirty or so stayed for the

Bible study groups that followed. In the evenings Pratt conducted services in the same theatre, attended by a hundred and fifty or more. But to build a core of committed Unitarians from this assembly of casual listeners was no easy task. By sheer persistence, and aided by the continuing arrival of Unitarians from elsewhere, Pratt not only established a congregation, but by the autumn of 1911 was able to embark upon a modest building program. A multipurpose hall of simple Greek design, costing more than $7000, was dedicated as the home of the Calgary Unitarians on December 10, 1911, just over two years after Pratt's arrival.

The procedures thus demonstrated in Calgary provided the model for other western cities. The first priority was to build up a congregation, with the hope that it would become self-supporting at as early a date as possible. This in itself was a major undertaking, for while there was no great difficulty anywhere in bringing out a fair-sized audience to listen to a provocative speaker, the number prepared to commit themselves to the hard work and sacrifice of building up a Unitarian congregation was everywhere very much smaller. Moreover, such congregations consisted almost exclusively of people with limited means struggling to make their way in a new land. To pay the salary of a fulltime minister without outside help would be an almost impossible assignment. Even with outside help, the salaries they were able to offer usually hovered around the denominational minimum, with the predictable result that Pratt was continually lamenting the dearth of suitable applicants.

The second priority, though no less pressing than the first, was actually in competition with it. A congregation had to have a building of its own at the earliest practicable moment. This would stand as a symbol that it was there to stay and as a centre that would be known to the public and available at all times as needed. The temporary quarters in which newly established congregations first met had no aesthetic attractions whatsoever; they were usually dingy dance halls redolent on Sundays with the smell of stale beer from the night before, and the music to accompany the hymns had to be coaxed out of unspeakable pianos.

The two congregations on the West Coast made slow progress. Pineo travelled over each week for a Sunday morning service in Vancouver. A brochure issued by the fledgling church announced that 'all people who are interested in the "New Theology" or who are in sympathy

with any of the liberal Christian faiths will find here congenial associations and opportunities for co-operation in Christian service.'[15] The first chairman was G. A. Boult, a member of a distinguished English Unitarian family with distant connections with the Hutton and Hincks families, which had contributed notably to the Unitarian story in Eastern Canada in the preceding century. The first secretary was William Beer, who was later to enter the Unitarian ministry in England.

A leading American Unitarian layman who visited Vancouver at this time described Pineo as a short, broad, ruddy man in his fifties with a quiet, genial presence whose sermons were sensible and intelligent, but not brilliant. He showed little acquaintance with Unitarian thinkers and preachers apart from Channing. There were more men than women in the congregation (this was a frequent comment on Canadian Unitarian congregations of the period, particularly in the West). 'There is no wealth among them, and small social prestige. There is the usual proportion of "cranks", theosophists, single taxers, long-haired men and short-haired women, but some of these have seemed to me sensible and reasonable.'[16]

After six months' work in Victoria, Kellington withdrew, and shortly afterward moved to California. Pineo now had responsibility for both congregations, returning to his own city by the afternoon ferry in time for an evening service. Growth was slow, however, and Pratt was anxious to see fulltime ministers at work both in Vancouver and in Victoria. Pineo became a candidate. His labors for the progress of heretical forms of religion had not been universally welcomed among the educational authorities to whom he was responsible, and in the summer of 1911 he left his teaching position to devote himself exclusively to the work of the ministry. As Pratt had other plans for Victoria, where Pineo's well-known change of status would in any case have undermined his effectiveness, this was carried on for a while in Vancouver. Pineo would have liked to become the regularly settled minister there, and canvassed the congregation vigorously with this in view, even though he was aware that Pratt was negotiating with the BFUA to get Vancouver a minister from England. The congregation became sharply divided. Some wanted to see Pineo continue; others wanted a more effective spokesman for Unitarianism. They were dismayed by the more and more obvious leaning on Pineo's part toward

the New Thought movement that was by this time attracting considerable public attention.

New Thought was an altogether different kind of movement from the New Theology. It laid heavy emphasis upon the power of positive thinking, and like Christian Science (with which it was closely linked both in its historical origins and in its presuppositions) stressed the therapeutic effects of its approach to religion. Its most widely influential expression was in the Unity School of Christianity, a body frequently confused with Unitarians because of the similarity of name. This confusion was compounded by the long-standing fondness on the part of Unitarians for the label 'Unity Church' as a universalistic name for their buildings. The Hamilton church long bore this name; the newly dedicated building in Calgary was called Unity Hall.

The characteristic outlook of the Unity movement, or of New Thought generally, has not commended itself to most Unitarians in spite of their pronounced optimism in the heyday of the New Theology. Pratt, conscious of the conflict that was making Pineo ineffective in Vancouver, worked hard to find a successor. At this point he scored his first real success in the search for effective ministers for Western Canada. Matthew Scott, a widower in his early forties, had had outstanding ministries in Scotland and England, and was now prepared to come. Not only was he an unusually eloquent preacher; he was also a warm person whose congregation had universally called him by his first name – an unusual distinction in pre-1914 England.

In Victoria, Pratt had to content himself with gambling again with a new Unitarian in a new congregation. Sidney Lindridge was an Englishman, the son of an Anglican clergyman and himself for a while an Anglican missionary in Africa. The customary theological changes had taken him out of the church, and for a while he had followed a business career in the United States. Now, in July 1911, he came to his first Unitarian ministry in Victoria.

The gamble in Winnipeg had not been successful. It became imperative to find a successor to Vrooman. But Pratt had only pawns to move, apart from Scott, whom he persuaded to spend three months in Winnipeg on his way to Vancouver. Then he took a chance and asked Pineo to go to Winnipeg for the customary six-months' trial period. Scott and Pineo exchanged places in October 1911.

On arrival in Vancouver, Scott discovered for the first time that he

had a problem on his hands. Pineo's friends in the congregation treated him as an interloper foisted upon them by outsiders. After clearing the air by announcing that he had no intention of staying unless they invited him to do so, he got down to work. His warmth and eloquence soon overcame the animosities, capacity crowds crammed into his services, and the congregation began to think in terms of building its own church. The same process was under way in Victoria, where only two weeks after Lindridge's arrival the congregation purchased a site for a future building.

The year 1911 closed with the situation in Western Canada more promising than it had ever been. New ministers had just been settled in Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg, a building had been erected in Calgary, and Pratt was now beginning to look for someone to succeed him there so that he could work on the prospects elsewhere.

Before 1912 was far advanced, however, the situation began to deteriorate. Scott remained unwilling to place his ministry on a regular continuing basis, although he had no immediate intention of leaving. There was trouble brewing in Victoria. And the Winnipeg congregation did not want Pineo to remain after his six months with them expired. Pratt felt sorry for him. He had thrown up a good job to enter a profession for which he lacked the paper qualifications, and without a success story behind him his prospects would be poor. With considerable misgivings, Pratt decided to give him another chance and moved him to the most promising of the untried fields, Edmonton.

Pineo went in with the same drive and enthusiasm as he had shown in Vancouver. He held his first service on April 14, and a congregation was organized the following Sunday. It drew several professors from the new university, as well as a number of influential citizens. Pratt, who had come up from Calgary to help with the organizing meeting, was elated, and wrote to Boston that Pineo seemed this time to be a round peg in a round hole.[17]

In an attempt to cast the net as widely as possible among sympathizers with the New Theology, Pineo at first persuaded the newly formed congregation to adopt a very broad name, without in any way trying to hide their Unitarian affiliation. He invited 'all liberally disposed people who are without settled church homes to cast their lot with the Unitarian fraternity just organized under the name of the "First Liberal Church".'[18] But some of the members felt that the name was too vague, and in November the congregation voted to change to

'First Unitarian Church'. By now a very active program was under way. Pineo's sermons usually dealt with controversial theology or with personal growth, but he sometimes ranged into social issues, defending the cause of labor in a hard-hitting address on 'Jesus Christ and the Carpenters' Union' and locking horns with the Lord's Day Alliance over the question of Sunday concerts in the city. He was supported by a galaxy of talent led by Professors Alexander and Broadus from the University of Alberta and Judge J. G. Tipton, while J. Burtt Morgan, a former Baptist minister who was now local manager for the Great West Life Assurance Company, led a study group on comparative religion called the Truth Seekers.

A surprising number of Unitarian celebrities visited the city. Charles Casson made a fleeting appearance, and was followed by Lewis G. Wilson, secretary of the AUA, and Mary B. Davies, secretary of the General Alliance of Unitarian Women. But the major event was the visit in February 1913 of Samuel McChord Crothers, Unitarian minister from Cambridge, Massachusetts, who was then at the height of his international reputation as essayist, author, and lecturer. He addressed an overflow audience in a downtown theatre on 'The Unitarian Message'.

The congregation was growing. According to Pineo's own account, it was as heterogeneous as the constituency he had gathered in Vancouver. 'Our congregation,' he said, 'includes people of most diverse theological beliefs. We have theists, agnostics, spiritualists, theosophists, and Christian Scientists, all bound together by the spirit of the movement – the spirit of freedom and progress.'[19]

The next step to be taken was obviously to build a church. Plans went forward. W. J. McNamara, a wealthy young businessman who had become one of the earliest members, and who was to be elected mayor of the city a year later, donated a choice building lot in a location near the university. Pineo secured plans from a Unitarian architect in Vancouver, R. Mackay Fripp, and it was intended that the building should go up during the summer of 1913. The project was an ambitious one for a new congregation. The plans showed a very pleasant looking church with seating for three hundred people and ample accommodation for all ancillary activities. The estimated cost was $12 000. But in spite of McNamara's further offer to carry a mortgage for that amount, it was discovered when the tenders came in that they had underestimated by a wide margin, and that the plans

would have to be cut back. In the meantime, other developments forced postponement of the building program.

Pineo was in trouble again. This time the congregation was barely split: feeling was almost unanimous that he should go. His resignation was submitted at the end of May. By the autumn, however, he was back in Edmonton to organize another congregation taking the original name of the First Liberal Church and meeting in the same place as the Unitarians had used at first. This new congregation would be expressly devoted to New Thought, and before long it too changed its name, to the New Thought Temple. Pineo announced it as 'a fellowship which stands for a New World Religion – a religion of the Here and Now, and one which recognizes man's divine nature. It holds that this life is full of great possibilities for the realization of Health, Success and Happiness on the part of every individual and that such possibilities can be realized by the discovery and use of the limitless powers of the Human Mind.'[20] For a while this cause was maintained with Pineo as its leader; then he shifted his religious emphasis to Spiritualism and his residence to the West Coast.

While Pineo was still enjoying his early successes in Edmonton, Pratt was worrying over the question of who was to succeed him in Winnipeg. It seemed intolerable that there should have been so little progress in the largest city in the West, where he had himself invested so much effort and won a reasonable response. If the congregation was to grow, a capable minister would have to be found. But no one was forthcoming. For the present they had to turn again to Vrooman, who was by now in business and able to devote only part of his time to the ministry – which meant in effect, Sunday preaching. But in the summer of 1912 Pratt pulled off his second major coup by persuading Horace Westwood to go to Winnipeg.

Westwood was a remarkable man, one of the more outstanding contributors to the evolution of Canadian Unitarianism. It would have been difficult to find anyone with better credentials for effective work in Western Canada. His childhood in England had been spent amid conditions as closely approximating the pioneer life as could be found there, his father having been a fundamentalist missionary travelling with and preaching to the 'navvies', as the railway construction workers were called. He had himself become an evangelist for the Primitive Methodist church, in which capacity he had come to Canada at the end of 1904. After a year, he moved to the United States because he had left a fiancée in England, and the American regulations concerning the length of time before a Methodist minister could marry were not as stringent as those in Canada. He had served for a while in the raw conditions of a lumber town in northern Michigan. Then, under the influence of the New Theology, he had gravitated toward the Unitarians, in spite of a direct warning he received from R. J. Campbell, whom he met when the latter visited the United States. Campbell advised him to remain within the confines of liberal orthodoxy, where he could reach hundreds of people for every ten he could reach as a Unitarian. None the less, he retrained at Meadville, and by 1912 had completed three successful years as minister of the Unitarian church in Youngstown, Ohio.

When Westwood arrived in Winnipeg in October 1912 he was therefore well grounded both in Unitarianism and in pioneer conditions. He had a forceful personality and was an eloquent preacher; he made his presence felt at once. The congregation to which he came consisted of about thirty families, most of them immigrants from England. They owned a building lot, but lacked the resources to build and were still meeting in an unattractive dance hall. Westwood saw the need for a church building at the earliest possible moment, and success came with unexpected speed. Samuel McChord Crothers, after his visit to Edmonton, came to Winnipeg, where he addressed a specially called meeting of the Canadian Club. While in the city he was the guest of Westwood, who described the church's plight and introduced him to some of its leading members. From what he saw and heard, Crothers, who represented a power structure in American Unitarianism outside the central bureaucracy of the AUA, became convinced that the Winnipeg congregation was faced by one of the most unusual opportunities on the North American continent and pledged his support in getting denominational backing for the cause. Westwood, who had hitherto had little encouragement in thinking that outside help would be forthcoming for a building program, was now invited to address a plenary session of the annual meetings of the AUA in May 1913. With an audience of more than two thousand in attendance, he presented his case forcefully. 'If you believe with me,' he declared, 'that Canada offers the greatest missionary opportunity which is before us, you will pour your money into the coffers of the AUA with distinct instructions that they see that these new movements become well-established churches.'[21]

The money came. There was enough of it to build a church in Winnipeg, but none to provide extra resources for elsewhere in the West. As soon as Westwood arrived back from Boston, building plans were drawn up, the contract was let, and the foundation stone was laid by the Mayor of Winnipeg on July 19. In attendance at the ceremony were ministers of both the Congregational and Anglican churches. In the more open atmosphere of the West, there was at any rate a little greater willingness to acknowledge Unitarians as part of the religious scene.[22]

While events were moving so favorably in Winnipeg, it was quite otherwise on the West Coast. In Victoria, it was the building program that touched off trouble. They were in no position to consider anything as ambitious as what was planned for Edmonton or Winnipeg, but secured some aid from the AUA. In return for the transfer of the title to their lot, they received $2600, of which the greater part had to be applied to paying off the mortgage. But they still had more than a thousand dollars in hand toward the cost of building – at least, this is the way the situation was seen by John Gunn, the society's president. Gunn, a Scottish Unitarian now working as a bookkeeper for a local lumber firm, took his role in the congregation very seriously. In fact, Lindridge accused him of being power hungry, an opinion that was shared by Scott, whom Pratt sent to investigate in February when trouble began.[23] Lindridge took the view that building up the membership was a higher priority than building a church and that the money should therefore be applied to this purpose. A stronger congregation would in due course be able to devote its resources to a building program. When he carried the day in a congregational vote, Gunn and sixteen other members resigned, claiming that this was an irresponsible use of the money entrusted to them.

For a while Lindridge carried on, attempting to prove his point by bringing in a sizeable contingent of new members. But the results were unimpressive, and by autumn he had to acknowledge defeat. His resignation came in November.

The problems were different in Vancouver. Scott had successfully overcome the initial prejudice against him, but it had not been known that one of his reasons for coming to Canada was the condition of his health. So, far from improving, it continued to deteriorate, and he began to have serious doubts as to how long he would be able to continue. By now, however, Vancouver too had begun serious discussion of a building program, and Scott was determined to stay at least until this could be brought to a successful conclusion. Negotiations for the purchase of a suitable lot by the AUA dragged on throughout the first half of 1912, delayed by the inflated prices of the Vancouver real-estate market. Finally in September a lot was purchased, and a combination of pledges from the congregation, a loan from the AUA, and a mortgage made it possible to think realistically of building. Once again R. Mackay Fripp was asked for plans. They were on a simpler scale than those he provided for Edmonton, and this time they were used. But even before the ground was broken Scott's health collapsed, and he left for England in February 1913. Both he and the congregation hoped that a return to health would make this departure temporary, and even after he felt obliged to send his resignation in April the fading expectation that he might be able to come back to Vancouver continued. But he was never able to resume an active ministry anywhere, and died in 1922 at the age of fifty-two.

Both Vancouver and Victoria were now without ministers. Vancouver suspended services, pending the completion of their new building. Fortunately for the Victoria congregation, J. Burtt Morgan had moved from Edmonton at the crucial moment to become manager of his company's operations on Vancouver Island. He took over the pulpit temporarily and did his best, as a person uninvolved in the previous year's controversy, to heal the breach.

Tied down in Calgary by his inability to find anyone to succeed him there, Pratt looked at the situation with some dismay. The condition of the congregations in British Columbia seemed likely to interfere with his plan to move as soon as possible to another prairie city such as Lethbridge or Saskatoon and begin work there. He had already tested the possibilities not only by personal visits but by a modest experiment carried out in the summer of 1912, when he sent H. J. Adlard to Moose Jaw for three months. Adlard, an English Methodist minister who had come to Canada a few years earlier, spent the summer with his family in a tent, sharing his newly discovered Unitarianism with a small group of hearers who came to his services. In September he went to Meadville to retrain for the Unitarian ministry.

Pratt was convinced that the little nucleus of a congregation he had gathered was an indication of further untapped potential in the prairie cities. But was this where he should invest his energies, or should he move to the coast in an attempt to restore the situation there? By April

he had decided to leave Calgary even though no successor was yet in sight, and planned to go on tour, spending a week in each of such cities as Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Medicine Hat. But before he could make this move he went down with a serious illness that put him out of commission for many weeks. He recovered in time to honor his commitment to fill Griffin's pulpit in Montreal for the last three weeks of July, but the only activity possible before this was a period of convalescence in Vancouver, during which he made a study of the situation there.

The result was an arrangement with Wilbur in Berkeley under which one of that year's graduating students from the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, Marshall Dawson, should go to Vancouver for a four-months' trial period beginning in September. Pratt himself reluctantly gave up his prairie projects for the moment and moved to Victoria after fulfilling his summer engagement in Montreal. His assignment as he saw it was first of all to get the church built and then to settle a minister as quickly as possible.

The Victoria congregation was still in an unstable condition. Though there had been some accessions of new members there had also been many withdrawals. Had they all stayed, the congregation would have been twice its actual size. Pratt did not shed many tears over these losses. Many of them, he said, were 'either "cantankerous" or indifferent to the church and the church idea.'[24]

A major event of 1913 was the grand tour made in the fall by W. Copeland Bowie, Secretary of the BFUA. With two thirds of his costs underwritten by the AUA's Billings *lectureship*, Bowie arrived in Victoria on September 13 and worked his way back across Canada at a leisurely pace. Pratt accompanied him as far as Winnipeg. Everywhere his visits brought out large numbers of Unitarians or friends of Unitarians from Britain, but as one member in Vancouver wryly commented, most of them had never been seen before nor since.[25] With his Scottish caution, Bowie was not carried away by the size of the attendance at his services and meetings, but made diligent inquiry as to the strength of the active membership in the various congregations: Victoria, thirty; Vancouver, forty; Calgary, seventy-five; Edmonton, thirty-five.[26]

In Victoria, Bowie visited the site of the new church, at this time still a garden full of apple-laden trees. Within a few months a small but artistically designed church was to be raised, ready for occupancy

on the first Sunday in December. The total cost was only $1650, of which $250 was contributed by the BFUA. Bowie's visit, following so closely upon Pratt's arrival as temporary minister, had done much to restore the congregation's morale.

When Bowie arrived in Vancouver he found the new building all ready for the dedication service, Dawson having already officiated in it on two Sundays. The dedication drew a near-capacity congregation of 140 in the evening. After spending time in Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina, and Brandon, in each of which cities services or meetings were held, Bowie dedicated the second new church of his trip in Winnipeg on October 19, with even larger congregations in attendance. Besides addressing Unitarian gatherings, he was invited to speak to various educational organizations across Western Canada. He had been a member of the School Board in London, England, to which he was elected in the course of a campaign against sectarian religious instruction in the schools.

As Pratt returned to his work in Victoria, he congratulated himself on the closer ties established with the BFUA. He was not to know until later the results of the conversations that Bowie, after visiting the Eastern Canadian churches, had in Boston with Samuel A. Eliot, his opposite number in the AUA. These two men, who at their last meeting six years earlier had set up the jointly sponsored field secretaryship for Western Canada, now decided to end the arrangement. Bowie felt that any further financial support from the BFUA should be applied to the support of ministers in specific congregations, rather than to a ministry spread as thin as that of the field secretary. Coming events were to justify this decision, but it was right for the wrong reasons. If Pratt had failed to build up the local congregations throughout his wide empire, it was because the resources to back him up were never available when he needed them. After so many frustrations and disappointments, for instance, there was still no minister for Calgary. One candidate had gone so far as to visit and accept an invitation, only to have his acceptance vetoed by his wife when he returned to his home in New England.

It was almost at the same moment that Pratt heard both that his own position was to be terminated and that a new candidate was available to take up the work in Calgary. He accepted the former news gladly: 'I feel as if this had been my real ministry, and of course it is with regret that it ends so unsatisfactorily. There are a number of

things I wanted to do before ending my term of service in Western Canada, but if they are done at all they must be done by others.... I cannot imagine a greater missionary catastrophe than the letting of this work falter now that the opportunity is at hand as it will never again be in the future. It is not at all important that I should be the one to carry it forward, but it is supremely important that it should be carried forward by somebody.... We have opportunities to build churches in Saskatoon, in Moose Jaw, Regina, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge. Is there not some way by which this work can be accomplished?'[27]

His plea went unheeded. Expansion was at an end. Consolidation of what had already been established was going to strain all available resources to the limit. No doubt he was correct in lamenting that more resources had not been made available, as he was certainly correct in his assessment that the opportunity was only there for a limited time; even he did not realize just how limited a time. But once again the loose structure and individualism of the movement made it incapable of responding effectively to the challenge.

Pratt's chief concern now became to tidy up the situation as far as possible before his time ran out. At last there seemed to be grounds for hope as far as Calgary was concerned. Leif Huseby, a minister from New Jersey, arrived on trial at the end of November. He soon indicated that he would be prepared to place his ministry on a continuing basis, and was duly invited to do so.

In Edmonton the congregation was holding its own. Pineo's New Thought Temple had drawn very few of the members away. Most of the services were being conducted by W. H. Alexander, professor of classics at the University of Alberta, a man who was to play a leading role in the congregation for many years to come. During the winter he was relieved for six weeks by Albert Lazenby, an English-born minister sent out from Massachusetts by the AUA on its Billings lectureship. Then in February 1914 Edmonton too obtained a regularly settled minister in the person of Charles Francis Potter. He was a former Baptist minister from New England, now coming to his first position as a Unitarian. At twenty-eight years of age he was still in the earlier phases of a religious evolution that was eventually to make him one of the foremost spokesmen for humanism and establish his reputation as author and lecturer. Like Westwood, he found on arrival in Western Canada that the local Ministerial Association, having overlooked the possibility of having Unitarians in their midst, had inadvertently left the door open, and once admitted he successfully outmanoeuvred a plot to have him expelled. Some modicum of social respectability was thereby given the representative of Unitarianism in a city where at least a few Unitarians occupied leading positions. Two months after his arrival the second anniversary of the founding of the congregation was marked by a grand banquet in the Yale Hotel, addressed by Mayor McNamara, Alderman East, and other prominent members.

In Winnipeg, Westwood's position in the community was even better established. He was appointed one of two delegates from the local Ministerial Association to the militantly activist Trades and Labour Council, as well as serving on the Manitoba Social Welfare Council. He reached many thousands of readers through his 'Saturday Sermon', which appeared regularly on the church page of the *Tribune*. In the summer of 1914 Lombard College, a Universalist institution in the United States, awarded him the honorary degree of D.D. 'for service in the cause of liberal religion in the Canadian West.'[28]

Only in British Columbia were the problems pressing and obvious. Dawson was not going to continue in Vancouver beyond the four months of his original contract. He felt that the congregation was prejudiced against him as an American, even to the extent of criticizing his accent.[29] He left at the end of the year, and Pratt assumed responsibility for Vancouver as well as for Victoria, commuting by ferry. Both congregations wanted him to remain as their settled minister, invitations that were flattering in view of their well-known preference for someone from Britain; none the less he felt unable to accept. Early in April word came that Bowie was sending a minister for Vancouver, G. Coverdale Sharpe. With very little time to go through the motions, Pratt got the congregation to indicate their approval. Sharpe arrived before the end of the month. He came originally from Scotland, and had been a Methodist minister until 1909. Since then he had been serving a Unitarian congregation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg now all had ministers – a situation that, as events turned out, was not to recur for half a century. Still, Pratt's ministry in Victoria was only temporary; so it was with relief that he received, hard on the heels of the news of Sharpe's appointment, word that the BFUA also had a minister for Victoria. H. E. B. Speight had been an assistant professor of logic at

the University of Aberdeen, and was subsequently assistant minister at one of the leading Unitarian churches in London, England. He was prepared to come to Victoria after the summer. With more time in hand, Pratt was able to obtain a formal congregational vote inviting Speight to the pulpit, and he prepared to bring his own ministry to a close at the end of July. In the autumn he was to move to a new position as AUA field secretary in Virginia.

Pratt's departure marked the end of an era, both in Western Canadian Unitarianism and in the life of the world. As the train carried him eastward over the now-familiar tracks, the storm clouds of war were already bursting over Europe. Though he had not accomplished all he set out to do, his achievements were by no means insignificant. He had been criticized at times for acting as though he were a bishop, but on the whole the Unitarian movement in Canada had every reason to remember him gratefully. It was not his fault that the men and the money had not been sent when he needed them.

Even before he left the country his work had begun once again to unravel. Huseby was not a success in Calgary, and when his relationship with the congregation began to deteriorate he took an opportunist way out by catching the current fever in the city and becoming an oil broker ('Praise God From Whom Oil Blessings Flow, Praise Him Oil Creatures Here Below', wrote the *Calgary Eye-Opener*).[30] Sick at heart that the congregation in which he had invested so much time and effort should once again suffer frustration and disenchantment, Pratt's parting message to them was none the less one of hope. Hope was certainly going to be needed in the coming days, but it would be by no means easy to sustain.

7

War And Aftermath

Despite their three quarters of a century as an organized movement, Canadian Unitarians were sadly unprepared for the test to which they were to be put by the war. They had made substantial contributions both to the public life of the country and to the evolution of its religious outlook; their chronic individualism, however, remained an insuperable obstacle in the way of any effective marshalling of their resources. Outside the one securely established base in Montreal, English-speaking Unitarianism could count only eight struggling congregations, and the prospect of establishing any new ones now disappeared entirely. Even the Toronto congregation, the only one of these eight not dependent upon outside help, was beginning to run up an increasingly alarming deficit. All the others carried heavy debts on their buildings – the one in Edmonton had not even been completed at the outbreak of war – and their ability to support ministers depended upon large subsidies from the AUA and the BFUA.

As for the ministers, they were in a poor position to give effective leadership in a nation at war. Griffin's five years in Montreal gave him some standing, but he was still a citizen of a country that was outspokenly neutral. Westwood as an Englishman labored under no such handicap, though he had been in Canada only two years. But he was liable to find himself in worse trouble because he had gradually over the course of the previous few years come to regard himself as a Tolstoyan pacifist. All other ministries had begun in or since January 1914, so that the incumbents had scarcely had time to settle in before

the war began. Saunderson in Toronto was a native-born Canadian, though he had lived the greater part of his life in the United States. The Ottawa minister, C. T. S. Bullock, was an American with no previous Canadian experience, and the same was true of Potter in Edmonton. Sharpe had arrived in Vancouver only in May, and Speight had not even left England when war broke out, reaching Victoria early in September.

To this dearth of established leadership was added the incubus of an optimistic philosophy better adapted to times of prosperity than of adversity. 'The church of tomorrow,' declared Bullock in his first sermon as minister in Ottawa, 'will be filled with sunshine and hope.'[1] In line with this sunny outlook, August 1914 found Canadian Unitarians chiefly preoccupied with plans for a great celebration in Montreal the following February to mark a century of peace between the British Empire and the United States. Even when the sun had disappeared behind the black clouds thrown up by the increasingly grim news from Europe, there was still an attempt to hold on to the optimism of the prewar era. Looking back from the perspective of a later day, Griffin recalled: 'A young man who was a member of our Montreal Church wrote a letter from the trenches in France. He spoke of the unmitigated horror and tragedy of war and then said, "I believe that there would never be another war if people generally accepted and followed our religious faith." We all had something of that confidence. It was not narrowness or bigotry; it was the value which we placed upon our faith. Now we have come to a time when everything is shaken and when everything is in a state of change. Our confidence is in a state of change. We are not sure: we belong to those of little faith.'[2]

Griffin was not commending the change. He was simply describing the situation, and urging a firmer grasp upon those dimensions of life that are of perennial worth. But undoubtedly the despair that overtook too many people in the later stages of the war and the period immediately following it was a reaction to the super-optimism of the prewar era, in which it had too easily been assumed that 'the progress of mankind, onward and upward forever' was some kind of automatic escalator.

One aspect of the shock reaction to the terrible carnage of the war was a feeling of the futility of addressing conventional condolences to those who had suffered bereavement. Potter recorded from Edmonton, where the proportion of men enlisting in relation to the population of the city was the highest in the world, 'my congregation, which had been steadily growing, was reduced virtually to a few women, and very soon those women came in black, with sad-faced little children. . . . The young women in my congregation, and the unchurched ones, too, who in every city seem to gravitate toward the Unitarian minister for weddings and funerals, were not to be satisfied with the old platitudes. . . .' He discovered that the most effective form of ministry in such a situation was to build a community of suffering.

'When I found one woman who had overcome her grief, I sent the next bereaved woman to her. And when she, too, has found peace, I made her the consoler of another sufferer. Soon we had quite a group of women who sought and found much comfort together, and they were a help to me also, for their friendship was a beautiful thing to see, and to be near them was a benediction. There seems to be a peculiar quality of rare sweetness developed when human beings who have shared any tragic experience join in an association of mutual helpfulness.'[3]

Westwood discovered another approach to the same problem. 'I had no answers, in the earlier stages of the war, that would have given comfort and assurance to those who had been bereaved. The most I could do by way of consolation was to speak of the nobility of sacrifice and of the contribution made by those fallen in battle. I soon found, to my sorrow, that in the presence of heart-break such generalizations brought poor comfort and were of little help.' When some of his members told him that they had evidence of direct contact with their dead menfolk, he set it down at first to their finding refuge from sorrow in the will to believe. But despite his initial scepticism, he found himself forced into a serious investigation, as a result of which he came to the conclusion that 'the scientific humanism toward which I had been drifting was sadly incomplete as an interpretation of human life and destiny. Thus a window was opened in my mind and in the light of the evidence which streamed through, I found myself altering my intellectual and spiritual outlook.'[4] He became convinced of the existence of a psychic world, though still open-minded on the subject of survival beyond death. Even Potter, who later became one of the leading spokesmen for the American humanist movement, was also strongly drawn to this field of investigation. He conducted numerous experiments to demonstrate telepathy, and throughout his life incurred the prejudice and scorn of fellow humanists by keeping the

door open to an exploration of the strange phenomena of this dimension of human experience.[5]

In their attitudes toward the war itself there was no unanimity among the Unitarians of Canada. Many of them had supposed themselves to be totally opposed to all war as a corollary of their belief in 'the brotherhood of man'. Bullock, though he had himself been an army chaplain in the Spanish-American war, delivered a blistering sermon on 'The Curse of Militarism' as late as May 17, 1914. 'We are asked to make no protest over the building of battleships when the interest upon the outlay for a single ship, placed at six per cent for ten hours, would pay the entire cost of a four years' course in any reputable university.... No wonder someone has said "The worst of war and of war service is that the soldier is a ruined man." It is this phase of militarism that I want to hold up as a warning in these days of armed Boy Scouts and of demand for special appropriations to secure the enrolment of young men for military service.'[6]

Memories of that sermon, which was published in the press, were still around when war broke out less than three months later. That event brought dramatic swings in some people's convictions, but others held to a consistent course. Recalling this period, Potter wrote: 'I disapproved of wars in general and of this one in particular, for I viewed it as brought on not only by Germany's reaching for power but also by Britian's colonial policy which required her to "rule the waves". And I thought that munition makers of both countries had helped foment the crisis.'[7]

At the far end of the spectrum from such views as these were a few Unitarians who yielded themselves to the pervasive jingoism of the day. Potter came under strong attack from the leading layman in his own congregation, Professor W. H. Alexander. 'Mr Potter has taken no account of our national feelings or our national feasts. We have had no prayers for the King, none for our brave soldiers and sailors. We have had never a word on behalf of England's stand for liberty and justice, but we *have* heard her government denounced for its treatment of conscientious objectors.'[8] In the same vein, Alexander furiously denounced the AUA for discontinuing the practice of flying the Canadian flag alongside the Stars and Stripes during the annual meetings in Boston. This decision had been made on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to fly the flag of a belligerent nation over neutral soil. 'I cannot describe this offical action of the Association as anything but pusillanimous,' (wrote Alexander to AUA President Samuel A. Eliot). 'I cannot understand the feeble mindedness that has laid hold of the American people in general and the Unitarian Association in particular, so that to spare the sensibilities of Unitarians of German *extraction* it has openly flouted the sensibilities of the Canadian churches who can now point to a long roll of their numbers on active service on behalf of what you, Sir, must well know to be the essentials of any decent civilization. And still you must spare the sensibilities of the kith and kin of the ravagers of Belgium, the vandals of Louvain and the *Lusitania* murderers.'[9]

Most Unitarians followed a more middle-of-the-road course, accepting the war as an unhappy necessity. Alexander was correct in his reference to the long roll of members on active service. Within eighteen months of the outbreak of war no fewer than forty members of the Montreal congregation had enlisted, while Helen Reid, a prominent Montreal Unitarian, was decorated by the King for her work as head of the Canadian Patriotic Fund in the city. By the same date thirty-five members of the Icelandic church in Winnipeg had enlisted, eighteen from Toronto, and even seven from the little congregation at Hamilton. All the churches were running regular Red Cross meetings to produce hospital supplies.

Westwood came to modify his pacifism, not as a result of pressure, but through reflection and discussion: 'As I observed the sacrifices and suffering of my congregation, the conviction began to grow that to isolate oneself from the life of which one was part by virtue of the social process was in itself immoral. Moreover, I saw that however much the war had come about through the competitive imperialism which Britain had shared with other nations, the individual citizen could not deny his share in the collective guilt. Therefore, he could not refuse to accept his share of the collective consequences without deliberately evading a personal responsibility he could not honourably deny. I recognized that when one has profited from the protection of his social environment in times of peace, he is not justified in standing aloof from the common struggle when this same environment is faced by dangers which threaten its very existence. Many were the earnest discussions concerning all this which took place in my study, for there was not a young man within my congregation who had not volunteered to enlist, and in almost every case, more because they were my friends than my parishioners, they talked the matter over with me. As

I look back, I realize that these intimate discussions played their part in remoulding my original attitude, and finally led me to the position I have held for many years, that absolute attitudes in social relationships are just as much open to question in these matters as they are in the realm of theology. This, in itself, is no denial of the truth that occasions may arise in which men feel compelled to oppose the thought and sentiment of their generation and to declare with Luther, "Here I stand; I can not do otherwise. God help me. Amen!"'[10]

In November 1915 Bullock obtained leave of absence from his congregation and enlisted as a chaplain to the American regiment being formed as part of the Canadian army. He wrote offering Potter a commission in the same regiment, but Potter still had no wish to participate in the war.

The most persistent theme in Unitarian circles during this period was the need to look beyond the limited goal of victory in war and to work toward a world of enduring peace. 'The church must rise with unfaltering faith to conserve and to elevate the moral vision and the spiritual confidence of men and women at a time of dismay, terror and heartache,' wrote a Montreal Unitarian. 'Its task now is to guide the thoughts and actions of its people to new conceptions of honour and duty, international goodwill and universal brotherhood.... It stands to voice the higher conscience of the world.... This is our cause this year.'[11] Westwood took up the same theme: 'While our men are fighting in the trenches, we must look forward to the end of the struggle and see to it that they shall not have fought in vain. We must see to it that we lay the foundations for enduring peace.'[12] 'Peace as well as war requires preparation,' wrote Speight in announcing a special series of addresses on the war in June 1915. 'It requires more preparation, because behind the forces working for war stands the great organized mechanism of states, and peace can only be secured by a resolute, voluntary, and continued effort of the people.'[13]

While the churches attempted in this way to take a long-range view of the situation, their more immediate problem was one of sheer survival. 'The war,' noted the *Canadian Unitarian Bulletin* in January 1915, 'is levying the most unexpected taxes upon the vital resources of Canada. Churches of all denominations feel keenly the strain.' The outbreak of hostilities had not ended the deepening economic depression that had settled over the country. For a time, in fact, it worsened. 'Since the beginning of the existence of the Canadian nation,' continued the same editorial, 'no such business depression was ever known before. Few people are joining any churches – it is not a time when people readily assume such obligations if they have not been carrying them before.' Congregation after congregation described itself as 'hard hit'. The secretary of the Vancouver church stated in a letter to the BFUA that bank clearings in the city had dropped from $52 million in January 1913 to $25 million in January 1915.[14] In Winnipeg the situation was just as bad. 'Despite the voluntary enlistment of thousands of young men,' wrote Westwood, 'the army of homeless and unemployed grew to tremendous and pitiable proportions. Hundreds literally walked the streets, and numbers were even without shelter through the long hours of night. The army of the homeless unemployed was not confined to the industrial workers, but included many who had held white collar jobs, such as store and bank clerks.'[15] In response to this situation, the church opened its basement as a dormitory, providing bed and breakfast to between fifteen and twenty men while trying to find employment for them. The congregation took up the project enthusiastically, and it was an outstanding success.

During the first year of the war the western churches were between them receiving $2410 from the AUA toward their operating expenses, and $1020 from the BFUA. All carried a heavy debt on their buildings. When he arrived in Victoria, Speight was so affected by the financial plight of the congregation that he rashly offered to lend them $500 to consolidate debts secured by personal notes from members. The offer was immediately accepted.

The ministers began to withdraw. The first to go, in October 1914, was Philip Thacher, who had been in Hamilton only six months. A month later Sharpe gave up the struggle in Vancouver and returned to England. Economic problems were not the only reason. When he had arrived six months earlier the crowd that had flocked to his first service expecting another Matthew Scott had gone away disappointed, and only a couple of dozen of the faithful attended in subsequent weeks. Commenting on the situation three months after Sharpe's departure, Speight wrote: 'The trouble seems to me to lie in the fact that they have built on individual ministers. When Mr. Scott went many left; when Mr. Dawson left some thought he had had scant justice and they left; and a few left when Mr. Sharpe gave in. There does not seem to have been any real society with even a rudimentary sense of loyalty, if three or four people are left out of account.'[16] One

of Speight's 'three or four' left his own reflections on the subject. 'There must be something lacking in the philosophy of our religion that impels most of those predisposed to come to us to turn away after a few months or years, unless we have an outstanding man as preacher or leader. Which indicates either that we have nothing constructive to give them outside of freedom of thought or... their clinging either consciously or unconsciously to authority in religion.'[17]

Certainly this phenomenon was not peculiar to Vancouver. But in fairness to the Vancouver congregation it should be added that in spite of less outside assistance in the ensuing years than other western churches received, they still managed not only to survive but, uniquely, to pay off the loan on their building.

Sharpe was in Vancouver long enough to participate in Speight's installation, which was also marked by the presence of no less a personage than Samuel A. Eliot, president of the AUA. When Sharpe resigned, Eliot urged the Victoria congregation, as a stopgap measure, to release Speight for Sunday evening services in Vancouver. The congregation demurred, as Hamilton had done under similar circumstances five years earlier, and relented only after a curt reminder from the AUA as to who was picking up the bills.

The next minister to go was Saunderson, after eighteen months in Toronto. In face of an increasingly impossible financial situation he took an opportunity to return to the United States. During the period between Canada's entry into the war in 1914 and the entry of the United States in 1917, not a single American minister came to Canada; a number of inquiries were received from the United States but they were all from Englishmen wanting to associate themselves with the cause of the Empire. None of them came, either.

There were a few bright spots in the generally sombre scene. In November 1914 the Edmonton Unitarians moved into their own building. It fell far short of the ambitious plans drawn up two years earlier, being simply the roofed-over basement of a church to be completed when better times returned. A house-warming to mark the event was addressed by Principal Riddell of Alberta Methodist College. This fraternal gesture was another indication of the slow thaw in the frigid relationships with other denominations, which speeded up a little in response to the need for wartime collaboration in various voluntary projects. 'Sectarianism is discarded as a toy for which we have no heart,' was the way a writer in the Montreal church calendar put it

shortly after the outbreak of war. Some slight modifications in the old atmosphere of prejudice and ostracism had begun before the war. The laying of the foundation stone of the Winnipeg church had been attended by representatives of other denominations. Even in that citadel of orthodoxy, Toronto, there had been a break in the solid wall of hostility that had hitherto existed. When Saunderson was installed in an impressive ceremony that brought Griffin from Montreal and Samuel McChord Crothers from Massachusetts, ministers of Congregational and Baptist churches brought greetings and expressions of fellowship. But they were publicly attacked for this by some of their colleagues.

The most promising event for the beleaguered churches came in the summer of 1915. For American Unitarians the war was still only a distant disturbance, and they planned to make that year's biennial session of the General Conference a gala occasion. For the first time in the twentieth century the conference was to meet on the Pacific coast, and San Francisco, chosen as the site, was also staging a World's Fair. Nearly three hundred Unitarians from New England and the Atlantic states chartered a special train to carry them westward from Montreal, using it as a travelling hotel from which to enjoy a visit to Western Canada. Stops were scheduled not only at the scenic resorts in the Rockies, but also at all the cities on the CPR main line where there were Unitarian churches. Crothers, who had organized the expedition, accompanied Westwood on side trips to speak at public meetings in cities away from the scheduled route, such as Saskatoon and Edmonton.

From Vancouver the party travelled by ferry to Victoria, where another large public meeting was held. Before they left the city, Crothers addressed the assembled delegates in the ballroom of the Empress Hotel. They had seen something of the prospects, the problems, and the spirit of the churches in the Canadian West. He would like to propose the establishment of a special fund to assist those so bravely struggling against such odds. His hearers enthusiastically endorsed this proposal, and as they constituted a majority of the delegates who would gather in San Francisco, its adoption by the conference was a foregone conclusion. AUA President Samuel Eliot, who had gone to San Francisco by way of the newly opened Panama Canal, attempted to stop what he considered an emotional response that had not been properly thought through; but Crothers had out-

manoeuvred him. The appeal was launched in September and brought in a total of $8300 – a very substantial sum when no minister working in the area had an annual salary in excess of $2000. Within two years the greater part of the fund was disbursed. Calgary got $2035, Winnipeg $2000, Edmonton $1600, Victoria $1400, and Vancouver $300. In addition, the Icelandic congregation in Winnipeg received $600. These allocations from the special fund were totally separate from and additional to the regular subsidies from the AUA and BFUA, which in 1916 totalled almost $4000. The small proportion that went to Vancouver reflected the fact that the congregation was maintaining no minister during this period, having decided to keep going with lay-led services for the duration of the war. Elsewhere the ministers were dependent on the fund for their continuance. Only its existence made it possible for Speight to get back the $500 he had loaned the Victoria congregation; the arrears of salary in Edmonton were made good in the same way.

The success of the appeal prompted Westwood for one brief moment to think of applying for its support to become a Western missionary like Pratt, leaving the Winnipeg congregation under the charge of Walter Letham, a local convert to Unitarianism. Then he changed his mind and became a candidate at Toronto, a more suitable location for the secretary of the Canadian Unitarian Association and leading spokesman for the movement in Canada. How the Toronto congregation was going to support a minister remained an enigma. They could certainly put up more toward a salary than Winnipeg could – which was nothing at all – but without substantial help from outside they could not now have raised the basic minimum to keep a family above starvation level. As matters turned out, the problem was resolved in another way. J. C. Hodgins, who had left Hamilton in 1892 for Germantown, Pennsylvania, and had subsequently served other American pulpits, had found his position in neutral America after the outbreak of war an impossible one. His outspoken views on who was to blame for the hostilities ('the ruthless gang of inhuman murderers who constitute the German war-party'[18]) brought him back to Canada. Increasing problems with arthritis provided an excuse for an early retirement; his wife's income as the daughter of W. B. Hamilton, the wealthy Toronto Unitarian shoe manufacturer, made it possible. So he had settled at Brampton, twenty miles or so outside Toronto. He now offered to supply the Toronto pulpit on a regular basis for an indefinite period at less than

half the regular salary, which amount he would donate to the Patriotic Fund. He would continue to live at Brampton and would undertake only weddings, funerals, and occasional lectures beyond the Sunday services. The congregation happily closed with the offer, with no expectation that this stopgap arrangement was in fact going to continue for the next twenty-eight years.

Westwood now settled down in Winnipeg, and another opening came up for Letham. In November 1915 Harold Speight left Victoria to take up the ministry of the Unitarian church in Berkeley, California, where the association with the University of California made the position particularly attractive to a man with his background and qualifications. He subsequently had a distinguished career both as minister and as university professor and administrator, returning to Victoria in extreme old age for the last few years of his retirement.

Letham followed him immediately. He was a young man, born in Scotland and educated in Winnipeg, where his father was a Baptist minister and he had himself served for two years in the same capacity at a mission church. A quiet man whose main interests were literary, he lacked the driving force necessary to make any headway at all in the unpromising Victoria scene. Westwood attempted to provide some momentum by undertaking a week's preaching mission in Victoria early in December 1916. But although he drew the usual crowd of curiosity seekers, the ambitious plans for his final night backfired badly. A downtown theatre had been rented, but after a day of deluging rain, 'When I walked out upon its unusually large bare stage and found myself facing about thirty people scattered over the main auditorium and galleries which had a capacity of perhaps twelve hundred, I felt insignificant indeed.'[19]

This episode seemed sadly symbolic of the Unitarian efforts in Victoria. Somehow they never produced the expected results. After eighteen months, Letham gave up and returned to Winnipeg. He was in turn followed by Ernest Bowden, an English-born Methodist minister who had served several charges on Vancouver Island before retraining as a Unitarian at the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry. He stayed in Victoria for two years, with no greater success.

One result of the General Conference Fund was that it now became possible to place a heavily subsidized minister at Calgary. In January 1916 Westwood and Potter travelled there in fifty-below-zero weather for the installation of William Irvine, later to become a well-known

figure in Canadian political life. At this stage in his career he was a refugee from a Presbyterian heresy trial in western Ontario. Though he had been acquitted, his situation grew increasingly uncomfortable. He had got into touch with Westwood, who recommended him for a Unitarian pulpit. Calgary held some promise. The congregation had been kept together by frequent visits from Potter, and might under the right leadership revive to the condition in which Pratt had left it three years earlier.

Irvine, however, was looking for a larger body of hearers than the forty-odd churchgoers who turned out on Sunday mornings to his somewhat inaccessible hall. So, like Pratt before him, he rented a downtown theatre for Sunday afternoon meetings on topical issues of the day. Large numbers of people began at attend these meetings, usually devoted to a radical reassessment of the existing social order. Irvine found it particularly galling that at a time when so many were undergoing the most ghastly sufferings, war profiteers were turning the situation to their own advantage. His utterances became more and more stinging, till some people began to call him a dangerous subversive, though in his own opinion what he was doing was proclaiming the religiously respectable ideal of 'the Kingdom of God upon earth'.

Matters came to a head with the great conscription debate that divided the nation in 1917. Unitarians were no more unanimous than the community at large on this subject. Westwood, though not opposed to conscription in principle, was so outraged by the use of the issue as a political ploy that he denounced the Borden government's proposals at a Sunday evening service in Winnipeg. An impromptu meeting after the service endorsed his stand. When news of this reached Vancouver, the congregation reacted strongly. A meeting authorized the sending of a message to the Prime Minister repudiating what they regarded as an attempt to associate the liberty-loving principles of Unitarianism with the anticonscription movement. They pledged their support in the effort to uphold the nation's threatened liberties by whatever means might be seen to be necessary. In subsequent discussions it emerged that the two congregations were not as totally opposed as might have appeared at first sight, but the courses of action they endorsed were very different. Westwood argued that the conscription of men should be accompanied by conscription of wealth. Though not contesting that this might be necesssary, the board of the Vancouver church urged that it did not affect the need for immediate

conscription of manpower. 'By all means let us insist on the conscription of wealth, but do not allow ourselves to be blinded to the main issue . . . which is that we have to win the war as quickly as possible. . . . Great though the evils existing in our midst may be, we do not regard them as being remotely comparable to the hideous evil revealed in the thing which has come to be known as Prussianism.'[20]

The issues raised by Irvine were no more radical than these, but they were raised more publicly, persistently, and provocatively. There was an inevitable reaction. The theatre in which his meetings were held cancelled the lease on grounds of lack of patriotism (instead of singing 'God Save the King', those attending had joined in singing 'God Save the People'). But a more serious blow came from within the Unitarian movement itself. After the United States entered the war in April 1917, the AUA had hastened to declare its wholehearted support of the Allied cause. No subsidy from the Association would be paid, it was announced, to any congregation for the support of a minister who did not loyally give such allegiance. Irvine was therefore particularly vulnerable.

He strongly denied that he was disloyal. He did not oppose the war. He simply opposed the manner in which it was being fought. In the election of 1917 he accepted a hopeless nomination to run against the government. Thousands of men, he said, including two of his own brothers, were going to their death in France as part of an ill-equipped army supplied with shoddy materials by those interested only in their own profits. 'I took the ground that if the war was being fought for freedom and democracy it should be fought as nearly as possible under conditions of equal sacrifice; that if our youth were called upon to give their lives the least that should be demanded was that manufacturers and others should give of their wealth.'[21] He also discounted the popular atrocity stories of the day as chauvinistic propaganda, and was reported to have said that if the British or Americans had been in the position in which the Germans found themselves they would have behaved in the same way.

It was scarcely surprising, under the circumstances of the time, that wild rumors began to circulate. Irvine, it was said, was a German agent trying to sabotage Canada's war effort. His own congregation stood by him for the most part, though a few super-patriots turned against him. One lifelong Unitarian went over to the Anglicans in disgust. But it was his Unitarian neighbors in Edmonton who watched

the scene with the greatest apprehension. After Potter returned to his native Massachusetts in June 1916 the congregation had made little attempt to find a successor. W. H. Alexander, professor of classics at the University of Alberta, offered to supply the pulpit on a regular basis. He was an able speaker and the congregation took the easy course, as the Toronto church had done the previous year, of appointing a man whom they did not have to support beyond a fairly nominal retainer fee. Like the arrangement in Toronto, this one was to last a long time: seventeen years.

Alexander soon found himself in trouble. No one could impugn his support of the war, but his aggressive presentations of Unitarianism, with caustic attacks from the pulpit upon doctrines held sacred by many who read the reports of these sermons in the press, provoked a public reaction. He was assailed in the Edmonton *Bulletin*. A petition was drawn up demanding that the provincial government should deprive him of his chair at the university on the grounds that it was inappropriate that anyone proclaiming such ideas should be supported by public funds. His university colleagues, however, stood by him and his tenure was upheld. But he could not afford to be associated with people whose patriotism was open to question, particularly as he himself gave such completely unwavering support to the war. He therefore set about purging the Unitarian movement of those he suspected of not being as wholehearted. His first target was the Women's Alliance of the Edmonton church. Though an affiliate of the congregation, this organization had maintained no restrictions on its membership. Alexander now declared that the Alliance was 'a scandal to the church,' claiming that its non-Unitarian members included a Socialist, a Catholic, a Spiritualist, and a person who was outspokenly disloyal. The president of the Alliance, assigned the responsibility for removing these 'undesirables', resigned in protest and left the church.[22] An inquiry was instituted by the board, which produced an admission from the woman charged with disloyalty that she had indeed said that she would sooner see her son carried out of the house in his coffin than see him wearing a uniform.

But it was chiefly the reports from Calgary that aroused Alexander's ire. The thought of being associated in the same organization with a man saying what Irvine was saying was intolerable. 'At much personal risk,' he wrote to Eliot, 'in a community none too friendly to our great cause I am week after week occupying the pulpit of the Edmonton church, the nearest neighbour of the Calgary church.... From time to time I am confronted with some amazing production from the mind of Mr. Irvine and asked whether that is the kind of stuff that Unitarianism stands for.... Personally and on behalf of the church and the Nation and the Allies I desire to file objection.'[23]

Eliot responded by cutting off the AUA subsidy to Calgary, informing Irvine that he had received indications that 'you belong to the small number of Unitarian ministers who have not been able to give wholehearted support to the principles which have led our allied nations into the war.'[24] In reply, Irvine repudiated the charges laid against him, protesting that he had been judged without being given the opportunity to speak in his own defence. But he did not ask for a reversal of the judgment. Instead, he informed Eliot that he had taken a job as a locomotive carpenter in the CPR yards and would continue to conduct Sunday services for the Calgary congregation as long as they wished him to do so. On this new economic footing, which provided him with a better income than he had been receiving as a minister, he maintained his position for a further two years, when he moved to a position as organizer for the United Farmers of New Brunswick. His followers, whom Alexander described as 'simply radicals of every conceivable sort, so that the church was just a cave of Adullam, without coherency or homogeneity,'[25] formed a People's Church, which applied for the use of Unity Hall. The AUA, which held title to the building and had more than $7500 invested in it, reserved it for the use of the tiny group of continuing Unitarians. For a year Alexander went down monthly to conduct services while the congregation tried to augment its income by renting the hall for dances. Complaints from the neighbors caused the city council to revoke the licence, and the response on Sundays was too small to continue the experiment. Services were suspended, and the AUA decided to sell the property, which proved to be virtually unmarketable. Not until 1946 was it finally sold, and for the intervening years hung like an albatross around the neck of the Association.

While these wartime disputes raged in the West, the Montreal church was soberly celebrating its 75th anniversary. Griffin, in his sermon to mark the occasion, noted that much of the bitterness and hostility displayed toward Unitarians in the past had by now evaporated. 'Our church is respected, our people are not subject to persecution; they work in all the community movements, so that in proportion

to our numbers we are better represented in the welfare activities of the city than any other church. Our hymns are everywhere sung, and here in the city many are the ministers who use our book of Common Prayer in their pulpit ministrations.' One indication of these changing attitudes was the willingness of another congregation to make its building available for the crowning event of this anniversary year. The General Conference had voted to meet in Canada for the first time, and its twenty-seventh meeting convened in Montreal in September 1917. The major service drew an attendance of close to a thousand, and was held in St James' Methodist Church. The delegates were of course overwhelmingly from the United States, but the more prominent figures in Canadian Unitarianism were all present. Both Alexander and Irvine addressed the conference (the latter on 'The Progress of Prohibition in Canada'), as well as Rognvaldur Petursson, Westwood, Hodgins, and Griffin.

Relations between Canada and the United States had changed markedly since the American entry into the war. Westwood recalled that in the earlier period the American members of the Winnipeg church had seemed almost like an isolated island within the congregation. Some had in fact returned to their homeland. But now there was a sense of solidarity. The celebration of a century of peace between the two nations originally planned for 1915 was incorporated into the Conference proceedings, and given validity by making it mark the centenary of the Rush-Bagot agreements, which demilitarized the Great Lakes. At the celebration service in the Church of the Messiah a bronze plaque to commemorate the occasion was presented by President Eliot to the church, while the congregation sang a hymn written for the occasion by John Haynes Holmes:

O'er continent and island,
From city, field and wood,
Still speak, O Lord, Thy messengers
Of peace and brotherhood.

Unfortunately, all was not peace and brotherhood within the conference itself. Holmes was an outspoken and unrepentant pacifist, and in a nation now at war this attitude did not sit well with many of his co-religionists. In particular, ex-President W. H. Taft, now Chief Justice

of the United States, who presided at most of the sessions of the conference, was so far moved as to insist upon a public repudiation of Holmes by the assembled delegates, which was carried by an overwhelming majority. No clearer illustration could have been given of the unhappy tensions induced among Unitarians by the war.

The General Conference was Griffin's swan song as minister in Montreal. He left shortly afterward to take up the ministry of the oldest established Unitarian congregation in North America: the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia. His successor, Dudley Hays Ferrell, epitomized the long-standing joke that American Unitarians believed in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Neighborhood of Boston. After less than two years of uneasy exile in Montreal, he gladly embraced an opportunity to return to Massachusetts.

Changes were taking place in other Canadian congregations. Since Bullock's enlistment in 1915, the Ottawa congregation had been doing surprisingly well with week-to-week pulpit supplies. W. A. Vrooman, formerly minister in Winnipeg and now living in Montreal, was a frequent visitor. But as time went by the congregation grew less happy with this arrangement, and even less so with the thought of the eventual return of Bullock, for whom many of them had little love. They were obliged by law to hold his position open for him until his discharge from the armed forces, but eventually he was induced to send in his voluntary resignation. It now became possible to look for a regular successor, though the congregation's financial resources were as limited as ever. H. J. Adlard, who had been Pratt's missionary at Moose Jaw in the summer of 1912 and had since that time been in the United States, was anxious to return 'to British soil', and in May 1918 was called to Ottawa. But after less than three years' experience of the financial disadvantages of such a move, he changed his mind and moved back across the border.

During the war the Hamilton congregation had found itself in a downward spiral. Neither Boston nor London would invest more money there without greater evidence of self-help from the congregation than was forthcoming. In 1919 the Hamilton Unitarians accepted an offer from the Christian Scientists to purchase their building, and suspended services. Thenceforward the only regular activity of the congregation was the annual meeting, at which they had the unprecedented pleasure of discussing what to do with substantial funds in

hand (the proceeds of the sale as invested in Victory Bonds). They gave $50 to the suffering Unitarians of Transylvania, but only very modest contributions, sometimes nothing at all, to the annual financial campaign of the AUA.

A heavier blow to Canadian Unitarianism was the resignation of Westwood, which came in the spring of 1919. In desperation, his congregation made a totally unrealistic offer to double his salary if he would consent to stay, but he accepted a call to Toledo, Ohio. His disappearance from the scene removed the only man who could at this point exert decisive leadership. All across the country the movement was drifting with no clear sense of mission, at the very time when according to the dreams cherished during the earlier years of the war the days of opportunity should be returning.

Actually, conditions at the end of the war were far from favorable for any resumption of the Unitarian advances of the Edwardian period. The New Theology was more or less dead. Those who had experienced, either directly or vicariously, the horrors of the trenches in France were disinclined to sing paeans in praise of progress. Liberal Christianity as a whole was in steep decline. Men disenchanted by the war lost their faith in any kind of Christianity and took refuge in philosophies of cynicism, disillusionment, and hedonism. Sales of Fitzgerald's *Omar Kahayyam* soared. Those who stayed with Christianity – as more did, perhaps, in Canada than in any other Western country – gravitated toward a concept of Christ as the Suffering Saviour rather than a teacher and leader in the liberal mould.

Only one aspect of the New Theology continued to exert an influence: its social radicalism. 'The Kingdom of God on Earth' had been the masthead on programs issued by the Winnipeg church on the eve of the war, announcing a special series of services on the theme of 'The Church and the New Social Reformation'. It was this message that Irvine had preached almost exclusively in Calgary. But by the end of the war the Kingdom of God on earth was seen as involving a much longer, harder, and more bitter struggle than had been foreseen by the earlier exuberant optimists who proclaimed (in the words of a popular Unitarian hymn) 'For lo! already on the hills/The flags of dawn appear.' The new order was to be struggled and sacrificed for, on the pattern of the war itself or, for some, the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Winnipeg General Strike was an expression of the temper of the

times, combining aspirations toward a new social order with disenchantment as to the direction in which the course of events seemed to be actually moving.

During the inter-war years many Unitarian congregations both in Britain and in the United States showed a tendency to move toward an espousal of socialism. The same phenomenon, though not on the same scale, appeared in Canada. But theologically speaking, the Canadian churches remained close to the conservative end of the Unitarian spectrum. Pratt's evaluation, made in 1913, still held good for the most part: 'We need churches which are willing to take advantage of the great historic impulse of Christianity, but interpret it in the light of modern thought. A man who wants to throw over Christianity and disregard entirely the great Christian impulse isn't the kind of man, according to my way of thinking, we want in Western Canada.'[26]

A much more equivocal statement came ten years later from an Ottawa layman: 'What we want in the pulpit is the man who can connect us with the spiritual power. We don't care to have him explain it to us. Some of us think it comes from on high; some that it comes out of humanity; some are purely agnostic.'[27] But the Ottawa congregation had always been more radical than most. Vancouver, for instance, was totally unprepared for what it encountered when, acting on a recommendation from Westwood, the congregation issued an invitation early in 1918 to E. Howard Durnin, a former Methodist minister from Saskatchewan. His unanimous invitation to become the regular minister after a trial period was quickly rescinded when it became apparent that, personal attractiveness notwithstanding, he no longer believed in worship or prayer and intended to turn his services into lectures. Half a century later such a minister would have commended himself in many quarters, but at least two other congregations in Canada besides Vancouver rejected Durnin as a candidate on the same grounds.

Not quite as brief was the ministry of 'Jimmy' Hart, who stayed in Winnipeg the greater part of two years (1922-24). He too was a former Methodist minister, from Lancashire, though he had emigrated in 1909 to the United States. He was a colorful character, unorthodox in every way, and his wife was equally far ahead of her time, retaining her maiden name and refusing to be called Mrs Hart. His oratorical powers and blunt manner attracted many young people, but his throw-

ing over of all traditional theology did not commend him to the congregation at large. An assessment by a field worker for the AUA after his departure judged him 'entirely unfitted for the place.'

With these minor and unsuccessful exceptions, the Canadian churches chose leaders who were conservative by Unitarian theological standards. Many of them had spent their formative years in other denominations. Liberal Christianity was still the Unitarian norm, though it had a fading appeal to the general public. There was little reflection in Canada of the debates taking place south of the border as to whether Unitarianism was really to be regarded as one of the Protestant denominations of Christianity, or rather an entirely different form of religion with different goals, different symbols, and a different constituency to which to appeal. But this orientation in Canada toward a Christian focus did not produce a corresponding degree of cordiality from the Christian churches. Despite a few local exceptions, the gap between Unitarians and members of other churches, which had narrowed a little just before and during the war, now began to widen again. Until after World War II, this was due chiefly to a reaction within the orthodox churches, which were by now in full retreat from the liberalism of the New Theology.

In the immediate postwar period, Canadian Unitarians were generally forced to make do with the resources they already had, rather than mustering new ones. Westwood was succeeded in Winnipeg by Letham, whose chief recommendation was that he was immediately available. He was an excellent preacher, but lacked the capacity to supply the kind of leadership that Westwood had provided. His father was still a Baptist minister in the same city, though this caused no unusual problems. But after fifteen months he gave up on the Winnipeg ministry and on Unitarianism. He took a teaching position and later became a Presbyterian minister in the United States. Faced with the usual problems in finding a successor, the Winnipeg Unitarians made a bold move. F. O. Maber, secretary-treasurer of the Northwestern Life Assurance Company, was chairman of the church board, and he made a personal trip to Boston to conduct negotiations. He returned in triumph with a brilliant young man who had recently transferred from the ministry of the Christian Connection: A. Nicholas Kaucher, linguist, philosopher, and mathematician. Unfortunately, however, Maber had overlooked two crucial points. The Winnipeg congregation had been accustomed to outstanding preachers, and

Kaucher's strengths did not lie in that area. But a much greater problem lay in his recent German origins. The feelings of the congregation three years after the end of the war still ran far too high for a man with a German accent to be given a fair chance. The appointment was not ratified and Kaucher resigned at the end of the year. He had been in process of delivering (to an almost empty church) an advertised series of sermons on the celebrated Five Points of Unitarianism, his final sermon being on 'The progress of mankind, onward and upward forever'. A week after he left Winnipeg, Maber too resigned.

Vancouver had fared little better in its quest for leadership. After the debacle with Durnin, the congregation decided that the time had come to discontinue the lay-led services that had kept them alive during the war, but no acceptable candidate for the pulpit was in sight. For a while Albert Pineo, now in business on Vancouver Island, came over regularly, and the congregation was almost evenly divided over whether to invite him to become their minister once again. The AUA, however, with one eye on Pineo's record and the other on his current activities as a frequent speaker at Spiritualist services, had no such divided opinions, and made it clear that no subsidy would be forthcoming toward his support. To offset this negative attitude, they proposed Paul McReynolds, also a former minister of the Christian Connection, but now a Unitarian minister in Colorado. McReynolds arrived in May 1920. An introspective bachelor plagued by chronic ill-health (he died in 1924 at the age of fifty) he was totally incapable of providing the kind of leadership the church needed, but as Minot Simons candidly admitted later, he was absolutely the only man the Association had available. His resignation was submitted in the same month as Kaucher's. Western Canada was now completely denuded of ministers, apart from Alexander's lay pastorate in Edmonton.

Eastern Canada was in little better condition. Ottawa had the temporary services of Wyndham H. Heathcote, an Australian ex-Anglican who was thinking of a North American ministry; after a winter in Ottawa, however, he accepted an invitation to the Unitarian church in Wellington, New Zealand. Hodgins was still carrying on his part-time ministry in Toronto. Both he and Alexander offered to end these 'temporary' arrangements after the war, but neither the Edmonton nor the Toronto congregations were in a position to seek fulltime leadership. So Hodgins hired a part-time assistant, Mrs W. B. Campbell, and

settled down to a routine of weekends in Toronto, with the rest of the week spent in literary pursuits at Brampton.

Only in Montreal was the situation more promising. There an able young American minister, Sydney B. Snow, had been appointed in 1920 after fulfilling an assignment from the AUA to investigate conditions among the persecuted Unitarians of Transylvania. In the country generally, however, the war had sapped the vitality of the movement to an extent that left it as ill-equipped to face the coming challenges as Canada's wartime armies had been through the supply scandals that had aroused Irvine's ire.

8

The Bleak Years

There was still a substantial constituency for Unitarianism in Canada, however poorly the churches were expressing it. The census of 1921 revealed almost five thousand self-declared Unitarians. This represented an increase over the figures for ten years earlier in every province without exception, and in Quebec and Manitoba the advances were substantial. In Quebec, to be sure, this represented no more than a regaining of the ground lost during the Barnes ministry; the 1921 figures were only a little higher than those for 1881 and well below those for 1871. But they still reflected creditably on the work of Griffin, and also of Snow, under whose ministry the life of the congregation picked up momentum very rapidly. Only Sunderland and Westwood had brought anything like this kind of ministry to Canada since the days of Cordner. After an installation service at which the changed conditions noted by Griffin three years earlier had been symbolized by the presence of the Vicar of Christ Church Cathedral, Snow got down to work. Within a few months the congregation had voted to establish a committee to revise its service-book, which had been unchanged for many years and reflected the spirit of mid-Victorian Unitarianism. Another decision was to 'adopt' for a minimum of three years the Unitarian church in a village in Transylvania, the transfer of which province from Hungary to Romania had resulted in a great deal of hardship and deprivation. An annual allocation of $160 was voted for this purpose. In February 1921 ex-President Taft of the U.S.A. spoke from the pulpit to a capacity congregation, presenting

an aggressively Unitarian message that precipitated a violent attack upon Unitarianism the following Sunday from the pulpit of the Erskine Presbyterian Church. This was followed by a lengthy and polemical exchange in the columns of the press.

Four months later a prominent Unitarian minister from England, E. Rosalind Lee, arrived in Montreal in the course of a coast-to-coast tour of the Canadian churches. She too spoke of Unitarianism, preaching the now current view that it was based on no external authority, ecclesiastical or scriptural, but solely on the right of private judgment and the dictates of conscience. The *Montreal Star*'s chief impression of the service, however, was conveyed in its headline HAT NOT WORN BY WOMAN PREACHER.

But the biggest event of 1921 was a series of six Sunday evening meetings presented at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in the autumn, which drew attendances of a thousand. The opening speaker was a radical Christian scholar, Professor Kirsopp Lake of Harvard. These lectures were under the sponsorship of the Unitarian Laymen's League, an organization founded in 1919 in an attempt to revitalize American Unitarianism and exploit the opportunities that had arisen with the coming of peace. Though in no sense anticlerical, the League worked on the principle that well-to-do Unitarian laymen would give better financial support to programs promoted and run by laymen. The validity of this assumption was proved by the large sums of money that the League was in fact able to raise, and by the rapidity with which chapters were established in congregations all across North America. These usually functioned as ginger groups to promote Unitarian extension, which was also the objective of the League's activity in sending prominent Unitarian spokesmen such as ex-President Taft on tour. A number of cities, Montreal being one, were selected for special campaigns, bringing in well-known personalities to speak under Unitarian auspices on the major issues of the day.

The impetus gained through the League's campaign in Montreal was maintained during the following few years by the Sunday evening People's Forum. This sponsored meetings at the church, under the auspices of a committee including the minister and a member of the church board. The church reserved the right to veto speakers or subjects, though there is no record of this veto having been used. Among those speaking at the Forum were Emmeline Pankhurst, the British suffragette leader, and Agnes Macphail, who took up the same theme. Perhaps the most outspoken advocate of the women's movement was Charlotte Perkins Gilman of New York. Taking as her subject 'His Religion and Hers', she declared that religion had become exclusively a man's province; man's desires and ideals had been expressed in it and woman had been ignored. 'Have you noticed,' she asked, 'that all the religions – Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Christianity – concentrate upon the paradise, and that all these paradises are for men only?'[1]

Some of the Forum speakers were Unitarians. John Haynes Holmes came up from New York. William Irvine, who had returned to Calgary to run in the 1921 election as a Labor candidate, and had to his own amazement been returned to Ottawa, came to speak on the structure of economic power in Canada. His parliamentary colleague J. S. Woodsworth was also a speaker; Woodsworth was sympathetic to Unitarianism but never became a member, as did his sister and two of his sons. (At the time of his death in 1942 the Montreal church was the location for a large memorial service conducted by the then minister, Angus Cameron, assisted by Professor R. B. Y. Scott of the United Theological College, with Professor Frank Scott as chief speaker. A similar service in Vancouver was conducted by Irvine.)

In the autumn of 1922, again under the auspices of the Laymen's League, the church was the scene of a two-week Unitarian Mission led by two prominent American ministers, William Lloyd Sullivan and Frederick May Eliot. The results of these efforts began to show in the church statistics. Membership rose from 184 in 1921 to 327 in 1923, and Sunday morning attendances rose too, though they seldom exceeded 150. But this was a far higher number than would have been found at Unitarian services elsewhere in the country, except at the Icelandic church in Winnipeg.

Snow himself, described as 'a princely figure in the pulpit,' was as outspoken as the visiting speakers. In a sermon marking the third anniversary of the Armistice he denounced the 'cynical old men' who were destroying all that the war dead had given their lives to gain. Three years later, in a hard-hitting sermon on civic affairs, he attacked the city authorities for their tolerance of a system of commercialized vice, and advocated the removal of the educational system from ecclesiastical control. Montreal, he declared, was in civic matters at least fifty years behind other cities of Canada and the United States. It was, for instance, the only city in North America, including Mexico, that

did not support from public funds a municipal hospital, and that left the care of the sick and disabled largely to private charity. It was the only city in America, north of Mexico, with no public provision for the poverty and unemployment so frequent in this industrial age.[2]

In 1923 Snow was awarded the honorary degree of D.D. from Meadville, an institution of which he was to become president five years later. He was one of five ministers from North America to participate in an exchange with British Unitarians to mark the centenary of their respective movements in 1925. His resignation from the Montreal pulpit the following year to become field secretary for the AUA came as a blow to the Canadian movement to which he had contributed so much, and to the Montreal church in particular.

The dramatic rise, already noted, in the Unitarian following in Manitoba between 1911 and 1921 was chiefly due to the continuing vitality of the Icelandic movement. In the opening years of the war it was on a steady if unspectacular course, building its strength slowly under the leadership of Rognvaldur Petursson as AUA field secretary with Gudmundur Arnason serving as minister in Winnipeg and Albert E. Kristjansson serving the small communities between the lakes. Meanwhile an ecclesiastical time bomb was ticking away that was eventually to explode with devastating effects within the Icelandic religious community.

In 1894 a second Lutheran congregation had been established in Winnipeg, calling itself the Tabernacle. Though it was formed partly for geographical reasons, there were also philosophical differences with the First Lutheran church. Using Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London as its model, the new church aspired to be 'a distinctive religious organization' serving the entire community within which it was set. Many innovations and departures from the normal Lutheran pattern were made in the services, but the congregation claimed to be entirely orthodox in its theological position, accepting the same doctrines as the Church of Iceland. In order not to compromise its freedom of action it did not seek membership in the Lutheran synod, and was therefore subjected to a great deal of criticism and attack from orthodox Lutherans.

In 1903 F. J. Bergmann became minister of the Tabernacle, and two years later the congregation at last joined the Synod. Bergmann, however, was moving rapidly in a liberal direction, and soon became an avowed and outspoken exponent of the New Theology. He urged

freedom of conscience for all, declaring that the historic creeds of the church were but milestones along the road and should not be made into a Chinese wall. 'The greatest thing in life', he said, 'is to grow.'[3] And under his leadership, which combined the talents of scholar, organizer, and pastor, the congregation grew.

Relationships with the orthodox Lutherans became more and more difficult, until a full-scale confrontation occurred at the synod of 1909. Bergmann was forced out of the association and his point of view formally repudiated. But his congregation stood behind him and so did eight other congregations, with the result that over two thousand members, more than a quarter of the entire membership, withdrew from the synod. Among the seceding congregations was the Quill Lake Church at Wynyard, Saskatchewan, which was later to become Unitarian. A great outburst of vigorous activity followed, culminating in the dedication on the eve of the war of a magnificent new Tabernacle church, built at a cost of some $60 000.

As relationships with the orthodox Lutherans became more strained, relationships with the Unitarians became correspondingly cordial, exemplifying R. J. Campbell's dictum that his New Theology bridged the gulf between Trinitarians and Unitarians. In the summer of 1916 discussions began with a view to establishing a new liberal synod to be called The United Icelandic Conference of America. The draft constitution as drawn up by Bergmann proposed that within the new organization the historic creeds of the church would be 'by no means legal ordinances, but mere illustrations; the conference itself would have no directive authority over the congregations joining it, but would be simply advisory.'[4]

Under wartime conditions the discussions proceeded slowly, and no definite action had been taken by 1918, when Bergmann died. The Tabernacle now found itself in the usual dilemma of an independent congregation built so largely around the personality of one man. After short-lived and unsatisfactory negotiations with the orthodox Lutherans, the leaders of the congregation turned again to the Unitarians, this time with a view not simply to establishing a conference, but to a complete merger of the two congregations. The Unitarians were happy to use Bergmann's Articles of Union as their point of departure, and in January 1919 submitted a proposal 'that the First Icelandic Unitarian congregation and the Tabernacle congregation be united in one common congregation,' as 'both stand for freedom of inquiry and

absolute personal freedom in matters of doctrine and faith.'[5] The new congregation would use the Tabernacle building. The existing Unitarian church would be sold and the proceeds used to liquidate the mortgage on the Tabernacle, and within six months of the merger becoming effective a liberal minister satisfactory to the united congregation would be brought from Iceland. After lengthy discussion these proposals were approved by the Tabernacle congregation in March.

The decision, however, was not unanimous. A couple of dozen dissentients took strong exception to the move and challenged its legality in the courts. The ensuing litigation was in the tradition of the lawuits in New England in the early nineteenth century and in England in the 1840s, when the defenders of orthodoxy likewise contested the rights of liberals to inherit church property. Though they constituted only a small minority of the congregation, the plaintiffs were on strong ground. The original constitution of the Tabernacle, which had never been changed, provided that in the event of a division within the congregation the property should belong to the party that adhered to the constitution. Adhering to the constitution entailed an acceptance of the doctrines embodied in the confessions of the Lutheran Church of Iceland. After a hearing that lasted five days, Chief Justice Mathers delivered judgment to the effect that 'The Tabernacle Church property was accumulated by those who adhere to the doctrines of the Lutheran Church as expressed in the constitution. While that constitution stands, a mere majority of the congregation has no right against the wish of the minority to devote the property of the church to the use of any other body which does not subscribe to these doctrines. In my opinion the proposed basis of union with the Unitarian Church would, if carried out, constitute a fundamental departure from the doctrinal position of the Tabernacle as declared in its constitution.'[6]

Notice of appeal was immediately lodged, a stay of proceedings granted to prevent the minority from entering into possession of the building and a fund of $1200 raised among the liberals and Unitarians to meet the costs of appeal. The Lutheran synod took similar action on the other side. Public opinion ran high, and the liberals found themselves at a disadvantage in having no Icelandic newspaper to give their side of the case. They had a minority interest in one, but had to buy a controlling interest before it could be prevailed upon to present their position. When the Court of Appeal convened, this

position was brilliantly presented by J. T. Thorson, a Unitarian lawyer who was subsequently elected to parliament, served in a federal cabinet, and wound up as a judge of the Exchequer Court of Canada. But the decision of the lower court was upheld. Permission was sought and obtained to appeal the case to the Privy Council. After Thorson advised them that such an appeal was almost hopeless, however, the liberals abandoned the battle. The proposed union between the majority party in the Tabernacle and the Unitarians proceeded, but the valuable church property was lost to the orthodox. The intensity of ill-feeling engendered within the Icelandic community by these events was to last for two generations.

The new merged congregation in Winnipeg was named The First Icelandic Federated Church (Unitarian and Liberal Christian). The cornerstone of a new church to replace the one they had lost was laid in October 1920 and the following spring Rognvaldur Petursson, who had assumed temporary charge, journeyed to Iceland at AUA expense to find them a minister. He was also commissioned to find a minister for the Gimli circuit, and had by now gained enough confidence from the New Theology congregation at Wynyard (which had just erected a handsome brick church) to look for one for them as well. In these projects he was completely successful. To the Winnipeg church came Ragnar E. Kvaran, a recent graduate of the Divinity School at Reykjavik, a vigorous and attractive personality who soon welded the combined congregation into a strong and growing community. To Gimli came Eyjolfur J. Melan, who dedicated himself to the difficult assignment of rebuilding the liberal movement on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The Gimli congregation had been inactive for a while despite sporadic efforts to revive it. While Westwood was in Winnipeg he had a summer home there, and had persuaded the reluctant Icelanders to come out to hear an English preacher. 'One of my most vivid recollections,' he wrote, 'is that of listening at night to the huskies howling in their pens. It was a weird sound, that protracted, mournful cry of the part-wolf. Until one becomes used to it, the experience of conducting an evening service in the little Unitarian church to the accompaniment of that canine chorus was somewhat disconcerting.'[7]

Melan rebuilt the congregation. He also helped rebuild and extend the church itself. Carpenter, artist, organizer, and social worker, he took a leading part in civic life. Besides looking after his home base at

Gimli, he also had responsibility for charges at Arnes, Hnausa, Riverton, and Hecla, and within a few months of his arrival he had invested in a second-hand Ford to carry him around this vast parish.

The new minister for Wynyard was Fridrik Fridriksson, another recent graduate of the Reykjavik Divinity School, who had been refused ordination by the Bishop of Iceland when the latter discovered where he was planning to go. He became responsible for the three established congregations in Saskatchewan plus a string of preaching stations. Fridriksson gave his ready co-operation to strengthening the ties between this New Theology movement and the Unitarian congregations of Manitoba. Bergmann's idea of a liberal conference was revived, and in December 1922 a meeting was convened at Wynyard to determine whether to proceed. All the Unitarian ministers from Manitoba were in attendance, together with leading lay representatives of the churches in both provinces. A delegation from North Dakota, opposed to the project, withdrew when it was enthusiastically voted to establish a new association to be known as The United Conference of Icelandic Unitarian and Liberal Churches. It had a membership of thirteen congregations and held its first regular session in Winnipeg the following summer, under Kvaran's presidency. To refute the Lutheran church's claim to be the only legitimate link with the religious life of the homeland, the major speaker at the conference was Professor Agust Bjarnason of the faculty of philosophy at the University of Iceland. He had been brought to North America by the AUA.

The next few years represented the heyday of the Icelandic Unitarian movement. The Saskatchewan congregations applied for membership in the AUA. New church buildings were erected at Arborg and Riverton, while Lundar and Oak Point inherited buildings transported from Otto and Mary Hill. Community churches built partly with Unitarian money and open to Unitarian use came into being at Piney and Vogar. There had originally been a similar project at Arnes; but when the community church there was moved on to property owned by one of the trustees of the Lutheran congregation, its use was denied to the Unitarians and they were obliged to put up a church of their own.

Albert Kristjansson, still minister to the Lundar circuit, was elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1920 as a representative of the Farmers' Progressive Party. A vigorous speaker and warm humanitarian, Kristjansson made a lasting contribution to the cause of religious and

social reform, which for him were intertwined. To his deep love of the literature of his own people he added a wide acquaintance with English literature, and could quote the poets at length. He served the interlake settlements until 1928, when he moved to the Pacific coast, where he spent the remainder of his career as minister to Icelandic congregations in Seattle and Blaine. His lively interest in progressive religion and politics was maintained until his death at the age of ninety-eight, and he was a recipient of one of the highest awards of the government of Iceland; the Grand Cross of the Order of the Falcon.

The formation of further congregations became an objective of the newly established Conference. For a while services were held regularly in Selkirk, a stronghold of the Lutherans, but a viable group could not be established. The fact that all the congregations except one were in small and scattered communities made it difficult for the movement to become self-supporting. Apart from Winnipeg, the Wynyard circuit was the only place where a minister could be maintained without outside aid. As field secretary, Petursson had his entire salary paid by the AUA, and grants were made toward those of Melan and Kristjansson.

At the expiration of his five-year contract in 1926 Melan resigned from Gimli. He moved to California; but in 1933 returned to his old circuit, which he served until his retirement in 1950. For three years from 1926 the Gimli circuit was served by another minister from Iceland, Thorgeir Jonsson. Regular interchange between the Icelandic state church and the congregations of the Unitarian Conference in Canada was to continue for many years. Benjamin Kristjansson came from Iceland in 1928 to succeed Kvaran, who had taken over from Petursson as AUA field secretary. Both men returned to Iceland in 1933, as did Fridriksson from Wynyard. After a period without ministerial leadership, the Wynyard congregation secured in 1935 another minister from Iceland, Jakob Jonsson, who undertook a five-year contract after spending some months as interim minister in Winnipeg.

Apart from Melan, all the men who came from Iceland after 1920 eventually returned to their homeland, where some of them rose to positions of distinction within the liberal wing of the established church. They had made a significant contribution to the life of Western Canada in face of great obstacles. To the natural difficulties of ministering to pioneer settlements in a new land were added the bitter

hostility of a large section of their own ethnic community, now attached to a particularly intransigent form of Lutheranism. Children in the small towns were warned against associating with Unitarian neighbors, and grew up with so strong an impression that the Unitarian churches were centres of unspeakable wickedness that the occasional furtive peep through the windows brought memorable disappointment. After 1929 the great depression aggravated the economic problems, while a new feature in the situation began to make its presence increasingly felt. The younger generation was beginning to assimilate to Canadian language and culture, and no longer felt at ease with a language it only half understood. Emil Gudmundson, growing up in Lundar during this period, recalled: 'All services and sermons were in the Icelandic language, since it was the language of the older generation, such as my grandparents. This meant, however, that my generation had little interest.... The wonder may be that I did not become a drop-out as most of my contemporaries from that community did.'[8]

Not even the warm genial spirit of Gudmundur Arnason, who had assumed charge of the Lundar circuit after Kristjansson left in 1928 and stayed with it till his death in 1943, could arrest this trend. The constituency for these churches was declining. Rognvaldur Petursson resumed the field secretaryship when Kvaran went back to Iceland, and held it till he died in 1940. The ranks of the ministry were beginning to thin, and replacements from Iceland no longer seemed appropriate in the new context. In fact, only one other minister came forward to serve the rural churches – Halldor E. Johnson, a former Lutheran minister who had become a Unitarian. He went to Wynyard in the middle of 1941, stayed there a while and then rode circuit around the Manitoba churches. Finally he settled at Lundar, and had been there four years when he was drowned while on a visit to Iceland at the beginning of 1950. From then on, the rural congregations were entirely dependent upon lay leadership and occasional visits from the Winnipeg minister.

In Winnipeg too the situation had been evolving. Though the Icelandic congregation was flourishing in the mid-twenties, it was far otherwise with the English-speaking one. After Hart's departure in 1924, All Souls' was at a low ebb, and some people talked of giving up altogether. As a temporary measure, a Congregational minister resident in the city was engaged as a regular pulpit supply, and

following him a university professor, in a vain attempt to follow the pattern that was still working reasonably well in Edmonton. During this period the church building was rented to the Christian Scientists on Sunday mornings and the Unitarians confined themselves to evening services. By 1929 the momentum had spent itself and the congregation came to a standstill. It was apparent that no further progress would be made without new policies. Dr. Louis Cornish, who had succeeded Eliot as president of the AUA, visited the city and discussed the situation with the congregation. As a result, it was decided to begin all over again with a new organization to be called The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. It comprised the remanants of the All Souls' congregation plus a portent of things to come – a contingent of young Unitarians of Icelandic background who preferred to attend services in English. The minister appointed with the assistance of a heavy subsidy from the AUA was a representative of this latter group. He was Philip M. Petursson (a nephew of Rognvaldur Petursson) who had just graduated from Meadville. The place of meeting for the new congregation was to be the Icelandic church, rented for the purpose on Sunday mornings; the old All Souls' church was leased to another denomination.

The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg declared its intention 'to maintain regular services of Christian worship in this community, and to upbuild in the hearts of its people the high ideals of a rational, progressive and exalting religion, in the love of God and the service of mankind.' It drew a sufficiently good response to gain rapidly in self-assurance, and within a few months there was dissatisfaction with the inconvenience of meeting in someone else's building, particularly as their own property had proved difficult to rent profitably. The AUA bowed to this demand, and they moved back into the old church, although they did not resume the name of All Souls', which had become associated with so many disappointments in the past. The deepening depression did not make this a very auspicious time for a new venture, but for a time things went reasonably well. Sunday morning congregations averaged fifty during the first year and the congregation was cheered by visitors from both the AUA and the British General Assembly, the newly formed successor to the BFUA. Both bodies provided grants, which together made up half the budget.

But gradually the situation began to deteriorate again. By 1934 the AUA was promoting the idea of a merger between the two Winnipeg

congregations. After Benjamin Kristjansson's return to Iceland in 1933 the Icelandic congregation found itself without a minister, and as the English-speaking congregation already had a minister of Icelandic background it seemed logical that he should serve both congregations. In order to do so, it was necessary for him to spend a year in Iceland perfecting his knowledge of the language; when he returned in the autumn of 1935 it was as minister to two congregations meeting in one building. The old All Souls' church was finally sold. So the situation continued through the unpromising years of the thirties. The AUA grant was discontinued now that the resources of the two congregations were combined, but the British grant continued until the closing year of World War II. Negotiations began with a view to complete amalgamation of the two congregations, but it was not until 1944 that this was finally consummated and the First Federated Church of Unitarians and other Liberal Christians came into being. It adopted as its covenant the traditional 'Five Points': the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Leadership of Jesus, Salvation by Character, and the Progress of Mankind Onward and Upward forever.

An affirmation of faith in perpetual progress called for considerable fortitude of spirit from those who had gone through thirty years in Winnipeg since All Souls' church first opened its doors with such high hopes. The hungry crowds of unemployed men seeking sanctuary in the church basement during Westwood's ministry; the dreaded telegrams bringing their grim news of the war's toll; the searing memories of the 1919 general strike; the stagnation of the twenties when the city's population fell by 50 000; the financial catastrophe of 1929 and the ensuing years of depression and drought; the distant but very real confrontation with the horrors of Nazism in World War II – none of these accorded very easily with such an ideal. Yet the classical American optimism expressed in the 'Five Points' survived, and was to find itself a little more in harmony with the dominant mood of the coming two decades, though the Five Points themselves were to slide rapidly into oblivion.

Nowhere else had conditions been quite as bad as they were in Winnipeg. But in other parts of Western Canada the years between the wars were unpromising ones for Unitarianism, as indeed they were for most forms of organized religion. In Calgary the church had closed down. The Edmonton church had been saved from a similar fate by the congregation's unwillingness to accept Alexander's resignation in

1922, when he felt he should make way for a fulltime minister on a regular basis. He was persuaded to reconsider, and the congregation then settled down to a Sunday morning ministry in its half-finished building. There had been problems during Potter's ministry arising out of the diversion to other urgent expenses of part of the AUA grant toward the minister's salary, so the money from Boston was now going directly to Alexander. This procedure not only relieved the congregation of any sense of responsibility for supporting its ministry, but also gave its incumbent a great sense of freedom and independence in his dealings with them.

William Hardy Alexander was at this time forty-four years of age and had since 1908 been professor of classics at the University of Alberta. He enjoyed an enviable reputation as scholar, author, and brilliant lecturer. In addition to his work at the Unitarian Church, he was elected to the Edmonton School Board in 1920 and served for a number of terms. Many of the university students attended services in what gradually came to be known as 'Dr Alex's church', but though they augmented the modest attendance, they did not provide the resources to build up the strength of the congregation. Alexander was a committed and aggressive propagandist for Unitarianism, and when this had appeared to jeopardize his position at the university he seriously contemplated entering the ministry. But now he had the best of both worlds. And in spite of the vehemence with which he had earlier attacked Irvine and his friends, his own viewpoint gradually became more radical, both theologically and politically.

By the early thirties this evolution had reached a point at which Alexander could declare that he had become a humanist 'with no attempt to dally on the fringes of orthodox religion.'[9] The *Humanist Manifesto* at that time incubating in the minds of a small group and issued shortly afterward with a number of American Unitarians (but no Canadians) among its signatories, asserted: 'Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now.... It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.... We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism and the several varieties of "new thought".'[10] It was along these same lines that Alexander said, 'If we have any common belief I think it consists broadly speaking in our desire to see this

made a better world for the largest possible number of people.'[11] In 1933 he announced his adherence to the newly founded CCF, which by a strange stroke of irony had had its earliest inception in William Irvine's room at the House of Commons. There was concern among some members of the congregation about his changes in outlook, but this does not seem to have been the primary factor in bringing about his resignation a year later. He stayed four years longer in Edmonton before moving to the University of California.

Alexander's resignation prompted the move he had unsuccessfully advocated twelve years earlier. A young minister just out of theological school, Carl A. Storm, was called as his successor – the only American minister to move to a Canadian pulpit in a period of well over two decades. Events proved that the congregation's earlier apprehensions over its capacity to maintain a regular ministry were well founded. It felt unable to contribute anything at all toward his salary and the AUA was unwilling to pay more. The British General Assembly helped with a modest grant, but Storm was unable to make ends meet and resigned after less than two years. The church promptly closed down and its building was sold. During the period of its existence the AUA had invested over $16 000 in its ministry and $6000 in its building, quite apart from the financial support received from the General Conference Fund and from England. Only $1400 was recovered from the sale of the building. No financial reckoning could give a fair assessment of the Edmonton experiment, as hundreds of students were influenced by the church during their university years. As far as the city was concerned, however, organized Unitarianism was now defunct and would remain so for the next fourteen years.

The west coast seemed to offer little more promise for Unitarianism than did the prairies as Canada moved into the uneasy inter-war period. With the opening of the Panama Canal, Vancouver gradually came to supplant Winnipeg as Canada's third city, but the Unitarian membership did not keep pace with the growth in population. Each new adherent gained was offset by a loss that the congregation could ill afford. Sadly typical of the period was the letter of resignation from a man who had taken an active and leading role in earlier years: 'I can see no future for the Vancouver church ... as an exponent of either liberal religion or religious liberalism.'[12] By 1922, membership had fallen to twenty-two.

The long-standing suspicion of American ministers had been reinforced by their unhappy experience with McReynolds, and it was with relief that shortly after his departure they became aware of a Scotsman as a possible successor. Alexander Thomson had had a richly varied career as minister, lecturer, and political organizer. For thirteen years he had been parliamentary agent for a British temperance association, in which capacity he had come to know the leading political figures of the day. When in 1916 Lloyd George became Prime Minister with the aid of the Conservatives, he alienated the greater part of his own Liberal party and was forced to set up his own political organization. He chose Thomson to head it. After five years, overwork produced a breakdown, and Thomson went to stay with his daughter in Victoria. He undertook extensive lecture tours in Canada and the United States, and also conducted a number of services at the Unitarian church in Victoria, where his son-in-law, W. L. Llewellyn, was treasurer.

He was invited to preach in Vancouver on a trial basis, and was then asked to become the resident minister. His installation in the autumn of 1922 coincided with another major event in the congregation's history, the first meeting in Canada of the Northern Section of the Pacific Coast Conference of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Churches. The only previous occasion when so many Unitarians had gathered in Vancouver was the visit of the special train seven years earlier. The presence of the conference delegates provided an imposing array of ministers for the installation service; the mayor of Vancouver and a local Methodist minister also attended.

Thomson was a tall and impressive man with considerable oratorical powers and an attractive personality. He had, however, one major – and ultimately fatal – defect. He was not a Unitarian. The liberal Congregationalism that he represented, strongly influenced by the New Theology, certainly seemed very similar. 'Official Christianity,' he said in an early sermon in Vancouver, 'concerns itself too much with organization and with formal and outworn creeds, and too little with the spiritual and everyday needs of mankind.... The Kingdom of God as taught by Jesus means the realization HERE of the ideal of Universal Brotherhood.'[13] But before long a good many members of the congregation were beginning to complain that he was 'too orthodox,' and he failed to draw many outsiders from his own natural constituency since this was already adequately served by the comparatively liberal First Congregational church. One new member whom he did

attract, Edward Hunt, was a person of some wealth who could and did contribute to the church on a scale not hitherto seen in Vancouver, and enhanced the congregation's chances of survival during the next few years.

Thomson resigned in May 1925. The AUA field secretary for the Pacific coast, Carl B. Wetherell, wrote from San Francisco pledging the association's help to 'find a man who is somewhat more liberal in his point of view than it was possible for Mr Thomson to become at his age, and after his many years of excellent work in the Congregational body.'[14] He endorsed the congregation's opinion that such a person would best be sought in England, and an appeal was sent to London. Hunt offered to put up the money to give the congregation the unprecedented opportunity of bringing a candidate on trial. The BFUA responded in positive terms, with the offer not simply of one minister but of two. J. B. Tonkin was willing to undertake the charge in Vancouver, while his wife, Ada, also a fully qualified minister, would make a last-ditch attempt to salvage the foundering cause in Victoria.

There had been no settled minister in Victoria since Bowden left in 1919, but services had been maintained by occasional visitors and members of the congregation. Some scepticism was expressed as to whether a woman minister could save the day; although nearly forty years had passed since the first Universalist woman minister came to Canada, Ada Tonkin was the first Unitarian woman to serve a Canadian congregation. Actually, the Victoria congregation was beyond reviving by a minister of either sex living in Vancouver and going over for one day a week. For a year and a half Mrs Tonkin – or sometimes her husband – preached to an attendance she could count on her fingers, and then she gave up. So did the congregation. Services were suspended in the summer of 1927, and little more than two years later the AUA sold the building to a fundamentalist church.

In Vancouver, J. B. Tonkin met with a somewhat better response. He was a bluff and genial Scotsman who had spent some years in the engineering profession before training for the ministry, and came with clearly stated intentions. 'I want to emphasize the fact of "exploration" more than any of the lands we have already discovered and occupied. I feel that the "search" for truth is a bigger thing even than what we call "the truth" itself. My aim will be to try and find out if there is a place in the world of today for a church where loyalty to the "search" for truth will be able to subordinate to itself all the other loyalties which of necessity clamour for support.'[15]

This approach was much more congenial to the Vancouver congregation, which slowly but perceptibly began to grow. But the growth was still offset by losses. Some members, including Hunt, were alienated by Tonkin's strong emphasis upon the Social Gospel, which they resented as politics in the pulpit, and they followed the well-trodden path out of the congregation. Tonkin was indeed a radical in his social and political opinions, and the church became a magnet for those who shared this stance. The Free Forum he organized frequently filled the church to overflowing for Sunday afternoon meetings addressed by a wide range of prominent local speakers. A few of those attracted by these meetings found their way into the congregation, but not many.

More specifically aimed at building up Unitarianism was the 'preaching mission' for which Horace Westwood returned to Canada in the spring of 1929. He spoke at well-attended meetings every night for a week in the Vancouver church, focusing upon controversial religious topics. But this venture too produced very few new members.

After the failure of the Victoria church, Ada Tonkin had become honorary co-minister in Vancouver, but in 1929 she found a position in which her talents and experience could be more effectively deployed. She became director of the Women's Protective Division of the Vancouver police force. 'No one,' wrote an enthusiastic reporter for the *Province*, 'can leave Inspector Tonkin after even a brief conversation without the conviction that in Vancouver a better day has dawned for the derelict woman and the drifting girl.'[16] Her success in this work now contrasted with the growing problems in her husband's situation, compounded by the effects of the deepening depression. The subsidies from Boston and London continued, and Tonkin began to donate 10 per cent of his small salary back to the church, but still the deficits mounted. In April 1932 he proposed a desperate measure. He would resign as salaried minister and continue to serve without pay, as they could both survive on his wife's salary. The congregation closed with the offer, but one member who wanted to see him go altogether went so far as to approach the Police Commission, which like other public bodies at this time of mass unemployment was under considerable pressure not to provide jobs for married women whose husbands were supposed to be able to support them.

In spite of loud protests from a number of leading citizens, who

argued that a sensitive position such as the one held by Ada Tonkin should be filled on the basis of demonstrated competence rather than need for the income, her engagement was terminated. Deprived of their only means of support, the Tonkins left Vancouver and returned to England. Exasperated by this turn of events, the church's board of trustees took the unprecedented step of expelling the member who had precipitated the whole affair, accusing him of unethical conduct.

Though the possibility of having to close down completely was not far from anyone's mind, the congregation resolved to continue with lay leadership. Then the correspondence began to arrive. Surprisingly enough, in view of the unpromising prospects, there was no dearth of potential candidates for a temporary or longer-term ministry. Vancouver had always had the reputation of being a city where an unusually high proportion of the population was disenchanted with traditional forms of religion. It was assumed (with very little evidence to date to support the hypothesis) that this should make it a fertile recruiting ground for Unitarians. The ever-optimistic Pennoyer wrote offering to come for a three months' mission that should set the congregation on its feet. The offer was politely declined. Another Universalist-Unitarian, E. M. Whitesmith, who had once been active in his native New Brunswick and was later to serve briefly at the Halifax Universalist church, wrote from Oregon expressing his desire to return to Canada. He was told he would be welcome as an occasional visitor, but there could be no question of his becoming a candidate for the pulpit. He did in fact come on several occasions. From Auckland, New Zealand, William Constable wrote expressing an interest, as his parents were now living in Tacoma and he would like to be in the vicinity. The congregation replied that if they had been able to afford a minister they would not have lost the one they already had. A similarly negative response was given to a former member of the congregation who had just returned after graduating from theological school and to a local adherent who offered himself for a low-cost lay pastorate. Robert Hutcheon of Meadville, formerly of Toronto and Ottawa, evoked more interest when he said he would like to spend a few months on the coast, but the matter was not pursued.

The lay services continued. Attendance, membership, financial support, and morale sagged. When the congregation gathered for its annual meeting in April 1934 it was presented with a report showing receipts of no more than $336 for the past year. Nearly two thirds of this had been spent on janitor services and emergency repairs to the building. The president of the board, Archie Peebles, warned, 'we have reached the point already ... below which an organized church cannot be maintained.'[17]

Then came a reprieve. The British General Assembly (GA) wrote confirming that Constable was indeed leaving Auckland and would be passing through Vancouver on his way to England. If the Vancouver congregation were sufficiently impressed to invite him to settle with them, then the GA would do all it could to make this possible. Again, the church would get two ministers for the price of one, as Wilma Constable was also a fully-trained minister and had in fact had more years of experience than her husband. He had worked for nine years in adult education after leaving the Congregational ministry, while she had served as a Unitarian minister. She was Scottish; he was English, though he had graduated from Edinburgh University. They had gone out from England to New Zealand in 1929.

When the Constables arrived, the impression they created was so favorable that the congregation reconsidered its stand that it could contribute nothing toward a salary. In August 1934 a formal invitation was issued on the basis that the GA would pay half the salary, the AUA one third, and the congregation the remaining sixth. Morale rose with the start of the new ministry, though there was little tangible progress. The Constables' main interests were literary, and the church literary society that had been founded by the Tonkins flourished. There were no divisive social issues, though in the very month that the Constables arrived the congregation adopted a resolution condemning war as a means of settling international disputes. After three quiet and uneventful years, the Constables announced that they had received and accepted a call to the Unitarian church in Capetown, South Africa. Shortly thereafter the GA offered as successor a man who had recently returned to England after six years in South Africa, Theodore Pagesmith. Though Pagesmith's long succession of short ministries did not augur well for permanence, the congregation had little choice but to accept. They felt that the GA had a better understanding of their situation than the AUA: 'A congregation wholly made up of working-class people is practically unknown in the United States, hence they have difficulty in appreciating our complete dependence and lack of financial growth.'[18] Such an analysis pushed the definition of 'working class' a little far – the writer was a university professor.

Pagesmith was a middle-aged bachelor. Like Tonkin, he was a former engineer and was inclined to the more radical side of Unitarianism. An AUA official assessed him as 'that rare bird, a British humanist,'[19] though his was a gentle humanism by comparison with that by now current in some American circles. He continued to use the 'Lord's Prayer' in his services, and for him God was 'the eternal spirit of life and love.' He was able to express his concern for social issues without creating divisions within the congregation. But he felt bound on arrival to give first priority to dealing with the dilapidated condition to which the church building had been reduced by a quarter of a century of neglect. Few newcomers were going to be able to get beyond the first impression that this created. Though the AUA and the GA came through with generous support for the major renovations, they would not have done so without the substantial local effort Pagesmith was able to marshal. Before the building had been made fully presentable, war broke out. Somehow or other the ideal conditions for promoting Unitarianism in Vancouver always receded as soon as they seemed almost to have been reached. The war, indeed, did not hit Vancouver nearly as hard as World War I had done, but now a more immediate crisis arose. Pagesmith's health began to fail. He had strong opinions on medicine and first consulted an osteopath who put him on a diet. Then he admitted himself to a Seventh Day Adventist sanatorium on Vancouver Island, which he chose for its vegetarian principles. But his disease turned out to be cancer. He died in February 1942, a few weeks after Henry Wilder Foote, who had recently retired from a distinguished career in the American Unitarian ministry, arrived to take over as interim minister for six months. At the end of that time the church closed down until a regular successor could be appointed. The membership was still under forty.

Unitarianism in Western Canada was now just a remnant of the movement it had once been. Though the Vancouver and Winnipeg churches had survived with large-scale outside help, the Calgary, Victoria and Edmonton churches had all succumbed. In Eastern Canada the survival rate was better. Only one church, that at Hamilton, had closed down, and after lying dormant for eight years it had suddenly sprung back to life. The circumstances were that early in 1927 the trustees were approached by a young man named Francis W. Woodruff with a proposal that he be appointed minister at $75.00 a month to revive the congregation. Woodruff, an Englishman, had for five years been a Roman Catholic priest and had then left the church and enrolled at the Harvard Divinity School. At the conclusion of his year there he was most anxious to attempt a ministry in Canada. With so little to lose, the survivors of the congregation agreed to the experiment. They now had over $15 000 in the bank. Woodruff began regular services in the Orange Hall, and at first drew encouraging attendances. In May, no fewer than eighty-five members of the Toronto congregation drove down for a joint service at which Luigi von Kunits, conductor of the Toronto Symphony, played the violin solos.

But the Hamilton congregation was not going to shake itself easily out of the old rut. Long inconclusive debates over policy took place in what Woodruff described as a 'miscellaneous gathering, utterly untrained in logical or coherent discussion.'[20] Moreover, Woodruff himself was not the kind of person to provide inspired leadership; some people felt that he had made a mistake in leaving the cloister. To dissension over policy was added dissension about him as a person and as a minister. After voting down a proposal to repurchase the old church, which had been sold in 1919, the congregation finally spent the same amount, about $10 000, to buy and convert a dwellinghouse at 444 Main Street East. But before it could move into its new home, ill-health (genuine, not feigned as so often in such cases) forced Woodruff to resign in August 1930. He returned to England at once.

Once again the congregation had a building but no minister. The AUA wanted them to participate in a plan to appoint an assistant minister in Toronto who would also serve as a minister in Hamilton, but neither congregation favored the proposal. In 1931 a candidate appeared. Douglas Hemmeon, a United Church minister from Nova Scotia, was willing to come, but not to transfer to Unitarian fellowship because this would jeopardize his pension rights in the United Church. The congregation accepted him on these terms. Though their level of congregational giving was well above, for example, Vancouver's, it was still not enough to cover expenses, and they had to draw continuously upon their now diminished nest egg. It lasted until 1935, the year that Hemmeon's pension from the United Church began. The minister's salary was reduced year by year, but all the usual indications of congregational vitality showed that this too was falling just as consistently. An appeal to the AUA was in vain; the association was unwilling to subsidize a congregation so palpably on the downgrade. Hemmeon

held on until 1942, when he retired, leaving a discouraged remnant of a congregation divided between the 'old Unitarians' and the people he had brought in through his involvement with the labor movement and other interests.

Uniquely in Canada, the Toronto church retained the same minister throughout the inter-war period. It also (with the inevitable changes wrought by time) retained the same congregation. The church was too well established to go under as the weaker western churches did, but it lacked the initiative and leadership to go forward with the fast-growing population of the city. Hodgins reaffirmed in 1920 his willingness to continue the part-time ministry inaugurated five years earlier, after he failed to get AUA funding for more ambitious projects. The publication, starting in 1921, of a printed monthly bulletin turned out to be the only modification in the church's low profile.

Hodgins was a man of impressive scholarship and eloquence. He remained in his rural retreat at Brampton, except for the weekends, when he took up residence in the Westminster Hotel on Jarvis Street. He read prodigiously in the classics, English literature and current affairs. He wrote poetry, plays, and two novels. For a while he edited and published his own magazine, appropriately named *The Onlooker*. At election times he took to the hustings in vigorous support of the Conservative candidates. The Toronto pulpit he regarded as his private preserve, and no one else spoke from it without his approval, which was by no means to be taken for granted. In 1936 Meadville honored him with the degree of D.D.

Theologically, Hodgins stood in the liberal Chrsitian tradition of his predecessors Sunderland and Hutcheon. He defined his own position by contrast with the prevailing orthodoxy. 'The teachings of these sublime spirits' (he was speaking here of Jesus and Paul) 'were perverted by cruder brains and coarser hearts into a horror of great darkness of which the Christian church should be ashamed. The Christ of the creeds is a travesty and a mockery of the peasant prophet who loved his people and all people. Fade this minatory figure must and will from human imagination, and with it will go the heavens and hells born of the dark medieval mind.'[21] Spokesmen for the Christianity based on the creeds felt less threatened by such statements than they had done in earlier years, and seldom counterattacked with denunciations of Unitarianism. When they did so, Hodgins in turn seldom deigned to reply. On one occasion when a blistering assault upon Unitarianism had been delivered from a neighboring pulpit and a hopeful reporter attended the Unitarian service the following Sunday, all he heard was 'There is a gentleman up the street who thinks *I* am going to hell. There is a gentleman further up the street who thinks that *he* is going to hell. As far as I am concerned, they can *both* go to hell!'[22]

When in the spring of 1939 the Meadville District Conference brought a large assembly of Unitarians to Toronto for its annual meetings, Hodgins restated his long-standing convictions in a sermon he called *Religion for the Modern Man*. After surveying the intellectual and material advances of recent years, he noted that although these had destroyed the foundations of the more limited religions of the past, they only served to underline the need for emphasis upon the spiritual dimensions of life. Acknowledging his indebtedness to the poets – Shelley he called 'the brightest spirit that ever walked this earth, the very Mozart of literature' – he concluded, 'we must acknowledge the existence of a new type of man, the result of a culture higher and richer than any previous generation has known. We must take of the common knowledge of our time and give it back transfigured. We must interpret life, in terms of its highest spiritual factors.'[23]

The weekly services were enriched by more than Hodgins's rhetoric; there was also a rich musical component. Luigi von Kunits, the Viennese-born conductor of the Toronto Symphony, was an active member of the congregation. Not only did he frequently play violin solos, he also on occasion spoke from the pulpit. A man of warm humanitarian spirit and charm, his death in 1931 came as a loss alike to the congregation and the city, and a huge crowd gathered for the funeral service conducted by Hodgins in Convocation Hall. Another frequent contributor to the services was Boris Hambourg, the well-known cellist, who also became a member of the church.

During the 1920s the little congregation coasted along without showing too much concern over missed opportunities for growth. Affection and loyalty toward Hodgins were almost universally shared. But by the early thirties some of the more progressive members became restless. Hodgins celebrated his 65th birthday in 1931 without displaying the slightest inclination to retire. Two years later his aging father-in-law, W. B. Hamilton, went so far as to approach the AUA with the proposition that they should send a missionary to Toronto to organize a second congregation, where emphasis could be laid upon aggressive

Unitarian propaganda and social action. The Association replied advising him to work through the existing congregation. At the annual meeting in January 1935 a proposal was put forward that a younger man might be appointed as assistant to help organize and develop the congregation. Nothing came of this proposal; in fact, it was financially impracticable without large-scale outside help. A few months later a field worker for the AUA noted that 'both at Montreal and in Ottawa I found a deep concern for the situation in their sister church at Toronto . . . according to these reports the church is beginning to show very serious results of this absentee ministry.'[24]

There was, however, no way in which outsiders could interfere with the situation, and the following January the Toronto congregation endorsed a fulsome testimonial to its minister: 'he gives us the highest, finest, most satisfying and hopeful of all interpretations of life, based on sound, sane views, wide experience, profound scholarship and deep human understanding. . . . He fills us with enthusiasm to go forth to meet the problems which beset our everyday life with high courage and confidence, and he shows us that, if the battle be well fought, life is a glorious experience.'[25]

The same meeting noted that church attendances were declining, however, and from this point onward the shuffling of feet waiting for Hodgins's retirement became more and more apparent. He himself seemed determined to hold on until the congregation celebrated its centenary in 1945, and he marked the 96th and 97th anniversaries with elaborate services addressed respectively by Dan Huntington Fenn, director of the AUA's Department of the Ministry and by Frederick May Eliot, president of the Association. In 1941 a proposal to get an assistant minister was once again deferred. But by now the deterioration in all aspects of church life was becoming apparent to everyone. The hints to Hodgins became more and more direct, and in April 1943 he submitted his resignation, stating at the same time that he did not wish to be given the title of Pastor Emeritus. Some of his friends felt that he had in effect been ousted after years of faithful service, but no objective assessment could come to any conclusion other than that it would have been better for all concerned had he resigned earlier.

The Montreal congregation, with the new impetus given it by Snow's ministry, maintained without difficulty its leading position within Canadian Unitarianism. Though it no longer boasted the long list of captains of industry included in its membership in the nine-

teenth century, there were still some prominent businessmen including John B. Frosst, pharmaceutical manufacturer, as well as many people prominent in the educational, political and cultural life of the city. It would be an exaggeration to call the church prosperous, but at least it paid its own way without too many difficulties and had at last won the grudging respect of the community within which it was set. It was well known for the high standard of its music and choir, under the talented direction of George Brewer from 1912 until his death in 1947.

After Snow's resignation in 1926, the congregation looked to England rather than the United States for a successor. There had been a forceful reminder four years earlier of the fact that all their ministers since Cordner had been Americans. When Snow had made the routine application to hold a marriage register for the ensuing year, he had met with a totally unexpected refusal. A vigilant official had noticed that under a provincial statute of 1829, still in force, marriage registers might be issued only to ministers who were British subjects. This provision had been specifically reaffirmed in the act of 1845 granting a charter of incorporation to the Unitarians. But for years it had been forgotten and unenforced, and now it appeared that all the marriages solemnized by Barnes and his successors at the church had no legal standing! The provincial legislature hastily passed 'an act validating the keeping of certain registers of civil status and the celebration of certain marriages,' so that those who had gone through such ceremonies and their descendants could breathe more easily. But it took a further private member's bill to ensure that in the future a lay member of the congregation could take the oath and officially assume custody of the register if the minister were not a British subject. There remained therefore only a formal inconvenience to an American minister, though as events turned out Snow was the last of the line.

Whether influences by memories of this incident or by the transatlantic exchange of ministers to mark the centenary of 1925, when several British ministers had preached in Montreal, the congregation now turned to the BFUA for a minister. The Association, on receipt of this request from a strong and self-reliant church rather than the usual struggling and subsidized group, sent a list of some of its leading ministers as potential candidates. In November 1926 the Montreal Unitarians extended a call to Lawrence Clare, one of the five British ministers who had exchanged with Snow and his colleagues the previous year. During the six months before he was able to come the

pulpit was occupied by a succession of visitors, including Kirsopp Lake, William Irvine, and J. S. Woodsworth.

Lawrence Clare, now in his forty-fourth year, had for the previous twelve years been minister of the foremost Unitarian church in Birmingham, also called The Church of the Messiah. Like his predecessors he was an outstanding preacher, though in his own view of things the liturgy was at least as important as the sermon. Influenced more by the Catholic than the Protestant modernists, he symbolized his leanings in the wearing of a Roman collar, something not unusual among English Unitarians but rarely seen in North America. He described his own religious orientation as that of a Christian Platonist. As such he laid heavy emphasis upon the mystical aspects of religion, not as a substitute for the rational aspects but as their essential complement.

Conscious of belonging to 'a generation that has passed through war and seen the destruction of all its hopes,' Clare set out deliberately to combat the resulting cynicism. 'Its upholders,' he wrote, 'enjoy the prestige that paralyses those who do not agree with them: their very style – so hard, clear, and confident – insinuates that those who fail to see eye to eye with them are cloudy sentimentalists. . . . Their attack is upon values – in other words, upon all that makes life worth living.' In calling for a crusade on behalf of the life of the spirit he invoked the aid of the arts: music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture. 'The poet,' he added, 'is a man gifted with insight into what we may call the infra-red and the ultra-violet of the soul's possibilities. His is the voice of an awakened, deeper self, and sees clearly where we are almost blind.'[26]

The resulting emphasis upon the inward and personal aspects of religion did not lead him to evade the demands of social responsibility. Though he spoke less frequently on social issues, when he did so he spoke forcefully. 'The cardinal evil,' he said in one sermon, 'lies in industrialism for private profit, and between this and Christianity there is no pact, there is no truce.' He went on to cite as the alternative 'industrialism with a public function and responsibility, which is to feed, clothe and house the people.'[27]

Essentially a pulpit orator and scholar, he was, like Cordner and Barnes, a man of considerable personal reserve, though he could be good company on social occasions and opened himself with warm sympathy to those who sought him out in time of need. Strong personal convictions notwithstanding, he could not bring himself to speak harshly of those who differed with him. Such characteristics, coupled with his brilliance as an interpreter of classical and modern culture, soon made him a prominent figure in the life of Montreal. He was in heavy demand as a lecturer on literary subjects. He was asked to address convocation assemblies, first at Macdonald College and then at McGill. He received unprecedented invitations to preach, not only at the United Theological College, but at such bastions of Protestant orthodoxy as St James' United and the American Presbyterian churches. He was even invited to speak to the Knights of Columbus.

During his tenure the congregation continued to grow. Progress was not spectacular, but growth of any kind was a rare enough phenomenon during those dreary days of the thirties. The centenary of organized Unitarianism in Montreal was marked in 1932 by a celebration that brought Snow from Chicago and Louis Cornish, president of the AUA, from Boston. During the next few years a feeling began to grow that Clare's distinctive emphasis needed to be supplemented, and this resulted in two new departures. Evening services, which had been discontinued since the early days of Griffin's ministry, were reintroduced in 1937 as a simpler alternative to the richly liturgical morning services. And in the following year an assistant to the minister, Mrs Matilda Moore, was appointed with special responsibility for directing the religious education program. The same year saw Meadville recognize Clare's contributions with the degree of D.D.

His ministry came to a sudden and tragic close. In June 1940 he became ill, but like Pagesmith he had his own opinions on medicine and refused to consult a doctor. He insisted on preaching, but the following day he was rushed to hospital with a ruptured appendix. His death on July 1 deprived the congregation of 'probably the finest preacher in Canada' (as it was expressed at his funeral), and the *Gazette*, in a tribute to his memory, wrote, 'in a phrase he often used, he was able to see life steadily and see it whole.'

There was little in the history of the Ottawa congregation between the wars to excite popular attention. In 1924 Charles Francis Potter came to speak to more than five hundred people at the Chateau Laurier on 'The Dangers of Fundamentalism' and four years later Horace Westwood succeeded in drawing just over two hundred to the opening night of his preaching mission at the church. But neither these public events nor the more unobtrusive publicity efforts of the Post

Office Mission (670 tracts were mailed in 1925) had any perceptible effect in building up the congregation. On the contrary, with a few ups and downs the average Sunday morning attendance declined gradually from sixty in 1919 to forty in 1939. The congregation was composed largely of civil servants – both the editor of the Senate debates, George Holland, and the editor of the Commons debates, A. C. Campbell, were very active members – but it also included some business and professional persons. C. E. Russell, the congregation's chief spokesman throughout this period and during its latter years the vice-president for Canada of the AUA, was secretary-treasurer of the Ottawa Transportation Company.

The question the congregation faced in 1922 was the perennial one of finding a suitable minister at a salary they could afford. After several disappointments, they focused on a highly controversial possibility. William Irvine had been elected to parliament the previous year as one of two Labor members, J. S. Woodsworth being the other. ('I wish to state,' said Irvine in the House, 'that the honourable member for Winnipeg Centre is the leader of the labour group – and I am the group.')[28] Irvine was willing to supply the Ottawa pulpit on a regular basis as long as this should be mutually satisfactory. The congregation was aware of what had happened in Calgary, but was prepared to gamble on Irvine's assurance that now that he had a forum for his political and economic views in the House of Commons, he would be under no temptation not to concentrate on religious matters when in the pulpit. The AUA, which was subsidizing the Ottawa ministry, did not see the situation in quite the same way, and came out with a strong warning against any arrangement with Irvine. Eventually they agreed to make an on-the-spot investigation and sent a minister named Frederic H. Kent, who had himself been a member of the Ottawa congregation a few years earlier and was well acquainted with many of its members. Kent reported in favor of Irvine and the AUA grudgingly came through with its subsidy. After the first year of the experiment Russell wrote enthusiastically that although his work had been confined to the pulpit, 'Mr Irvine has developed surprisingly into the favour of every member and adherent of the congregation without exception as far as I know.... He has drawn a large number of strangers every week.... I need not tell you how very gratifying his success has been to all of us.'[29] Minot Simons replied for the AUA, 'We are perfectly happy and ready to say that the misgivings with which we viewed his connection with your Society have been quite dissipated.'[30]

The Ottawa congregation, like those in Toronto and Edmonton, had thus contrived to have its pulpit adequately supplied each week without having to raise even a minimal fulltime salary. More members of parliament were to be seen at services during this period than at any previous time. But the arrangement came to an abrupt end when Irvine lost his seat in the election of 1925.

It was at this point that the congregation received another inquiry from C. W. Casson, who had periodically expressed an interest in returning ever since his ministry in 1905-7. (He actually had returned for a while just before the war, as editor of the *Citizen*.) Now he was prepared to come if the congregation would extend a unanimous call. The congregation obliged. At the same time one of its own members, Norman S. Dowd, entered Meadville to train for the ministry. A native of the Eastern Townships and a former Methodist, he had taught school for a few years after graduating from McGill and had then entered the federal civil service.

The restless Casson changed his mind in little more than a year and the congregation turned to Dowd, who had just begun his second year at theological school. If he would come back to Ottawa they would ordain him right away, and he could continue his theological education by private study. Dowd agreed, after making an arrangement by which the AUA financed his trip to Montreal every three weeks to be supervised by Clare. Irvine was by now back in parliament again and able to deputize for him when necessary.

Dowd turned out to be a fluent preacher, but his ministry was not much less of a part-time arrangement than Irvine's had been. After the conclusion of his studies he accepted an appointment as editor of the journal of the railwaymen's union. He became more and more involved in labor affairs, which took up an increasing proportion of his time. Finally, when the Canadian Congress of Labour was formed in 1940, he was offered a fulltime position as its executive secretary and sent in his resignation to the church.

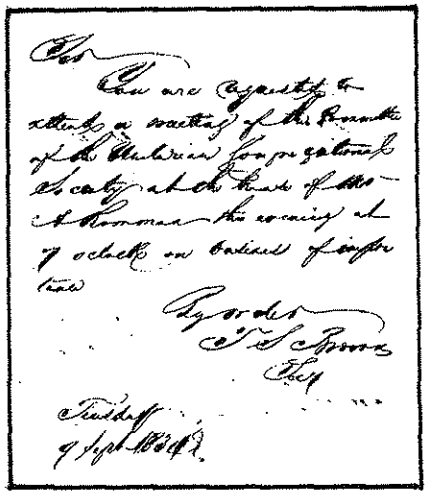
The experience of the inter-war period, taken as a whole, appeared to hold out few prospects for the future of Unitarianism in Canada. The exuberant optimism of the prewar period had been eroded by grim realities, and what remained of it was not likely to draw many new adherents to the movement. As morale sagged, the churches

declined or died. Bold words were no substitute for the work and devotion that Westwood had put into trying to build a cross-Canada movement with a sense of drive and direction. The surviving congregations had become isolated enclaves with little sense of a wider community. Only rarely did Snow or Clare visit Toronto; still more rarely did Hodgins visit anywhere other than Toronto. It took an initiative from the AUA even to bring the churches into touch with each other. At the annual meetings in Boston in 1928, Cornish 'called the representatives of Canadian churches together to confer upon Canadian questions, so that Canadian ministers might keep in touch with the situation in other parts of Canada.'[31]

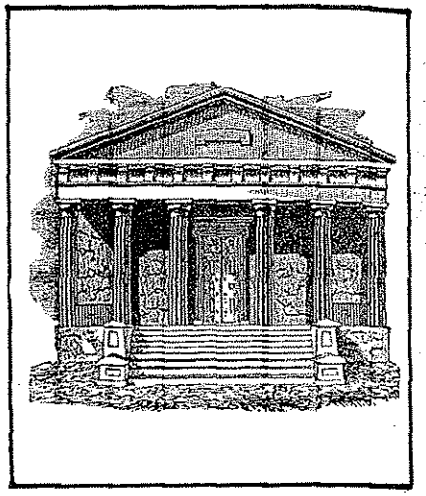
No new ventures were undertaken, and few were proposed. A lone enthusiast in Saint John, inspired by Pennoyer's Universalist campaigns in 1930-31, tried to get AUA funding for a promotional effort to restart the movement there. The realistic AUA felt unable to help. A few similar inquiries from other parts of the country met with the same response. After all, the AUA had spent some $200 000 in Canada between 1890 and 1932 with very little to show for it.[32] Lesser but substantial subsidies had come from the British Unitarians. For the greater part of the inter-war period and World War II both the Winnipeg and the Vancouver churches were being funded from both sources. In the final year of the English-speaking Winnipeg congregation as a separate entity, 1943, the British grant accounted for almost one third of that congregation's total budget, which caused embarrassment in some quarters, in view of the beleaguered condition of Britain in general and of British Unitarianism in particular. In fact, the Winnipeg grant that year was almost exactly equal to the amount raised in a cross-Canada campaign to send money to London for the relief of Unitarian congregations that had had their churches damaged or destroyed in air raids.

The ties of sentiment with the British movement had been strengthened by the Canadian tours of British ministers: Rosalind Lee in 1922, R. J. Hall in 1929, Mortimer Rowe in 1931, and (most successful of all) Lawrence Redfern in 1937. Redfern, one of the foremost ministers in England, made a well-publicized journey on behalf of the GA to all the overseas congregations affiliated with it. But it was still the AUA that kept most closely in touch with the Canadian scene, despite the fact that there were fewer American ministers in Canada than before World War I or after World War II. Visits and correspondence from

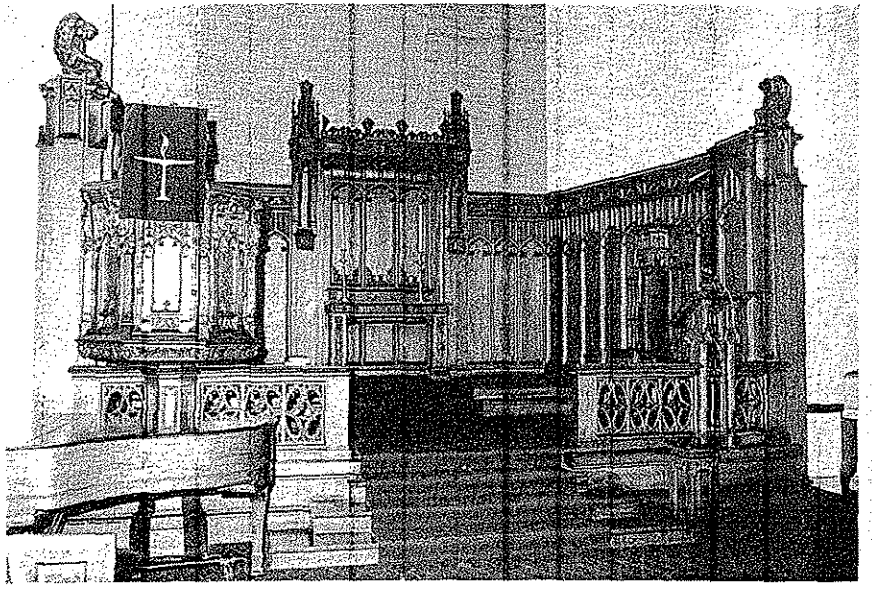
denominational officials brought alternate encouragement and warning, and helped keep the remnants of the movement together as Canadian Unitarians waited for the tide to turn.



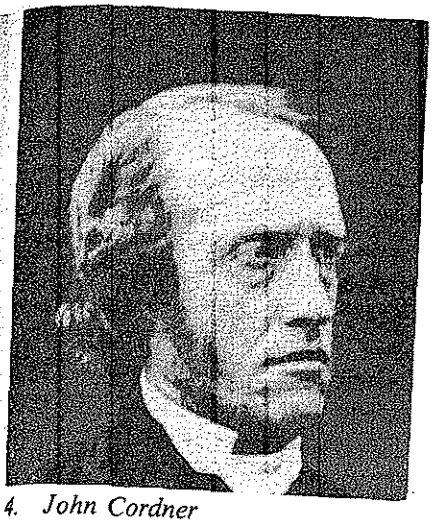
1. *Letter of T. S. Brown, 1834*



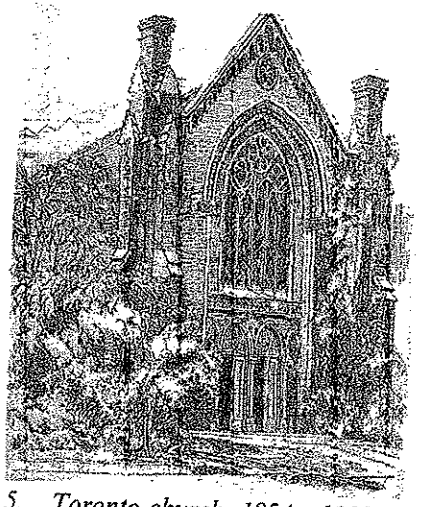
2. *First Montreal church, 1845*



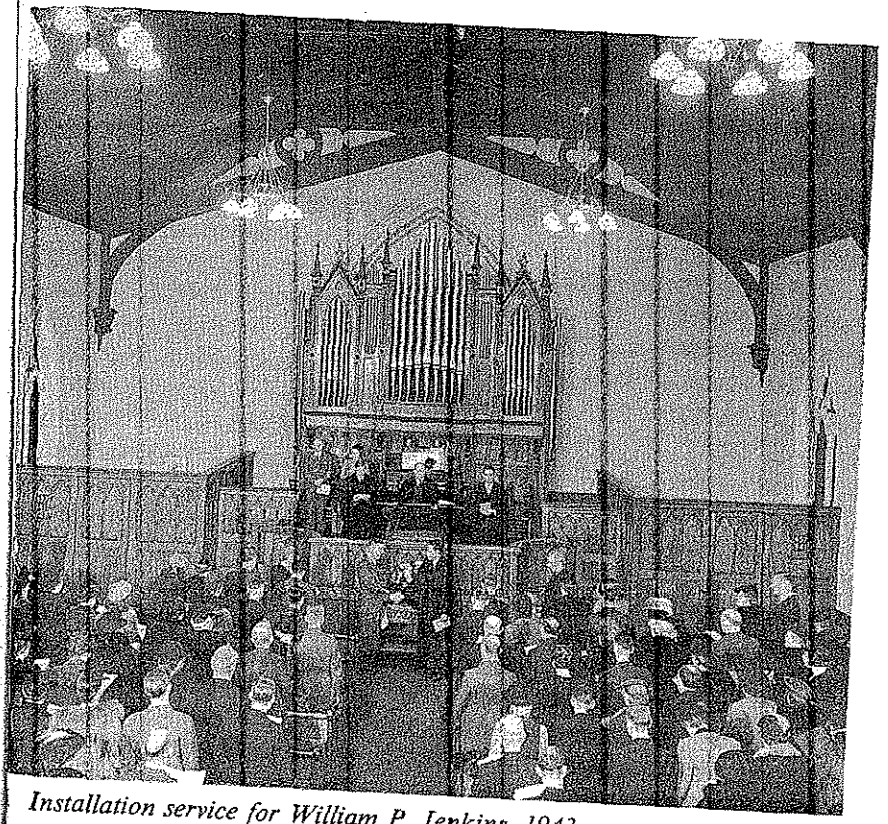
3. *Montreal church chancel, 1908*



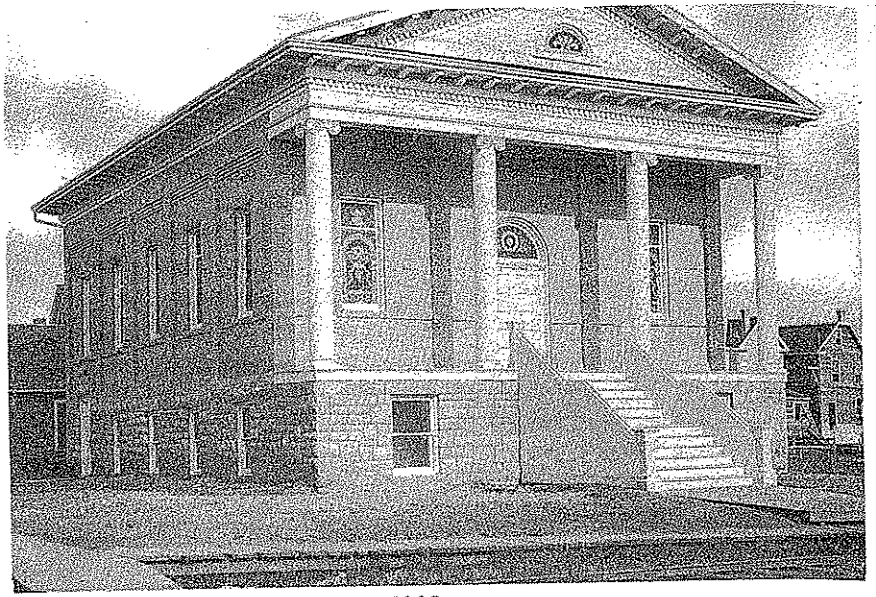
4. *John Cordner*



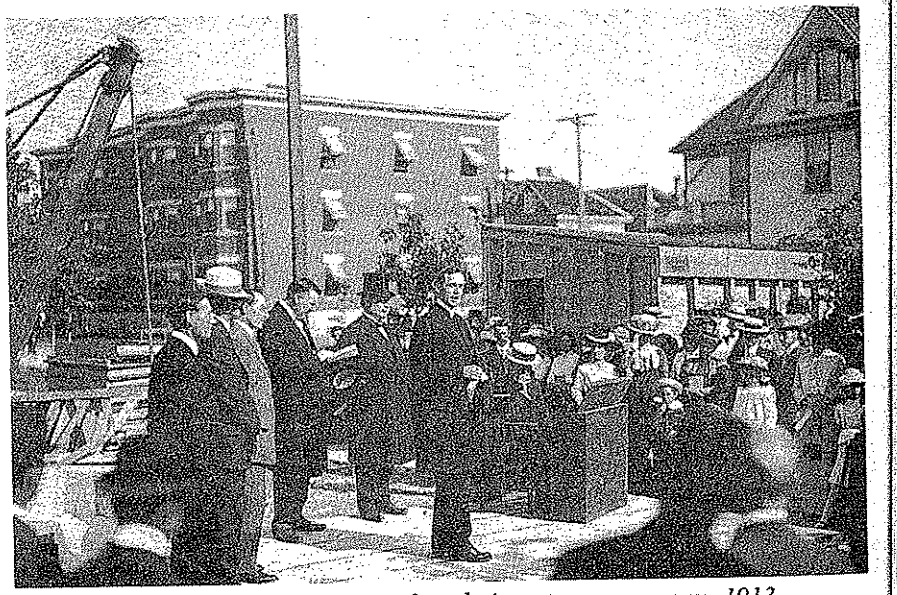
5. *Toronto church, 1854 - 1950*



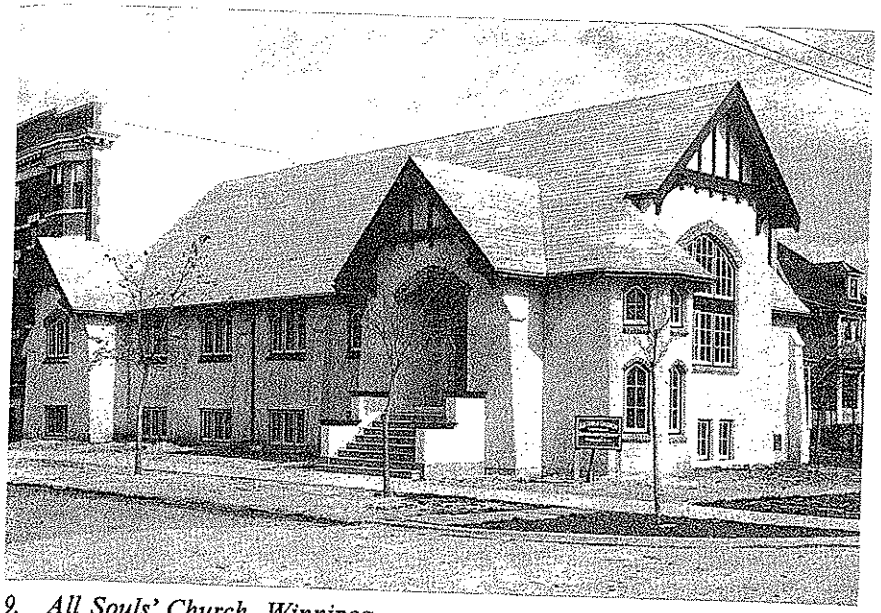
Installation service for William P. Jenkins, 1943



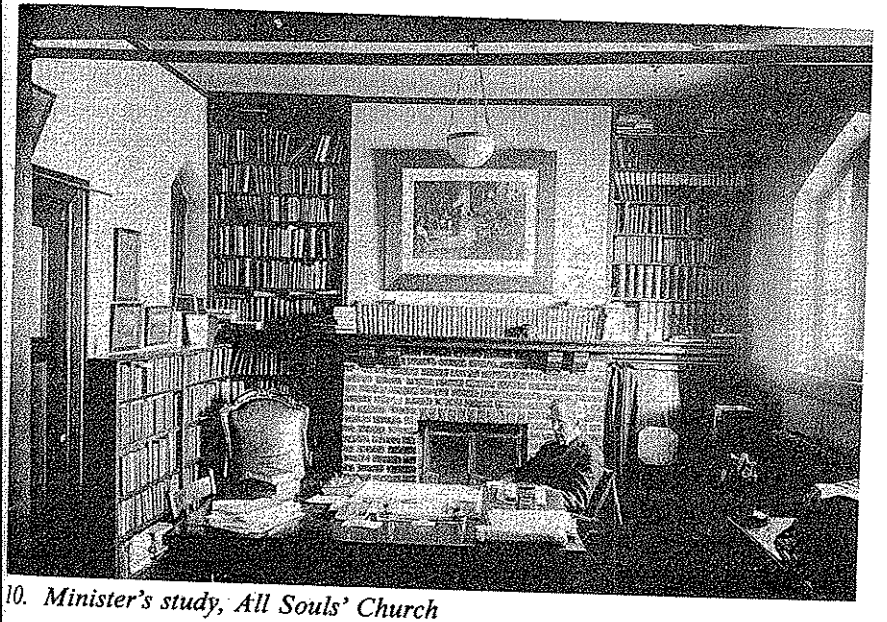
7. *Icelandic church, Winnipeg, 1905*



8. *All Souls' Church, Winnipeg, foundation stone ceremony, 1913*

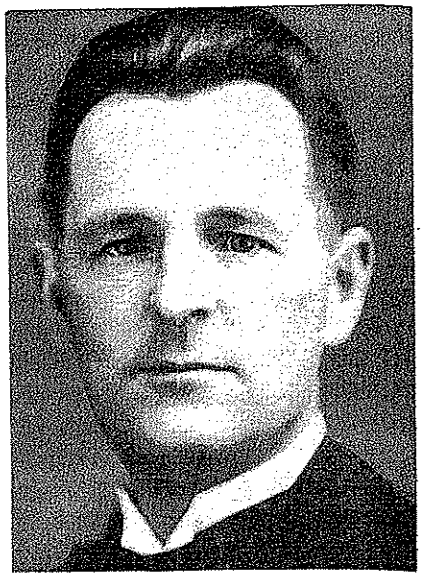


9. *All Souls' Church, Winnipeg*



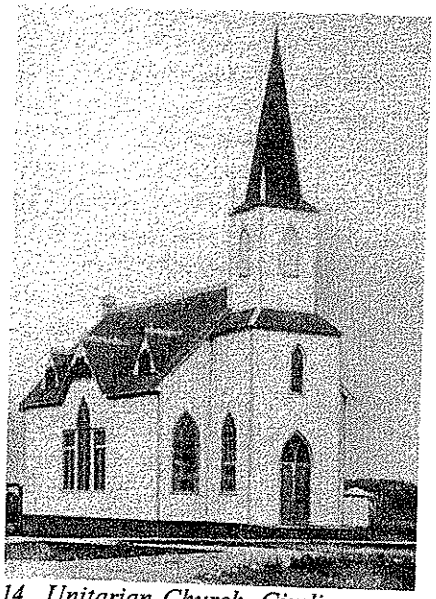
10. *Minister's study, All Souls' Church*

11. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, bust by E. Hahn (National Gallery, Ottawa)

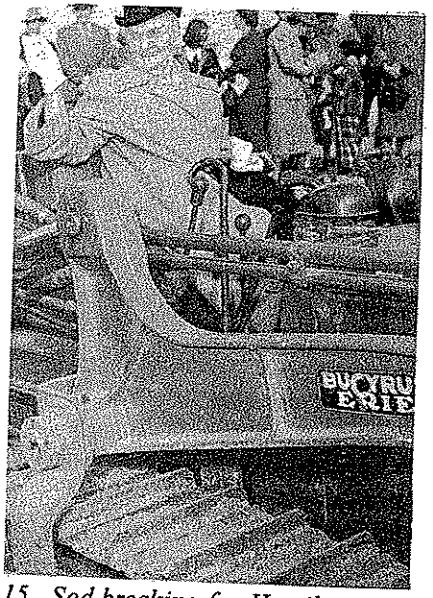


12. William Irvine

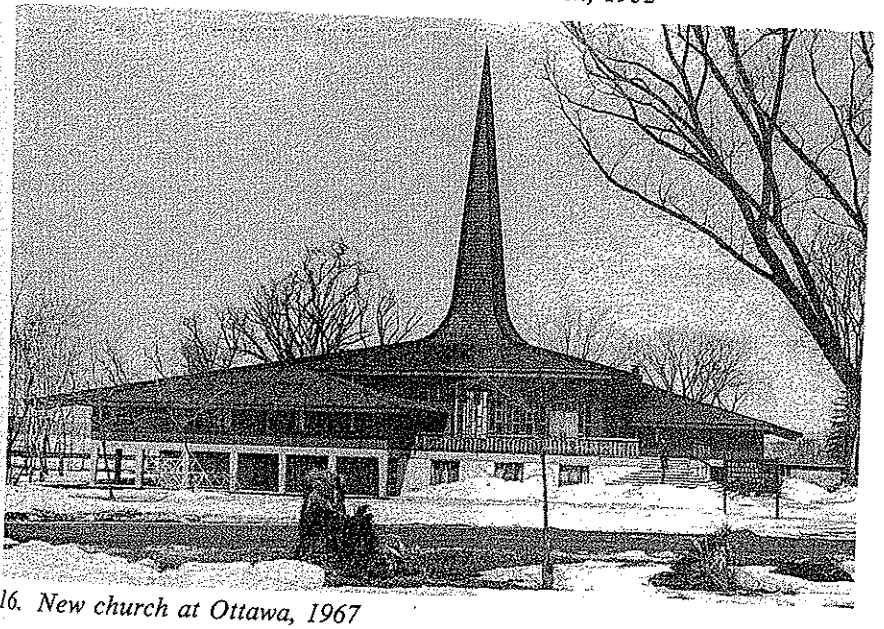
13. First CUC board, 1961



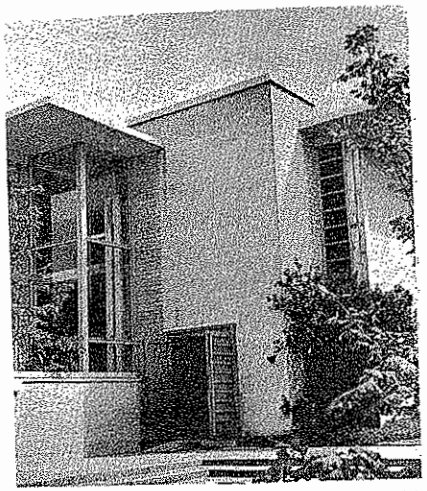
14. Unitarian Church, Gimli, Manitoba



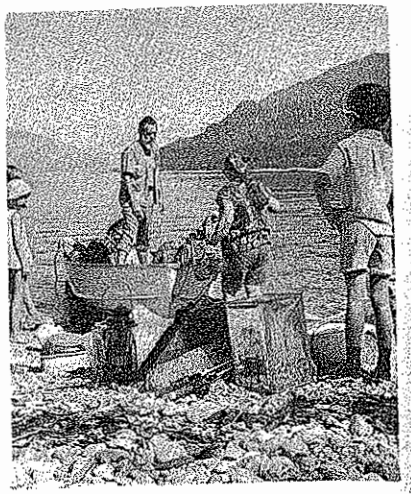
15. Sod-breaking for Hamilton church, 1952



16. New church at Ottawa, 1967



17. New church at Vancouver, 1964



18. Unitarian Wilderness Camp

19. Unitarian Church of Vancouver, 1913-1963

20. Canadian Unitarian and Universalist journals

THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

Truth, Holiness, Liberty, Love. No. 5.

MONTREAL, MAY, 1844.

THE RATIONAL CHRISTIAN.

"Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you Free."

Vol. I.—No. 4 MONTREAL, FEBRUARY, 1877.

EDITOR'S RANDOM READINGS.

Gospel Messenger,

OR, UNIVERSALIST ADVOCATE.

LONDON, C. W., JANUARY, 1849. No. 1.

Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration Number.

The Liberal Christian.

"The Kingdom of God is within you."—Jesus.

Vol. VIII. HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, APRIL, 1897. No. 10

The Canadian Unitarian Bulletin

Published by the Canadian Unitarian Association.

MAY, 1916.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNITARIAN CHURCHES.

THE CANADIAN UNITARIAN

December, 1943

WINNIPEG 1904-1943

THE CANADIAN UNITARIAN

VOLUME 17 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1975 NUMBER 2

Looking ahead to two great gatherings

IARF CONGRESS

A world of fellowship

ANNUAL MEETING

9

Renaissance

The misfortunes between the wars had not been an experience peculiar to Canadian Unitarianism. All forms of organized religion had encountered similar problems, though the larger and better-organized denominations were in a more favorable position to cope with them. The British and American Unitarian movements had also declined.

In the United States, concern over the way things were going had generated action. At the annual meetings of the AUA in 1934 a commission of appraisal was appointed. Two years later this commission reported its findings in a 350-page book under the title *Unitarians Face a New Age*. It began by asking bluntly whether Unitarianism had 'any real function to perform in the modern world', noting that 'there are many discouraged Unitarians today' and that 'the general level of morale is dangerously low.' None the less, the commission affirmed, Unitarianism could respond effectively to the needs of the times if its adherents so chose. 'There can be little doubt of the need in the modern world for some organized expression of the liberal spirit in religion.... The denomination includes enough men and women of faith, and enough churches of power, to transform the doubts and hesitations of the denomination as a whole into positive and forward-moving faith.'[1]

A clear picture emerged from the commission's careful survey of the salient features of contemporary Unitarian thinking. It showed a group that affirmed the primacy of the free exercise of intelligence in religion and stressed individual responsibility. There was a general consensus

that religion, to be meaningful, must translate itself into action at a personal and social level. On the other hand, there was much disagreement as to how far Unitarians should make use of the traditional religious vocabulary, as to how closely they felt themselves to be aligned with the Christian tradition, and as to how far they felt human nature could cope unaided with all life's problems.[2]

From analysis the commission proceeded to recommendations. One of these struck a familiar note: 'A group that has so long been accustomed to highly individualistic methods must *learn* to act co-operatively.'[3] But of equal importance was the process indicated in the report's title: facing a new age. This would express itself firstly in new forms of worship, 'not unmindful of the great tradition but eager to carry it forward into a new age which will inevitably have its own fresh experiences of the eternal and cosmic urge, and which may therefore be expected to express its faith in fresh language and symbolism.'[4] Secondly, it would express itself through making use of the new insights that had been emerging in the field of education. 'Pretty much everything the church does to affect those who come within its walls can be brought under the term education. Once this is recognized, the implications of the discovery will necessitate a drastic overhauling of actual procedures and will stimulate the experimental use of a great number of new ideas.'[5] And finally, it would express itself in outreach, both in church extension and in 'the effort to translate social idealism into terms of social action.'[6]

Those recommendations pointed the direction in which American Unitarianism was thenceforward to move. In 1937 the chairman of the commission of appraisal, Frederick May Eliot, was elevated to the presidency of the AUA with a full mandate to give the kind of leadership for which he had called. Though the impulse to face a new age sometimes overreached itself in simply endorsing current fads and forgetting that Unitarianism was after all a religious movement, the net result of this abandonment of the nostalgic attempt to recapture the lost vitality of the New Theology was to pull the denomination out of its tailspin and into an accelerating climb. During the war the term 'Unitarian Advance' was coined to describe the new approach.

In Canada, *Unitarians Face a New Age* had a delayed impact. Though a few individuals had read the report, it was not until the winter of 1939-40 that a little group of leading laypersons from the

reputedly conservative Montreal church got together to give it systematic study, under the chairmanship of Roy Campbell, son of A. C. Campbell of Ottawa and subsequently mayor of Westmount. One immediate result was that when a few months later the congregation was faced with the necessity of finding a successor for Lawrence Clare, they deliberately looked for someone who would represent the new outlook. They found such a person in Angus Cameron, a twenty-eight-year-old native of New Brunswick who after leaving the Baptist faith of his upbringing had studied at Meadville and then spent three years as minister of the Unitarian church in Dunkirk, New York. He received a unanimous call to Montreal in November 1940, within a few days of a call being extended by the Ottawa congregation to 'Ingi' Borgford, a native of Winnipeg and a product of the Icelandic Unitarian movement. Borgford was ten years older than Cameron but had been his contemporary at Meadville, having spent his early adult years in the engineering profession. He came to Ottawa from four unhappy years at the decaying Universalist church in Halifax. There, in the face of considerable odds, he had tried to give expression to the spirit of the new age, and in particular to his own social conscience, which led him to espouse the progressive causes of the day.

The forward-looking spirit of Cameron and Borgford contrasted sharply with the defeatism that had begun to hang like a cloud over Canadian Unitarianism. 'Liberal religious groups in Canada will not be large and they know it,' wrote Douglas Hemmeon at the close of twelve unfruitful years in Hamilton; 'there is a lack of rational approach to religion among Canadians.'[7] Borgford found on arrival in Ottawa that his predecessor Norman Dowd was even more pessimistic. 'He does not believe there is any need or justification for the Unitarian Church in Canada.... He does not see much hope for the Ottawa church, and believes that all the Canadian churches are on the way out.'[8]

It took courage to believe that the new Unitarianism could flourish in such an allegedly unpromising environment – courage of the same order as had been called for on so many previous occasions in Canadian Unitarian history. But before long Borgford and Cameron received welcome reinforcements. Alfred Stiernotte began his ministry at Vancouver in September 1943, and three months later William P. Jenkins arrived in Toronto. Both were men in their early thirties and were aggressive advocates of Unitarian Advance. Stiernotte came originally from Belgium and still had a pronounced accent, though he had been in Canada since 1922. While at the University of Alberta he had become a Unitarian under the influence of Alexander. After graduating in chemical engineering he had worked in the oil industry for several years before going to Meadville to train for the ministry. Vancouver was his first church. Jenkins, a native of Ohio, had been ordained in 1938 to the ministry of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, had transferred to Unitarianism three years later, and had served for two years at the Unitarian Church in Walpole, New Hampshire.

Of the five significant pulpits in Canada, four were now occupied by Canadians. The novelty of this phenomenon was not the result of any dearth of Canadians entering the Unitarian ministry – for many years there had been more Canadian-born ministers serving Unitarian churches in the United States than there were Unitarian positions in Canada, and this was to remain true in the coming period.

Of these same five pulpits, only one had not seen a change of incumbent since the outbreak of war. In Winnipeg, P. M. Petursson was less than halfway through his thirty-five-year ministry; though older than the newcomers he still counted as one of the denomination's younger ministers. Moreover, his outlook had evolved over the years and he too was strongly influenced by the spirit of Unitarian Advance – a spirit by now being summarized in Five Points, which replaced their nineteenth-century predecessors: individual freedom of belief; discipleship to advancing truth; the democratic process in human relations; universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed; and allegiance to the cause of a united world community.

This declaration marked a departure not only from the traditional vocabulary of religion, but from anything that could be readily identified by the man in the street as religious at all. It had been designed simply to identify some distinctive characteristics of a Unitarian approach to religion, not to give a complete description. Its exclusive emphasis upon the intellectual and the practical, however, and its lack of any reference to the emotional, mystical or spiritual aspects of human experience, opened the door to the secularization, which was to be so marked a feature of the next period in Unitarian development in Canada. As recently as 1939, in an Easter sermon entitled *The Life beyond Life*, Hodgins had affirmed his faith in personal immortality. 'Our immortality seems sure,' he said, 'not so much because of what

we are, as because of the things we love.... There are many things we esteem precious that can never be scientifically proved.'[9] Such language, and such ideas, rapidly went into eclipse during the next few years as the younger generation of ministers took over.

Borgford's position was simply stated: 'religion is the socially shared quest for the good life.'[10] The social idealism that looked toward the creation of a better world once the war against Nazism had been won was to ground itself securely upon scientific methods of inquiry and demonstration. For Stiernotte, this was 'the dynamic participation of man in the creative synthesis of objectively tested relationships.'[11] 'Unitarian religion,' he said, 'is based on the natural powers of the mind... it has nothing whatever to do with the present craze for strange pursuits of religious meanings in the mystical, the mysterious, the astrological, and the esoteric.'[12]

The most complete statement of the new outlook within Canadian Unitarianism to appear before the end of the war was a thirty-five-page pamphlet by Angus Cameron originally delivered as a sermon series under the title *Religion for Modern Man*. The Montreal congregation had two thousand copies printed, but it was subsequently republished by the AUA under the title *Unitarianism: A Modern Adventure* in two printings totalling forty thousand copies. Cameron too laid heavy emphasis upon scientific method as the avenue to truth. 'Religion would do well to adopt the spirit and humility of science. In experimental science, men work from experience. They observe what is, and then establish a hypothesis. When that method was applied to the natural world, the wisdom of the ages was shown to be not such great wisdom.'[13]

Proceeding to an examination of the new Five Points, he added that none of them represented an end in itself. They were all 'means to the fullest development of the human potential of each individual.... Is the fullest development of each individual, then, an end in itself? I think we should recognize that for many modern men it is. And we should grant that in so believing they are truly religious.... However, there are other men who... while reverencing personality, reserve their last devotion for something beyond personality. It is at this point that we arrive at the growing edge of religious thinking.... It is very doubtful if the old symbols with the old meanings can adequately express it. But it is here that we have the growing edge of a new faith and a new sense of God.... In all this, we are being true to the

underlying process that, out of the old, continually brings forth the new. It is the life that encompasses the growing trees, the distant stars, and the life of man. Devotion to this process evokes a response nothing can daunt. No frustration, failure or disaster can quench it. It is devotion to the realm of possibilities inherent in the life process and as yet only slightly realized. It is, if you will, devotion to God, for we reserve that name for this creative Life Process.'[14]

This represented the farthest the new ministers would go in the direction that had a few years earlier been the dominant one in Canadian Unitarianism. In terms of the perennial Unitarian tension between the rationalistic and the romantic, the pendulum was now swinging strongly toward the rationalistic end of the scale. Just a few years earlier Clare and Hodgins, Alexander and Constable had based their approach to religion upon classical culture and wide-ranging literary interests. The new ministers based theirs upon scientific, sociological, and political interests. Borgford and Stiernotte had both been trained in engineering, Jenkins in law. Only Cameron showed obvious signs of feeling the tension of the opposing poles within his own life.

Tangible signs of the new orientation began slowly to appear. *Unitarians Face a New Age* had recommended that the church services make use of fresh and contemporary materials. Such new materials as were now incorporated into the services inevitably reflected intellectual and political rather than mystical and spiritual concerns. Some of them, indeed, were not new at all, except to Unitarians. They were simply products of the Hegelian ethical movements of the early days of the century, in which Felix Adler and Stanton Coit had attempted to construct a religion without theology. Though the lectures and publications of these movements had had considerable influence in undermining the old-style theologies, the institutions they had created had met with little success, least of all in Canada. But most of the modification of the services that took place was simply by way of attrition, so that they came more and more to consist of music, readings, and an address from the pulpit.

None of these developments took effect very rapidly. The congregations were less eager for change than were their ministers, and tended to put up considerable resistance to any radical alterations in their accustomed orders of service. Before he accepted the invitation to Montreal, Cameron had reached an understanding with the pulpit committee that he would move toward discontinuing the use of the

venerable service book, comparatively minor modifications to which had caused much dissension within the congregation during Snow's ministry. But he was prepared to take his time and move slowly. When the congregation celebrated its centenary in 1942, bringing Sydney Snow and Frederick May Eliot for its celebration services, the morning worship from the book followed almost without change the form laid out by James Martineau in 1862. It was not until 1948 that it was finally voted to remove the service books from the pews, as they were no longer being used. In Toronto, despite a greater degree of impatience from Jenkins, change came equally slowly. That congregation's centennial service in 1945 included 'the Lord's Prayer' and the singing of 'God Save the King'. At this late date the Toronto congregation even retained traces of its early roots in the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster through the persistence of the Presbyterian custom of appointing Elders.

Equally hesitant were the changes in the second of the areas identified by the Commission of Appraisal, that of education. The AUA had by now begun to produce a new curriculum for the Sunday schools, taking immediate present-day experience as its point of departure. This was enthusiastically promoted by 'Tillie' Moore, director of religious education at the Montreal church until the spring of 1942, whose efforts were reinforced by an unprecedented event that took place a few months before her resignation. This was a religious education conference in Ottawa that brought in members of the Montreal and Toronto congregations for an exposition of the new program by Ernest W. Kuebler, director of the AUA's division of education. Kuebler came back a year later for individual visits to the three churches, as the new ideas began to percolate and the AUA materials came gradually into use.

Only in the areas of extension and social responsibility were there any very visible signs of change before the end of the war. Extension efforts had naturally been limited by wartime conditions, though the churches were by no means as hard-hit by these as they had been during World War I. There seemed to be fewer divisive issues within the congregations, too, as attention focused on planning for action to be implemented as soon as the war was over.

Extensive use of radio to reach the scattered constituency in Manitoba began in 1941, with services being broadcast both in English and Icelandic. Points as far distant as Keewatin, Ontario, and Wynyard, Saskatchewan reported good reception. In this way contact was maintained with Icelandic Unitarians and sympathizers despite travel difficulties. More important from a national standpoint, however, was another initiative that had come from Winnipeg late in 1940. E. J. Lucas, who had recently found his way to Unitarianism, wrote with the zeal of a convert to Charles Russell in Ottawa, proposing that something be done to bring the Unitarian churches of Canada closer together. He suggested 'the formation of a Canadian Conference to include every church of our faith from Coast to Coast' and added that as it was so difficult to get people together in person from the different parts of the country one possibility might be a nationally circulating newssheet.[15] Russell was so impressed by the proposal that he reproduced Lucas's letter and circulated it to all the churches. There was enough of a positive response for it to be decided to go ahead with the newssheet, and Borgford agreed to act as editor. The first issue of *The Canadian Unitarian* appeared in January 1942, and for the first time in a quarter of a century Unitarians across the country were regularly informed not only of each other's news but also of a sampling of opinions. Eight issues appeared each year and were distributed by the churches, which shared the costs of production.

The Canadian Unitarian was directed chiefly to those who were already members. But the need to attract the general public was increasingly stressed as the churches became more missionary-minded. The publication of Cameron's pamphlet was one response. Another was the regular appearance in the *Toronto Star* of paid advertisements along the lines of Casson's 'paragraph pulpit', but concluding with an announcement of the Unitarian services. There was positive response in 1944 to a suggestion from Jenkins that the Canadian churches should jointly sponsor an advertisement in *Food For Thought*, the journal of the Canadian Association for Adult Education.

Paradoxically, there was only one place where the face-to-face meetings for which Lucas had hoped could realistically be held, and that was at the annual meetings of the AUA in Boston. But the president of the AUA no longer needed to take the initiative in calling them. Frank Symons, who had succeeded Russell as the association's vice-president for Canada, met in 1944 with Cameron, Jenkins, Borgford, and Petursson to discuss ways of promoting the movement. Things were beginning to move, and a new sense of identity as Canadian Unitarians was slowly emerging.

In the closing months of the war this sense of national identity found a focus in a major project in social responsibility: the founding of the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada. There had been a Unitarian Service Committee (USC) in the United States since the critical month of May 1940, when the organization was formalized to continue relief work in Europe that had begun as far back as 1938. Originally it had been an expression of the concern of American Unitarians for their threatened co-religionists in Czechoslovakia, and then for Czech refugees in general. After the fall of France, the USC worked from a base in Marseilles to assist refugees from many parts of Europe trapped in the 'unoccupied' part of the country. Among these was Dr Lotta Hitschmanova, who had been a journalist in Czechoslovakia before the war and had been forced to flee because of her strong anti-Nazi stand. She worked actively with the USC and other agencies before leaving for Canada in 1942 on the last boat from Lisbon to New York. As a result of this work, there was an understanding with the USC in Boston that she would return to Czechoslovakia as its representative after the war. In the meantime she was working in Ottawa, where she became a member of the Unitarian congregation.

In November 1944 the USC opened a centre in New York for the shipment of used clothing to the liberated countries of Europe. Appeals for support of this project drew a response from Unitarians in Canada, but it was soon discovered that government regulations in both countries made it impossible for Canadian relief supplies to be shipped by way of the United States. The possibility of a similar but separate operation in Canada provided a natural alternative, if it could operate on a scale to justify its existence. Dr Hitschmanova was convinced that it could, and was prepared to organize it herself. The idea appealed immensely to Borgford, combining as it did two of his major fields of concern, social responsibility and national identity. He wrote at once to his fellow-ministers, suggesting that such action would not only get around the red tape that prevented shipments across the border but would also draw a better response from Canadian donors than would be forthcoming if their contributions were incorporated into an effort for which the chief credit would inevitably go to the United States.

The response was positive, and in July 1945 Dr Hitschmanova travelled to Boston with a proposal to the board of directors of the

USC. She asked for an experimental period of three months to try to organize a Canadian branch of the USC; if this was not successful, she would be prepared to revert to the original idea of returning as USC representative to Czechoslovakia. The board readily agreed to underwrite the experiment and within a few weeks the organization was registered under the *War Charities Act* as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.

An honorary committee was established under the chairmanship of Senator Cairine Wilson, and including the ambassadors of France and Czechoslovakia, to which countries clothing, food, and medical supplies were to be sent. Under the terms of its registration, the USC of Canada had to limit its appeal to Unitarians and their friends. Branches were immediately established by the churches in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, and the new venture was under way. Dr Hitschmanova was able to report to the October meeting of the USC directors in Boston that tangible progress was being made, and they gave their full support, including the gift of ten thousand copies of a folder especially prepared for distribution in Canada. 'When we are asked what Unitarianism means,' it declared, 'we tell about the Unitarian Service Committee – our faith in action.' The guiding principle was the same as had inspired the American committee since its inception: 'Loyal to the Unitarian principle of goodwill to all men, help will be distributed in Czechoslovakia and France on a strictly non-sectarian basis to the needy and deserving, without discrimination of creed or nationality.

By the end of the year substantial sums of money were coming in, and the first consignment of medical supplies had been shipped from Saint John, N.B. The clothing drive was launched in January, Meanwhile, Senator Wilson had been working to secure permission for the fund raising to be directed to the general public rather than simply to Unitarians. These efforts were rewarded when in February 1946 the government of Canada gave official recognition to the USC as one of the country's major relief agencies, and authorized a general appeal. Explosive growth in the operation followed. During the next two months Dr Hitschmanova addressed fifty-three open meetings on a cross-Canada tour, and spoke eleven times over the radio. 'Canada has become Unitarian-aware,' exulted *The Canadian Unitarian*: 'Unitarianism is on the advance. In this emergency where thousands of innocent victims die every day and every night in Europe, we have to do our

share.'[16] By October, over ninety thousand pounds of used clothing had been sent to Europe, and Unitarian church premises across the country were clogged with further supplies, which poured in as fast as they could be sorted, packed, and shipped by teams of volunteers. Food and medical supplies were also being sent at an accelerating pace, and $50 000 had been raised for a foster-parent plan for children in European orphanages.

This enormous expansion in the scale of activities meant that although the packing of supplies was still being done largely by Unitarians on Unitarian premises, the source of the contributions was increasingly from non-Unitarians. In her year-end report for 1947 Dr Hitschmanova noted that 'only 5% of our donations come from Unitarians.' This was markedly in contrast with the situation in the United States, where the bulk of the support for USC activities came from Unitarians, and hastened the complete separation between the two organizations. While the earliest negotiations were still under way at the beginning of 1945, Mrs H. G. Barber of Ottawa had written to the American USC, 'you must keep in mind what I always tell the Alliance – we in Canada do not work on a denominational, but on a national basis.'[17] It became increasingly clear as time went by that the USC of Canada was becoming a national rather than a denominational organization.

The organization of the Service Committee, by far their largest-scale joint undertaking to date, gave Canadian Unitarians a sense of involvement in a project the relevance and usefulness of which was patently beyond argument. Back in 1944, Willard A. Stewart, a board member of the Toronto church, cited what he called 'the recipe for survival,' which had been given by Lawrence Redfern when he spoke in Toronto nearly seven years earlier: 'History has shown that invariably, when the church has reached a low ebb, it is revived when it champions a new and greater cause.'[18] Unitarians had now discovered such a cause and were interacting vigorously with the current concerns and needs of the wider community.

Beyond this major enterprise, such interaction still tended to be at a personal or purely formal level. As an example of the first, Philip Petursson was elected to the Winnipeg School Board as a CCF candidate in 1942 and served for a number of years. Through his political involvement he became a close friend of Stanley Knowles, who frequently deputized for him in the Winnipeg pulpit. Personal friendship

was in the same way responsible for the unprecedented invitation to Stiernotte to preach in a United Church. Despite his theological radicalism he had quickly established a warm relationship with the more liberal ministers of other denominations, men who like himself were concerned to see religion translated into social action. At his ordination and installation in 1944 no fewer than six ministers of other denominations – United, Anglican, and Baptist – participated, including Andrew Roddan, then president of the Vancouver Ministerial Association. It was also through personal contacts that Brock Chisholm was brought to the Ottawa pulpit in February 1946. Already a well-known figure in Canadian public life for his pungent and controversial utterances but not yet a Unitarian (he later joined the Victoria church), Chisholm drew a packed attendance to the service.

Other memorable visits to Unitarian services during this period belonged to the more formal category. Personal links were partly responsible for bringing the Bishop of Iceland to the Winnipeg pulpit in February 1944, but the attendance of the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba two years earlier was more in the nature of a token that Unitarians would not be omitted from the roster for state visits. Both occasions brought out the crowds. At the centennial service in Toronto, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario read the lesson, and listened without much enthusiasm to a sermon on 'The Church of the New Age' by A. Powell Davies, minister of the rapidly growing Unitarian church in Washington, D.C. A large attendance of outsiders was more predictable at the memorial service in Ottawa for A. C. Campbell in November 1943; among the many members of parliament present was Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

There was interaction with the wider community at other levels too. Trends within society at large had their impact upon Unitarian congregations. One major trend in the years immediately following the end of the war was the revival in the fortunes of organized religion that gradually developed into the so-called 'religious boom'. This had its heyday during the fifteen years from 1948 to 1963, reaching its peak in 1959. Unitarianism in North America paralleled the overall trends, with a slight time lag. Once again it was demonstrated that in spite of all the radical differences between Unitarianism and other forms of organized religion, the movement follows the same sociological trends. Unitarian churches gain in strength when other churches are gaining, lose when they are losing. That there was nothing automatic or inevi-

table in such a process was shown by the fact that the Universalist churches continued to lose strength throughout the 'religious boom', but the performance of Unitarian churches as compared with churches generally threw doubts upon the claims that the postwar gains of Unitarianism could be attributed solely to internal changes within the movement. An American Unitarian minister wrote in 1950: 'Denominational leaders imply that our gain in membership has been due to the changed policies which were introduced in 1937. That is simply not true. The gain in membership is largely due to a general impetus toward church membership during that period.'[19]

Numerical growth was far from obvious within Canadian Unitarianism during the first few years after the war. When the census figures for 1951 were published, they showed a total of 3517 Unitarians, scarcely more than the 3224 recorded in 1911. The decline in the Icelandic movement was apparent from the Manitoba figures, which were only half those of thirty years earlier; even in Ontario the increase during the same period amounted to less than a hundred. No new societies had been organized, though there was a short-lived attempt to establish one at Windsor in 1942. On the other hand, the struggling cause at Hamilton had once again gone under, suspending services and finally selling its building in 1947. As in its earlier period of suspended animation, however, it maintained a paper existence and thereby retained control of its financial assets.

In 1946 Stiernotte and Borgford both left for the United States. The former had accepted a position as managing editor of *The Humanist* magazine, but had considerable problems in obtaining an American entry visa on account of his active involvement with the National Council for Canadian-Soviet Friendship – an organization which at that time had many eminently respectable members. He subsequently became a professor of theology and ended up in the Episcopal Church. Borgford served three American Unitarian congregations before his untimely death in 1957. These two ministers were succeeded, in Ottawa by Gaston Carrier, a young French-Canadian who had just completed a year at Meadville after leaving the United Church ministry, and in Vancouver by Alfred Hodgkins. It was a measure of the lack of significant growth in Vancouver that despite the congregation's experience with a non-Unitarian minister little more than twenty years earlier it was prepared to repeat the experiment. Financial problems provided the reason, though half Hodgkins's salary

of $100 a month was paid by the AUA. He had originally been a Methodist minister, but had spent the greater part of his career in the teaching profession in Saskatchewan. Having now retired to Vancouver, he supplemented his pension by ministries to several small congregations, of which the Unitarian church was the first. He was assiduous in his pastoral duties and drew in a number of new members, but many of them were drawn more by his social and political associations than by an interest in Unitarianism. Before long the church board had to direct a formal request that he consider drawing some of the readings used at the services from sources other than the Bible.

The Canadian Unitarian did not long survive Borgford's departure. Its last issue appeared in December 1946. Despite efforts by Cameron to keep the idea of a Canadian Unitarian organization alive, this too lapsed. Only in Montreal and Toronto was there tangible evidence of any Unitarian advance at all. By the mid-century point, the Montreal premises had been expanded by the acquisition of two adjoining residences, converted and dedicated as 'Unitarian House' by Frederick May Eliot in 1949. The church's declared membership had by now climbed to amost double what it had been when Cameron arrived, and stood at about five hundred. In Toronto the advance, which had begun more slowly, was by now more publicly obvious. The membership of 385 in 1950 was more than three times what it had been when Jenkins came, and the average Sunday morning attendance had risen from about 70 to 125. The need for a new church had been becoming increasingly obvious, not so much at first on account of inadequacy of the existing premises as of the deterioration of the neighborhood, which had now become a red-light district. Hodgins had called the church 'an Athenian isle set in a Phrygian lake,' and at the annual meeting of 1942 it had been noted that 'it is most desirable that a new location be secured at the earliest possible moment.' After Jenkins came the pressure for a move increased, but not until the summer of 1946 was the decisive step taken. An offer of $40 000 for the property from the Robert Simpson Company was accepted, and $25 000 of this was immediately laid out for a new site on St Clair Avenue West. As the purchaser was in no hurry to redevelop and was prepared to let the congregation stay in the premises without paying any rent, there was still no great sense of urgency in getting a new building started.

In fact, the congregation now developed a case of cold feet. Financial support lagged far behind what would be needed for an imagina-

tive building program, and even the current budget suffered to an extent that caused the newspaper advertising to be discontinued. Jenkins, exasperated by his inability to move the board or the congregation to effective action, submitted his resignation in January 1948. Frantic consultations followed. He was urged to reconsider; the church board offered its resignation; a special congregational meeting supported the minister's demands for immediate action on the building program, an effective financial canvass, and an aggressive campaign to build up the membership. By the annual meeting in June, Jenkins had modified his stand. He told the congregation: 'If you are determined to take advantage of the great opportunity for the Unitarian faith in Toronto, then I shall remain to work with you. But to drift and retrench mean congregational atrophy and suicide, and I will have no part of it.'

Despite this categorical warning, progress was still slow. Architects' plans for a new building were rejected as too costly. A congregational meeting had to be abandoned for lack of a quorum. The building committee was replaced. Finally, after matters had dragged on for over three years, it was the Robert Simpson Company that precipitated action by giving the congregation two weeks' notice to vacate its building. The company had got wind of an impending strike among steelworkers in the United States, and wanted immediate use of the property to stockpile steel beams. Jenkins's friend Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Holy Blossom Temple persuaded a member of his congregation to give the Unitarians free use of one of his chain of cinemas for their Sunday morning services, but they now had no home for other activities. On October 2, 1950 the first sod was ceremonially turned on the new site by eighty-two-year-old Walter Thomas, a descendant of one of the original members of the congregation a century earlier. The new building began to take shape, but it was not to be ready for occupancy until the autumn of 1951.

By this time, changes had taken place elsewhere in the country. A year after Jenkins's ultimatum to the Toronto congregation, Carrier had issued a similar one in Ottawa, citing the congregation's apathy and defeatism, its unsatisfactory financial structure, its failure to recognize the need to move forward, and its lack of pride in the appearance of its buildings. The congregation voted, as had been the case in Toronto, to work with its minister to try to overcome these problems; early in 1950, however, Carrier resigned and moved to an American church. In

Vancouver, Hodgkins too began to use his resignation as a lever in negotiations with the congregation, but in the end one such resignation was, to his chagrin, simply accepted, and he left in the spring of 1951.

As they entered the second half of the twentieth century, Canadian Unitarians were still essentially a little disorganized band of individualists. South of the border the movement was by now full of the fervor of Unitarian Advance, and was exulting in its growth in numbers and vitality. But the difference between the situations in the two countries could not be attributed to any factors peculiar to Unitarianism. The religious boom began more slowly in Canada than in the United States. Among the major Protestant bodies only the United Church registered any advance during the decade ending with the census of 1951. Baptists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians all declined in numbers.

The greatest change of the decade so far as Unitarians were concerned was in theological orientation. In 1941 the Canadian movement stood where it had always stood, at the conservative end of the Unitarian spectrum. Its adherents overwhelmingly regarded themselves as liberal Christians. By the end of the decade they had not moved as far in a radical direction as they were ultimately to go, but there had already been a decisive swing in that direction, which had taken place with remarkably little controversy. In the United States, bitter recriminations between 'theists' and 'humanists' had been one of the most prominent features of the Unitarian scene, with upholders of the traditional standpoint counterattacking vigorously. In Canada resistance to change took more passive forms, perhaps because there were no spokesmen for liberal Christianity capable of challenging the ministers who were leading the new trend. Inertia was a poor defence and had nothing positive to offer. But it still took until 1948 for the old service books to be taken out of the pews in the Montreal church, and not until 1953 did the Ottawa congregation vote to take down the nineteenth-century Five Points, which had been inscribed on the front wall of the church. There were a few protesters, but the tide was now flowing too strongly for them. Little attention was given the retiring chairman in Toronto when at the 1945 annual meeting he warned: 'We hear a great deal these days about Christianity in action, and no doubt far too much emphasis was placed on dogma, ritual and the importance of faith; yet I sometimes think the modern church is more like a service club. There is a happy mean which we must preserve.'

At least he said 'service club' and not 'country club'. There was too

much concern for social action among Toronto Unitarians for the latter expression to be used, as it was at a later date with regard to some Unitarian congregations. But the trend to which he referred, though unmistakable, was again no peculiar Unitarian phenomenon. A few years later a leading minister of another denomination, addressing the American Sociological Society, said that expanding church membership could well be a product of growing secularization of the church itself, or a mass reaction to the growing impersonality of society that drove people to the warmth of the church to get satisfactions denied them elsewhere.[20] Another reason why the Unitarians of Canada, on the whole, followed the lead given by the young ministers was that there seemed to be no viable alternative. Faced with the necessity of steering between the Scylla of retailing traditional liberal answers to questions hardly anyone was still asking and the Charybdis of complete secularization, they chose to risk the latter, unlike the Unitarians of Britain, who chose the other course and continued to decline.

But it had been necesssary for the reformers to move slowly. In his earliest period in Toronto, Jenkins would open his sermons in traditional manner with a Biblical text. The prayer printed along with one of them ran: 'From our daily round of cares and burdens, from the hubbub and excitement of the street and the market place, from a world perplexed and battered and bleeding, we come into this place of quiet and simplicity seeking the voice of God . . . only the divine voice, the still, small voice, that speaks from the soul-depths, can lead us. . . . May we more clearly understand the message of Jesus, for we see in Him the prophet speaking the word we need. . . . May we in this hour be purified and guided aright, that we not only hear the voice of God but become the instrument of that voice to the benefit of all mankind.'[21]

However theistic, even Christocentric, this may have sounded, Jenkins was really pushing the congregation hard in the direction of humanism. 'I suppose,' he said in 1950, 'some of you will shudder when I say that word.' He proceeded to explain it. After tracing its antecedents in the humanism of the Renaissance and in the ethical principles of Jesus and the Hebrew prophets, he continued, 'its central belief is the belief in the dignity of human nature and the possibility of human beings to solve their problems if they face them. . . . All humanists have this in common: they are not supernaturalists, they believe in one world which is a natural world . . . they believe in the scientific spirit which recognizes the value of reason in common life and also the democratic spirit which is an outgrowth of essential faith in the dignity of man.'[22]

By the time the congregation was ready to move into its new home, it already numbered a humanist study group among its varied organizations. This blossomed during the winter of 1951-52 into the Toronto Humanist Association, technically a separate body and an affiliate of the American Humanist Association, but composed predominantly of Unitarians, using the premises freely and reporting to the annual meeting of the congregation. The growing strength of the point of view it represented showed itself not only in the steadily decreasing use of theological words such as 'God' and 'prayer', but also in a similar move away from ecclesiastical terms such as 'church' and 'sermon'. It was not simply that the congregation now included some people with a Jewish rather than Christian background, for whom the word 'church' had unpleasant historical associations; it was largely the expression of a desire to shake free from all words used in traditional Christian circles. When in September 1951 the congregation met for the first time in its new building for a service of celebration and dedication led by AUA President Eliot along with Jenkins, there had been no decision as to what to call the structure, and the issue was evaded by a sign that simply announced 'First Unitarian Congregation'. Though the publicity brochure issued shortly afterwards was headed 'Welcome to the Unitarian Church', the term remained a bone of contention. It was increasingly avoided at the cost of considerable circumlocution, but for lack of any generally accepted alternative it remained in unofficial use, and sometimes in official use as well.

The architecture, no less than the hesitancy over what to call the building, expressed the swing away from traditional ecclesiastical image. It was announced as 'the first church of completely modern functional design in the city of Toronto.' Modern it obviously was, and a complete departure from traditional church design. As to whether it was uniquely functional there could be more debate. No doubt a Gothic cathedral would be completely functional for a congregation still using medieval modes of thought and worship, and as completely dysfunctional for Unitarian use as the empty niche incongruously carved into the stonework high above the Sherbrooke Street entrance of the Montreal church. But there was nothing particularly functional

about the three-columned pylon outside the main entrance to the rectangular brick building, which unkind critics said completed the impression that it was a fire hall.

Inside, apart from its poor acoustics, the building was completely functional for the kind of activities favored by Jenkins. 'Our effective symbolism is words,' he said 'and that is why our pulpit is in the centre of the church, because it is where the word symbol is expressed.'[23] There was no other symbolism in the building, though for years the debate as to whether to place something on the plain brick wall at the front was as perennial as the discussions over the name. The auditorium was furnished with comfortable leather-bound chairs, which could be turned around to face the stage at the rear for theatrical performances.

The dedication of the new building was Jenkins's moment of triumph after nearly eight years of struggle and frustration. This stocky determined man was now emerging as the unchallenged leader of Canadian Unitarianism, a position he was to hold for nearly a decade. Normally mild-mannered, and devoid of oratorical flourishes in the pulpit, the pugnacious spirit of his Welsh ancestry could flare when he encountered opposition. Once he had come to a conclusion he considered correct, whether on an issue of principle or on one of tactics, he could find little patience for those he saw as obstructionists standing in the way of progress. He now held the limelight amid an increasingly imposing array of visible accomplishments. In the conservative Toronto of his day his outspokenness on controversial issues always made good copy for the newspapers. 'Our idea of a moral man is an old fuddy-duddy shaking a stick and saying "No, no ... mustn't, can't!"'[24] He denounced the Sunday observance 'blue laws' and the accepted religious views on divorce, birth control and abortion. When the federal budget for 1951 induced the usual reaction to the announcement of new taxes he retorted that in one way the new taxes were not high enough. 'Millions for business as usual, hundreds of millions for arms. But where is the item for peace-building?'[25] When a Roman Catholic organization launched a campaign for the suppression of objectionable literature through economic pressure against the vendors, Jenkins counterattacked with the argument that censorship of sex and violence would inevitably lead on to censorship of philosophies with which Catholics disagreed. He pointed out that this same organization had earlier denounced the CBC for having broadcast talks by

such speakers as Brock Chisholm and Bertrand Russell. Few of his utterances, in fact, were calculated to endear him to Catholics. In a celebrated sermon of 1952 he declared that 'angels and flying saucers are but different interpretations of similar optical illusions.... Both give the lie to reality. Both are escape mechanisms.'[25]

Jenkins excelled in organization and administration, and was accused by critics of running the church 'like a department store'.[26] Unsparing of his own energies, he drove others too. 'I call upon you,' he said to the congregation at the 1953 annual meeting, 'to arouse yourselves before the air of complacency degenerates into the odor of sanctity.' Three years later he came back with the accusation that too many of them were 'listeners, not doers.' His continuing march away from tradition was symbolized in his wearing of a blue gown in the pulpit: Black, he said, was the color of mourning.

In addition to his heavy workload at the church, Jenkins assumed a succession of denominational responsibilities. He served two terms as president of the Meadville Unitarian Conference, the district organization serving the churches of eastern Canada and the neighboring states, which held its annual meeting in Toronto in 1947 and again in 1953. He served on the board of trustees of the AUA and as one of its three vice-presidents. In 1956 he was elected president of the Unitarian Ministers' Association, a role that involved travel to all parts of North America. All these links brought the Toronto congregation into a more intimate involvement with the American Unitarian scene than ever before in its history. But Jenkins was equally active in public affairs at a local level. While still at the old church he had served as chairman of the Moss Park Neighborhood Workers' Association. Later, he was secretary of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (Toronto branch) and served on the executive of the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs, which sponsored the famous Couchiching Conferences. For some years he was treasurer of the Civil Liberties Association. In December 1953, at the conclusion of ten years at the church, he and his wife, Marie, were honored by the congregation with a dinner at which Frederick May Eliot was the principal speaker.

Though Jenkins was never satisfied with the performance of the congregation, by any other standards it had been impressive. The entire rebuilding project had cost about $170 000. Of this, $40 000 had come from the sale of the old church and $50 000 had been loaned by the AUA. The congregation had raised the remainder through its own

efforts, in addition to maintaining the normal operating expenditures. It was sheer good fortune that totally unforeseen legacies enabled it to pay off its entire indebtedness within a year of moving in, for the need for further outlay was rapidly becoming apparent. The original building contained only five rooms for the use of the Sunday school or School of Religion as it was now renamed. But the number of children coming to the church was rising even more rapidly than the number of adults – in fact, it was the experience-centred non-dogmatic children's program that led many parents to the church. Typical of the thinking of scores of parents was what Roy and Lorna Sumner wrote in an article published in a nationally circulating magazine in October 1955: 'This may sound strange to you – the idea that a baby could bring a mature young man and his wife, both ex-Baptists and non-churchgoers, back to religion.... We coped with the same problem facing thousands of other young Canadian couples who cannot accept the teachings of the church into which they were born.... A child needs to "belong".... We found our answer in Unitarianism.'[27]

This article brought many more couples not only to the Toronto church but to Unitarian churches all across the country, and was credited with triggering the development of an entirely new Unitarian group in Saskatoon. By the time it appeared the children's enrolment in Toronto was around the two hundred mark, as compared with twenty-two when the Sunday school had been reorganized at the beginning of Jenkins's ministry. To accommodate this growth it had been necessary to build a large addition to the church, completed in 1954. But even while this was still in the planning stage, Jenkins had further proposals to set before the congregation. Metropolitan Toronto, he told the annual meeting in 1953, was large enough to support three or four Unitarian congregations, not just one. So he called for the establishment of fellowships.

The fellowship program had been a product of Unitarian Advance and was by now becoming one of the denomination's success stories. It had been launched by the AUA in 1948 as a form of organization for Unitarians or potential Unitarians in places where there was no established congregation, and provided that where ten or more individuals could gather and organize they would be recognized by the association and given the support of resource materials circulated from a new office set up under a layman, Munroe Husbands. The first fellowship came into existence in June 1948 and within a year there were twenty-

two of them. One was in Canada. By the time Jenkins was setting his proposals before the Toronto congregation the total number of fellowships already established in North America was passing the hundred mark.

The first Canadian fellowship opened a new chapter in the disastrous story of Unitarianism in Hamilton. After Hemmeon retired in 1942, the congregation made a half-hearted attempt to continue, and Jenkins had come over regularly for a time. In 1944 Lon Ray Call, who came to be known as 'the godfather of the fellowships,'[28] made a detailed study of the situation, but none of his recommendations was implemented except for the sale of the old house, which was followed by a fading out of all activities. For two years Unitarianism in Hamilton lay dormant. Then in the spring of 1949 it was resurrected as a fellowship, under the active leadership of J. B. Chambers, a lawyer, and E. B. Ratcliffe, an engineer and contractor who was later to become a member of the AUA board. Enthusiasm was more marked than any sense of direction. The fellowship wanted to be an old-style liberal Christian group and a new-style humanist group at one and the same time. It adopted as its statement of purpose the time-honored Unitarian affirmation: 'In the love of Truth and in the spirit of Jesus we unite for the worship of God and the service of Man.' It announced to the public: 'Liberal Christians in Hamilton have organized to establish a church.... Our hope is for a group of humans who may become sufficiently God-inspired to carry out His purposes on earth. There is a great deal for such a church to do in this community.'[29] Another announcement, which appeared almost simultaneously, declared that 'being religious does not require acceptance of unreasonable and supernatural doctrines, or performance of mystic rituals. The basic requirements are an open mind and a genuine interest in man's relation to his fellow man and to the universe.'[30]

Ratcliffe produced ambitious sketches for a building – the Church of the Dawning, he wanted to call it – but for the present the fellowship had the use of a theatre, which, as in Toronto, was provided rent-free by Jewish friends. It was there that in October 1949 regular services began, with Jenkins driving down from Toronto on Sunday evenings to conduct them. The new venture was seen as significant enough for Eliot to come up from Boston for a service in November. Good publicity brought an attendance ranging from forty to ninety to these services, which followed the conventional Unitarian pattern, with con-

siderable use of theistic vocabulary. Morale began to mount even among the old-timers, who had lived through so many disappointments. The new year brought a decision to merge the old Hamilton congregation, which still maintained a paper existence, into the new fellowship. The financial assets resulting from the sale of the previous building thus became available, a campaign for further funds was launched, the AUA promised a subsidy toward a resident ministry, and the result was that Eugene A. Luening became Hamilton's new minister in the autumn of 1950. The choice of Luening was one more instance of the Hamilton congregation's unfortunate propensity for calling the wrong minister. He was a quiet man who had served rural churches in Massachusetts, and was certainly not the aggressive promoter of Unitarian Advance the leaders of the congregation had implicitly expected. The disparity was so obvious that Luening resigned after only eight months.

Shortly afterward the congregation chose another minister of a very different stamp. Fred I. Cairns, who began his ministry in January 1952, was, like Jenkins, a convert from the ministry of an orthodox denomination who had swung right over to become an outspoken humanist. A native of Louisiana, he had just completed three years as minister of the Unitarian church in Madison, Wisconsin. After his installation – 'we have almost unlimited confidence in the possibilities of your future under his leadership,' wrote Eliot for the AUA[31] – the congregation immediately turned its attention to a building program. Ratcliffe offered to build them a $40 000 church for $20 000 (the amount of the loan the AUA was willing to provide) if the members would pitch in and help with the construction. He himself would donate the land. Though some members had doubts about the suitability of the location the plan was accepted, and in October the sod was broken by Mrs Sarah E. Berry, a member of the congregation since 1907 who, at 80 years of age, 'drove the bulldozer in a manner that made us wonder if we couldn't save some labor costs by using her on the job.'[32]

This fourth church building for the Hamilton Unitarians rapidly took shape, with many of the members participating in the work. But the euphoria generated by their accomplishments was short-lived. They had chosen a humanist minister, but they had not reckoned with the political and economic implications of his humanism. Cairns was a political left-winger and a strong supporter of the cause of organized

labor. In September 1953 he and Ratcliffe clashed head-on over these issues, and a civil war began within the congregation. Cairns refused to resign, and his opponents resorted to tactics that seemed to many members to be an overspill of the McCarthyism then rampant south of the border. Before the end of the year a motion to dismiss the minister had passed a congregational meeting by a narrow margin, and a very substantial number of members had accompanied Cairns out of the church.

It was against this background of disaster in a neighboring city that the Toronto congregation entered upon its *annus mirabilis*. It had already become the largest congregation in Canada, the first time in history that any other church had come close to the size of the one in Montreal. Now Jenkins was to refer to the year 1953-54 as 'the most significant in my life as a minister.' There was the banquet honoring his ten years in the city; there was the inauguration of a regular Sunday morning broadcast under the title 'Let's Think Together'; there was the continuing stream of newcomers; there was the completion of a $50 000 addition to the building; there was the appointment of a fulltime assistant to the minister, Mrs Avis McCurdy; but above all, there was the successful launching of two new fellowships in the eastern and western suburbs. Avis McCurdy devoted the bulk of her time to this project, laying the groundwork for both fellowships during the autumn of 1953. Early in the new year services began in public schools at Birch Cliff and South Peel. The objective in each instance was to pass through the fellowship stage as rapidly as possible by reaching the sixty-five member families required by the AUA for recognition as a church. Though it took two years for the western fellowship to accomplish this and three years for the eastern one, they were well enough rooted within a few months of their founding to vote for a joint ministry to begin in September. Donald Stout, assistant minister of the church in Louisville, Kentucky was called to this position.

Though the suburban momentum was building up, it seemed for a moment as though the central congregation had overreached itself. There was a financial crisis, and Avis McCurdy's position had to be terminated. But the problems were only temporary, and in June 1956 Jenkins was able to report 'a year of growth that has never been equalled.' Among the year's accomplishments was the launching of another fellowship, in Don Mills. It began holding services at the end of March, but entered immediately into negotiations with the Birch

Cliff fellowship with a view to merger. The areas from which they drew their constituencies overlapped, and the major difference between the two groups was sociological. The Don Mills fellowship was composed of young executives and artists moving into a newly created community; the Birch Cliff fellowship of more firmly established professional people and blue collar workers, many of them recruited by Avis McCurdy through her active involvement in the CCF. In May these diversified groups merged into one organization, which they named the Don Heights Unitarian Congregation. Geographically, no such place as Don Heights existed. As Jim Peters, one of the founding members, declared as he pointed upward: '"Heights" doesn't exist anywhere; it's a Utopia, it's something out there!'[33] This mode of choosing a name reflected the early emergence of a style that was to make Don Heights unique even among the individualistic Canadian Unitarians.

Before the merger was completed Stout had resigned to devote his whole time to South Peel, and the Birch Cliff fellowship had committed itself to an $18 000 land purchase and building program. They lost no time in looking for new leadership, and by a happy turn of events were able to continue with a half-time ministry until they were ready to shoulder the entire load. Jenkins had been elected president of the Unitarian Ministers' Association, which would make heavy demands upon his time. The association compensated for this through a financial contribution to provide part-time help and this, supplemented by the Toronto congregation, made up of the other half of the salary for J. Franklin Chidsey, a recent graduate of Meadville, whom Jenkins now brought to Toronto. Chidsey began work in September 1956. Meanwhile the growing congregation at South Peel, with Stout as its full-time minister, was embarking upon its own building program, even more than Hamilton's a do-it-yourself affair. Work began in the spring and in September the congregation moved in, though the building was far from complete. In fact, the night before the first service there was a heavy rainfall that came through the half-covered roof and left large puddles on the floor as the congregation assembled. Some of them stayed after the service to nail sheeting on to the roof. Not until January 1957 was the furnace working; prior to that time the congregation was dependent upon electric heaters and heavy sweaters to keep warm. The congregational records laconically noted a dramatic upsurge in attendance after the heat came on.

While Toronto thus set the pace, Unitarians everywhere in the country were by the middle fifties experiencing the effects of the religious boom (to which Avis McCurdy candidly ascribed much of the growth in her 1954 annual report). The Montreal church maintained steady but not spectacular progress. Angus Cameron was suspicious of the pyrotechnics in Toronto, which he described with some prescience as the overinflating of a balloon that one day was going to burst. He himself was taking stock of his position theologically, personally, and practically, after the active church and community involvements of his first ten years in Montreal. In 1952 he took what in later years would have been counted as a sabbatical (though this institution had not as yet established itself within Canadian Unitarian ministries), and retired for six months of systematic reflection at his farm in New Brunswick. Donald Maw, a young minister from England who had just completed a year of supplementary studies at Meadville, assumed temporary responsibility for the pulpit.

The congregation's overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon composition was beginning to be modified by an influx of New Canadians from many parts of Europe, who found in Unitarianism an expression of the aspirations they had for life in their new homeland. There was still only a tiny handful of francophones, though this included one ex-priest. Sociologically, the congregation remained largely a group of business and professional people, some of them prominent in the community. Some indeed enjoyed a national reputation through their writings. Blair Fraser, later to become editor of *Maclean's*, was an active member during the middle and late forties, and Norman Berrill, professor of zoology at McGill, was becoming well-known through his talent for presenting scientific thinking to a popular readership. His best-selling *Sex and the Nature of Things* appeared in 1953.

In the autumn of 1951 the Unitarian General Conference was held in Canada for the first time since 1917, and again came to Montreal. Its theme was 'The Disciplines of Liberty'. Most of the 375 delegates were Americans, but the francophone setting was recognized by bringing Georges Marchal, minister of a liberal Christian congregation in Paris, and the associations with British Unitarianism were likewise recognized in the presence of Henry Cheetham, secretary for religious education of the British General Assembly.

Suburban expansion in Montreal had begun a year earlier than in Toronto. In the autumn of 1952 a questionnaire was circulated among

families in the Lakeshore area asking whether they were in favor of establishing a local Sunday school. From the positive response to this emerged the Lakeshore Fellowship, founded in January 1953 with no fewer than fifty-three charter members. Regular services began almost at once, first using a school gymnasium and then a United church whose congregation had just moved to a new building. This, the Lilly Memorial Church in Pointe Claire, was to be purchased by the Unitarians as their permanent home in 1957; for the present it was simply rented. Many of the services during the first year were conducted by Phillip Hewett, a young minister from England, who had just completed a year of graduate theological studies at the Harvard Divinity School, and was now serving as assistant to Angus Cameron. He was no stranger to Canada, having trained there during the war under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. He had subsequently completed his undergraduate and theological studies at Oxford. His year in Montreal was chiefly divided between two projects. The first was the extension work on the Lakeshore and the second arose from his complaint to Cameron that there was no up-to-date book on Unitarianism suitable for use with an adult study group. 'Why don't you write one?' Cameron shot back, and provided the necessary time. The result was *An Unfettered Faith*, which went through three printings during the next seven years, with most of its sales in Canada.

Elsewhere in the country expansion came more slowly. The reluctance of the younger generation of Icelandic ancestry to follow their parents' religious affiliation continued to have an adverse effect upon the Winnipeg church, and its reputation in the community at large as an Icelandic church deterred others from coming in. Members became increasingly aware that their official name, First Federated Church, did not announce them effectively to the public as Unitarians; in 1956 it was voted that for purposes of publicity and general usage they would call themselves the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. Philip Petursson, with his unique combination of fluency in Icelandic and acceptance of the evolving outlook of contemporary Unitarianism, continued his long ministry and thereby eased a transition that must otherwise have been painfully abrupt. From an average attendance of fifty at the Sunday morning services in the autumn of 1946 the figures climbed by steady progression to ninety-five for the same period a decade later. In 1956 a committee was struck to investigate the possibilities of rebuilding, but the congregation contented itself with the purchase and conversion of an adjacent house to relieve the growing pressure on the Sunday school.

The Ottawa and Vancouver churches both broke with tradition at the beginning of the fifties by calling American ministers. The trend of a few years earlier was now reversed. Had Hodgins's long ministry in Toronto continued only six months longer, a point would have been reached in the autumn of 1943 when every Canadian congregation would have had a Canadian minister. Even as matters stood, Jenkins was for a number of years the only American serving in Canada, and Cameron had in 1947 commended the trend toward Canadians serving Canadian churches.[34] The supply of ministers from England had temporarily dried up, and apart from the brief stints served by Maw and Hewett in Montreal, there was no British minister in Canada for almost fifteen years after the death of Pagesmith. Ottawa explored the possibilities of finding one in 1950, but received word from London that there was now such a shortage of ministers in England that no names could be suggested. Actually, there were far more ministers in relation to the lay membership in England than there were in either Canada or the United States; the real difficulty in settling a British minister lay rather in the widening difference in orientation between the Unitarian movements on opposite sides of the Atlantic. British Unitarians were sometimes described as 'more spiritual', sometimes as 'more conservative' than their North American counterparts. Both these assessments were essentially correct, but there was an unfortunate tendency to assume that they meant the same thing.

Links with the British movement had been growing more tenuous while links with the American movement had strengthened. A few visits from leading British Unitarians maintained contact: George Grieve, chairman of the British USC, toured the Canadian churches in 1945; E. G. Lee, editor of *The Inquirer*, came in 1954; Eric Price, Redfern's successor in Liverpool, followed in 1955; and John Kielty, secretary of the GA, made occasional visits to Canadian churches during his numerous trips to North America. But these visits were more symbolic than practical. Canadian Unitarianism was becoming more and more fully a part of one North American movement, though not without the concomitant rise of a distinctive national sentiment that was before long to express itself in a number of significant ways.

The new minister in Ottawa was George Marshfield, who for the previous three years had been minister to students at the University of

Minnesota. A year later, in December 1951, J. A. (Lex) Crane began his ministry in Vancouver, after graduating from the Starr King School, as the Pacific School for the Ministry in Berkeley was now called. Both Marshfield and Crane represented the rising generation of Unitarian ministers, conscious of the wider horizons opening before the movement at an intellectual as well as practical level, unwilling to go on refighting the battles of an earlier generation and reluctant to close the door prematurely upon either traditional religious insights or novel ideas. They came to a setting in which Unitarianism in general was now moving strongly in the direction of a secular humanism. A brochure issued by the Ottawa congregation early in Marshfield's ministry described Unitarians as 'dedicated to the progressive transformation and ennoblement of individual and social life, in accordance with the advancing knowledge and growing vision of mankind.' It continued: 'The Unitarian seeks to discard superstition and to rely upon reason.'

To many Canadian Unitarians of this period, as to their co-religionists south of the border, the question of theism versus humanism was still an either/or proposition. Either you believed in God or you did not, and there was little exploration of exactly what 'believing in God' meant. If you did so believe, you were a theist; if not, you were a humanist. And as 'theism' seemed to demand more by way of unproved suppositions, the corollary was that a humanist church provided the lowest common denominator on which all Unitarians could agree (for who, after all, was opposed to 'the progressive transformation and ennoblement of individual and social life'?). Theists could supplement this in their own personal religion if they so desired. Some of the ministers went along with this oversimplified view of religion; others tried to point out that the realities both of theological discussion and of religious experience were a little more subtle than it supposed. In a sermon he called *Theism versus Humanism: A False Dilemma?*, Marshfield declared that concepts of God arose out of human experience, and that although this did not provide any warrant for dogmatic definitions of God (*le Dieu defini est le Dieu fini*), none the less 'one may find in the human enterprise, the culmination of eons of creativity in the world, a richness and a beauty and a significance best expressed by the ancient name of "God". But if the term seems too rigidly defined in common usage, and too painfully associated with

beliefs intellectually and morally unacceptable, then no one need feel any compulsion whatsoever . . . to retain it.'[35]

Crane sounded the same irenic note. A former Roman Catholic, he was almost obsessed with rethinking theology, especially the concept of God, and on more than one occasion regaled the congregation to a pulpit consideration of all the classical Christian arguments for the existence of God. Once he felt compelled to apologize for leaving his hearers in midair with a 'to be continued next week' ending – a technique, as he put it, 'more aptly suited to the Perils of Pauline than to a sermon series.'[36] His conclusions, when he finally reached them, showed a fuller awareness of the implications of the Copernican revolution than did Marshfield's, where God was still manifested only 'in the human enterprise'. Insisting in the same way that 'God is something other than any conception of him,'[37] Crane went on: 'The idea of God is the answer to man's need for a worthy object of reverence, of worship, an object that may give significance and purpose and direction to his own life and being.... The idea of God as the totality of existence, the whole of life and being, is the broadest conceivable frame in which man may picture his life.... It is the answer, and this seems to me of the utmost importance, to man's need to accept, to love, if his own being is to be harmoniously integrated with the life and beings that surround him.... We know now that a man must come to accept himself, that he must love and accept his neighbors. Otherwise his personal relationships will lead him into conflict and disharmony, into unhappiness, even despair; and similarly, if he does not love God, if, that is, he has no respect for the whole of life and being, if he feels that existence is worthless, meaningless, then all his relationships with various parts are poisoned at their roots.'[38]

But the drive toward secular humanism was to gather much more momentum before it spent itself. It harmonized well with the mood of the fifties. Canada was in the midst of an economic boom in which everything seemed possible. The great pipeline debate was not over whether it should be built, but how. The St Lawrence Seaway was at last under construction and the Trans-Canada Highway on the drawing board. Even the notoriously intransigent Canadian terrain was being tamed in demonstration that 'man is the master of things.' The human condition became the dominant interest. Bertrand Russell

might write at that very moment, 'I should not have any inclination to call myself a humanist, as I think, on the whole, that the non-human part of the cosmos is much more interesting and satisfactory than the human part,'[39] but the dominant mood in Canadian Unitarianism was not prepared to take such protestations seriously. In spite of the exuberance accompanying economic progress, however, social and religious conservatism continued to dominate Canadian life, and gave Unitarianism the aspect of a radical and often shrill protest against the status quo. The fact that most of the ministers leading this protest were Americans was exploited by opponents who capitalized on growing resentment over American economic domination and represented the Unitarians as American expatriates trying to undermine the traditional and respectable patterns of Canadian social life. However unfair these attacks were, they were repeatedly provoked, for social action was never far from the central focus of Unitarian concerns at this period.

Even the Unitarian Service Committee, which posed little threat to the political and social establishment, became a centre of controversy, both inside and outside the Unitarian movement. The internal controversies arose from a growing sense of frustration within the congregations over the total absence of any mechanism for control of an operation that had been started in their name and to which so many of their members had given unstintingly of their time, energy, and money. Locally, the branches established by the churches were for the most part closely tied into the structure of those churches, but the national office in Ottawa emphasized its independence from the Unitarian movement, and the branches that had been established in towns where there was no Unitarian congregation were run by people who saw in the USC simply a Canadian international relief agency of proven effectiveness.

There was certainly a great deal of ambiguity in the situation. On the one hand, many of the local USC depots were at Unitarian churches, Dr Hitschmanova spoke regularly from their pulpits on her annual cross-Canada fund-raising trips, and they took considerable pride in what they had long considered their major service project. On the other hand, contributions to the USC work were overwhelmingly from non-Unitarians, and sensitivity to the religious convictions of some of these supporters had caused the organization to resist requests from Unitarians that it involve itself in controversial programs such as

the support of birth-control clinics in overpopulated countries. From the outset, the USC had stressed that its work was 'non-sectarian', but this had originally been understood to mean that aid was given without discrimination to those in need, regardless of their religious beliefs and with no attempt to proselytize. It had drawn fire from some Christian sources for this very policy. 'The Canadian Unitarian Service Committee,' ran a scathing editorial in the *United Church Observer*, 'seeks contributions from Christian churches and Sunday school children to help the poor overseas, then discriminates against Christian institutions working with the needy overseas.' After quoting Dr Hitschmanova's explanation that 'the USC does not support church projects because they have as a primary or secondary objective proselytizing as their goal,' it continued, 'the Unitarians are quite right when they say that Christians proselytize . . . .If the impoverished people of the undeveloped world are to be helped to a full life, they have to have a faith to go along with their science, education and material improvement.'[40]

But this non-sectarian emphasis was now coming to be construed as meaning complete separation of the agency from the Unitarian movement. The church-affiliated branches began to protest. When the Winnipeg branch submitted a resolution at the beginning of 1954 calling for a greater degree of Unitarian control over the operation, the national executive in Ottawa did not take kindly to the proposal. 'It was somewhat startling to us,' wrote W. F. Oldham, secretary of the Winnipeg branch, 'to find that our resolution was considered as trying to upset the "independent" position of the USCC, as we had no idea it laid claim to such a position . . . .We cannot see that a Unitarian sponsorship should be any detriment . . . .Were I solicited to contribute money or goods to, say a "Presbyterian Welfare Committee", I would expect that the Presbyterian body of churches were sponsoring it and guaranteeing its bona fides and responsibility to be trusted with public funds.'[41] The Vancouver and Montreal branches expressed themselves in similar terms.

Later in the year the USC established a committee to revise its constitution and clarify the situation, under the chairmanship of Milton A. Dewey, a prominent member of the Toronto congregation. After three years of work, including much correspondence with the churches, the only net result was an understanding that the USC would discontinue the use of the Unitarian name if it should ever be requested to do so by a majority of the Unitarian churches of Canada.

Dewey felt disinclined to interfere with the highly centralized and efficient organization. By comparison with the American USC, which was run by Unitarians, it had much lower overheads and fewer internal disputes, though it operated on a similar scale. The absence of any form of national Unitarian organization in Canada made it a foregone conclusion that the USC of Canada, under the dominating and dedicated direction of Lotta Hitschmanova, would go the way it did. Oldham's analogy with a tightly organized body such as the Presbyterians would not hold water. While the USC continued to be an efficient organization, it became less and less a Unitarian one, though some of the local branches were still integral parts of Unitarian congregations. The term 'non-sectarian' in the USC publicity was supplanted by the more explicit term 'non-denominational', and by 1973, a year in which the total receipts of the USC in cash and kind exceeded a million and a half dollars and projects were supported in many widely scattered parts of the world, Dr Hitschmanova (who as a Unitarian herself constituted one of the surviving links with the movement) was able to state that 'we keep the name "Unitarian" in our title for historic reasons, and because the word expresses the oneness of mankind in which our organization passionately believes.'[42]

As the debate over the status of the USC continued, another major project in social responsibility was coming to the forefront of Unitarian attention. Throughout North America liberal-minded people had begun to express their disgust with the increasingly costly and ostentatious practices that had come to surround the majority of funerals. As early as 1950 there was an attempt within the Ottawa congregation to set up a memorial society to encourage simpler procedures, but the effort was premature and came to nothing. A few years later the Unitarian Laymen's League in the United States launched a major campaign for funeral reform, and Canadian congregations quickly took up the cause. In November 1954 Cameron denounced the vulgarity and pseudo-religion of most funerals from the Montreal pulpit, and members of the congregation set to work to establish a memorial society. It was deliberately designed to be a community-wide rather than a strictly Unitarian organization, and two non-Unitarians served on its first board of directors. This same procedure was followed in city after city across the country: Unitarians launched the societies, but they were open to members of all denominations or none. Typically, they provided for simple inexpensive funeral arrangements to be pre-planned by the members themselves and implemented through contracts with co-operating undertakers. The membership of most of them increased slowly, but the outstanding success among them was the Memorial Society of B.C. Organized by the Vancouver congregation in October 1956, it had within twenty years reached a membership in excess of 80 000. Though there were always Unitarians on its board of directors, it became a truly community-based venture, and had a significant impact upon the overall nature and cost of funerals in the province.

Communication between the congregations with regard to such projects boosted local morale and the sense of being part of a national movement. Evidence of growth was by now to be seen everywhere. Even the Hamilton congregation had recovered with surprising speed from the disaster of 1953. Though most of those who left the church at that time never returned, the remainder rallied and by the autumn of 1954 had called a new minister. Dr Robert Brockway was, on the face of it, an unlikely candidate to navigate these troubled waters, for he had himself just emerged from a situation not unlike what had happened to Cairns. He too was a left-wing radical, but a highly individualistic one who could scarcely be suspected of toeing anyone's party line. He had spent his childhood and youth in Hawaii. After a period during which he considered himself a Buddhist, he graduated in 1951 from Union Theological Seminary and entered the Unitarian ministry. During the five years he spent in Hamilton his utterances were always forthright, unorthodox, and colorful. ('We're being bullied by the Christians,' he complained in an article in *Maclean's*. 'I challenge the assumption that Canada is a Christian country and I also challenge the right of Christian churches to impose their views and their ways of doing things upon all of us.')[43] His dislike of all structure and organization as well as his beard and guitar foreshadowed a type of minister to become more common a decade later. The congregation remained alive, he claimed, as long as it 'offered to the nonconformist and philosophically-minded person the means to stimulating experiences, conversation and the development of personal religious values.'[44] As soon as it began moving in the direction of greater formality and decorum he felt it was time to go, and in 1959 he resumed the teaching career that had always rivalled the ministry as his major interest.

Though Hamilton had provided the first example of a fellowship in

Canada, it was rapidly followed by others, some of which also developed into churches while others remained permanently as fellowships. The Western cities in which Pratt had labored before World War I were first in line. The Victoria fellowship was organized in 1950; those in Edmonton and Calgary shortly afterward. They began as discussion groups and included a handful of the survivors of the earlier churches. At first they showed little tendency to grow beyond these small beginnings, and the one at Calgary actually went out of existence again for a couple of years. The notable exception was in Edmonton, where the fellowship grew rapidly. At first it met in the old church basement, which had been the home of the original congregation, though now it had to be rented from its present owners, a United church that, like the one in Pointe Claire, had moved to new and larger premises. The Unitarians, as they too grew, organized as a church in 1954, with ninety-seven charter members. They called as their minister Charles W. Eddis, who had been a member of the Toronto congregation before training for the ministry at Harvard and Meadville. Two years later they purchased the Westmount Presbyterian Church as a permanent home for the congregation.

Fellowships were now proliferating not only in the cities but in smaller towns that had never previously had any exposure to Unitarianism. By the end of the decade no fewer than thirty of them had been formally organized, and others were meeting as informal groups. The Unitarian tradition of fierce individualism was perpetuated by the newcomers in the fellowships, some of whom were rebels against just about everything conventionally accepted. 'The fellowships,' wrote Laile Bartlett in her detailed study of the subject, 'attract a host of persons who feel squeezed and squashed by the pressures of their various worlds, who are waiting for the chance to slip the bonds of their conventional church or job or town. Here is a crack in the rigidity of society, a place where people are free to be themselves ... so eager to be free that, for some of them, there is little else but worship of this new-found freedom!'[45] The secretary of a fellowship in B.C. wrote: 'Our members spent the first few months after we organized in congratulating each other on our intellectual emancipation and our superiority to those who were still so benighted. But now we have decided to put our haloes away in a drawer, and get down to some hard work in positive directions.'[46] Unfortunately not all fellowships

progressed so rapidly into this phase; those that did still had to cope with newcomers who were in the initial stage of euphoria.

One result was that very often the newly founded groups resisted for a period of time, or indefinitely, even the minimal degree of organization required for AUA recognition as a fellowship. Dates of origin are therefore at times approximate, but by the years indicated fellowships were emerging or already organized in the following places:

1949:	Hamilton, Ont.
1950:	Victoria, B.C.
1951:	Edmonton & Calgary, Alta.
1952:	Regina, Sask.
1953:	Lakeshore, Que.; London, Ont.
1954:	St. Catharines, Birch Cliff, & South Peel, Ont.
1955:	Don Mills, Ont. (merged with Birch Cliff to form Don Heights)
1956:	Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.; Saskatoon, Sask.; Penticton, B.C.; Calgary, Alta. (refounded after a period of inactivity)
1957:	Sudbury, Ont.
1958:	Kingston, Belleville, Windsor, & Lakehead, Ont.
1959:	Chalk River, Ont.; Trail, Duncan, & Powell River, B.C.
1960:	Nelson & Nanaimo, B.C.; Fredericton, N.B.; N.W. Toronto, Barrie, & Guelph, Ont.; Port Huron-Sarnia (an international fellowship straddling the border).

Toward the end of 1960 Munroe Husbands, director of the Fellowship Office in Boston, undertook a speaking tour on which, besides addressing many of the existing fellowships in Eastern Canada, he spoke at public meetings in Saint John, Moncton, Sherbrooke, Cornwall, Oshawa, North Bay, Sault Ste Marie, and Brantford. The number of fellowships in Canada was now well in excess of the number of churches, even if the small semiactive Icelandic churches were included. Some of them were moving on to become churches – Hamil-

ton in 1950, Edmonton in 1954, South Peel in 1956, Don Heights and Lakeshore in 1957; Calgary in 1960; and Victoria in 1963. But the majority settled down into the rapidly established fellowship pattern of lay leadership with infrequent visits from ministers, relatively low profile in the community at large, informal discussion, and few of the usual forms of worship. At the end of 1958 the secretary of the Regina fellowship wrote: 'The meetings this year have been taken by our own members. Talks have been given on Confucius, Gandhi, Schweitzer, Whitman, and Mencken. Discussion topics have included "Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy"; "The Dead Sea Scrolls"; "Skepticism"; "History of Documentary Films", and "The Unobstructed Universe".'[47]

Even in the Maritime provinces, where there had been little Unitarian activity since the failure of the Saint John church, things began to stir. An informal Maritime Free Religious Fellowship gathered at Amherst, N.S. from widely scattered points for meetings over the Easter weekend for three successive years in the early fifties. It furnished the impetus for local effort, particularly in Moncton later in the decade. Two Baptist ministers who attended these gatherings were drawn into the liberal religious movement. Rosalie West attempted the unenviable task of trying to salvage the Universalist cause in Halifax, then on its last legs, and Horace E. Colpitts moved to a Unitarian pulpit in Maine. These recruits from another denomination were later followed by others. George E. Jaeger, an Australian who had served in both the Anglican and Presbyterian ministries and subsequently became a humanist, was introduced to Unitarianism by Jenkins and went to the Wynyard church in 1957. Donald R. Fraser, a United minister from Alberta, moved to the London fellowship a year later. Both these ministries were short-lived, and no successors were appointed.

Though developments within the new and smaller groups were often exhilarating, the strength of the movement still dependend upon the leadership given by the larger long-established churches. Stability in the midst of fast-moving change was provided by the continuing ministries of Petursson, Cameron, and Jenkins. Elsewhere the pattern of short-term ministries continued. Marshfield resigned from Ottawa in 1954; Crane from Vancouver in 1955. The former was replaced within a few months by Howard Box, another American of radical stamp who was shortly to move over to the Ethical Culture movement. During his ministry the Ottawa congregation took a further step away

from its past, abandoning the name 'Church of Our Father' which the church had borne since 1900 and adopting a new constitution that declared: 'This church is a democratic religious society which seeks to build a dynamic faith wherein man's religious heritage finds ennobling harmony with contemporary truth. It is dedicated to the spiritual enrichment of its members and the welfare of mankind, to which end it fosters fellowship, service to others, free inquiry, education and respect for other religious viewpoints.' As in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, the Ottawa congregation dealt with the growing pressure on existing premises by purchasing adjacent houses, converted to church use in 1956.

Crane's departure from Vancouver was followed by a fifteen-month interregnum. The congregation extended a call to Hewett, who was by now back in England serving a church that he felt unable to leave until the summer of 1956. The momentum that had at long last built up at Vancouver produced spectacular results during this period without ministerial leadership. Only thirteen years earlier the congregation had suspended services for a year under similar circumstances. Now its own members filled the pulpit and took on other responsibilities. Dorothy Livesay, Canadian poet and active member of the congregation, delivered a memorable sermon criticizing current Unitarian trends and calling for more weight to be given to the intuitive and mystical aspects of religion. Visiting speakers such as Brock Chisholm and Earle Birney brought large attendances at the services. The growth in membership continued, and accelerated rapidly after Hewett's arrival. Most of these newcomers were professional people – school and university teachers, social workers, engineers, accountants, doctors and lawyers, with a fair sprinkling of young business executives and blue-collar workers. Typically, in those days of the 'baby boom', they were parents of young families, which added to the pressure on accommodation for the popular children's program, where the AUA curriculum was supplemented by materials written by church members including Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence. The purchase of an adjoining house in the autumn of 1956 did little to relieve the pressure on space, which had to be augmented by extensive rental of accommodation. Double services began in 1958 and a year later the congregation voted to rebuild completely. Membership, which had passed the one hundred mark for the first time only seven years earlier, reached four hundred in 1960.

The growth in Vancouver was not matched in Victoria. For a number of years after its formation the fellowship in that city remained a small discussion group with monthly meetings and little inclination to expand. By 1958 frustration on the part of Unitarians in the city who wanted a more active organization reached a point where, with the support of the ministers in Vancouver and Seattle, they staged a palace revolution, took over control of the fellowship and set up a children's program. Membership began to climb at once, and weekly services began. In the closing years of the decade Hewett went over regularly once a month to conduct a service.

On the prairies, the old Icelandic conference, declining in size and effectiveness, voted in 1952 to merge its identity in a new English-speaking Western Canada Unitarian Conference. Representation from the fellowships in Edmonton, Calgary, and Regina at the following year's meeting in Winnipeg signaled the beginning of the new order, and thenceforward the rural Icelandic churches gradually ceased to participate, with the exception of Wynyard, where the meetings were held in 1955 and again in 1957. Philip Petursson, as regional director for this vast area, found his energies fully taxed. He was in demand from the scattered Icelandic constituency, as the only surviving Icelandic-speaking minister, for funerals of the pioneers of the movement, and from the new fellowships for speaking engagements and administrative advice. In November 1959 he journeyed to Port Arthur for the public meeting that launched the Lakehead fellowship.

Eddis resigned from the Edmonton ministry with effect from the beginning of February 1958, when he drove across the country under wintry conditions to take up his work as first minister of the newly constituted Lakeshore church at Pointe Claire, Quebec. He was succeeded a year later by W. G. Horton, a Canadian by birth but not by upbringing, his parents having moved to the United States at an early point in his life. When the congregation celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1959, the occasion was marked by the pulpit appearance of an old friend, W. H. Alexander, now living in retirement in the city. Pressure upon space forced the congregation, like those in Vancouver, Ottawa, and Toronto, to begin holding its Sunday morning services in double sessions, and a new religious education building was erected in 1961 to house the expanding Sunday school.

But it was still in Toronto that Canadian Unitarianism found its central focus. The two suburban congregations continued to grow. The

opening of their 'do-it-yourself' building in 1956 proved to be only the first phase of construction on the three-acre site owned by the South Peel congregation; two years later a School of Religion was built, this time by a contractor. The young and active congregation pursued a vigorous policy of community involvement, implementing Stout's 'emphasis on ethical religion' as 'the major characteristic of Unitarianism.'[48] By the time of his tragic death in 1961 the membership had grown to 245.

The desire for a building of its own gripped the Don Heights congregation from its very beginnings, though it took longer to fulfil than in the case of South Peel. Fund raising for the purpose began as soon as the congregation was established, and took a wide variety of forms. The search for a suitable site passed through a number of frustrating phases until in 1959 an acre of land was purchased just south of Highway 401. By contrast with what had happened at South Peel, the congregation then proceeded to commission John C. Parkin, one of the country's leading architects, to design them a building. In an address to the congregation, Parkin described his concept: 'A liberal group adhering to Unitarianism surely requires a liberal architecture totally free of that which is without freedom.... Surely your buildings should be full of light, should be joyful and simple and direct structures, free of any pretentiousness or false claims. Your floor plan should demonstrate your most democratic of theologies. Your plan and its elevation should be unlike those belonging to those religious and philosophic attitudes which favour an image of God, a Creator or an Originating Force possessing a darkness or a mystery, to be worshipped in a pall of gloom.'[49]

The congregation endorsed this concept and the design through which Parkin expressed it, but no such consensus prevailed when it came to the name. The discussions within the parent congregation over what to call its building were tepid by comparison with the debate that raged at Don Heights. The invitations to the dedication ceremony on November 11, 1960 had indeed described it as the Don Heights Unitarian Centre, but there was not enough support to make this official, and when the sign went up on the building it simply read 'Don Heights Unitarian', without any qualifying noun. It was even suggested at one point – no doubt in jest – that it should be called the 'Unitorium'. Jim Peters, editor of the congregation's newsletter, accused its members of 'nomenophobia', a fear of naming, but the

issue remained unresolved, and the incomplete name on the building bore mute testimony to the problems of securing a consensus among Unitarian individualists.

The downtown congregation took further measures to cope with its continuing growth. In 1957 it began double services on Sunday mornings and appointed Val Scott as fulltime director of its religious education program. In an article published the following year in *Saturday Night*, Hugh Garner described its membership as 'made up largely of members of the middle classes, and particularly of the free-thinking professions. A cross section of the congregation is representative of the white-collar trades, schoolteachers, social workers, engineers, members of the arts, scientists, and businessmen. Big business is sparsely represented, a point which probably helps to prove the adage that conservatism is something that can only be afforded by the very rich and the very poor.'[50] Some of the members enjoyed local or national distinction. These included figures from the literary and theatrical world like Mavor Moore and Lister Sinclair, Ralph Allen, editor of *Maclean's*, and artists such as Frederic Steiger, painter, and Emanuel Hahn, sculptor. Business and political life were represented by such persons as James E. Coyne, who became the outspoken and controversial governor of the Bank of Canada, Donald Macdonald, NDP leader in the Ontario legislature and William Dennison, whose years of service in civic office culminated in his election as Mayor of Toronto. Predictably, there were many persons active in higher education, including a number of professors from the University of Toronto.

There was little in the outward appearance of the congregation when the *Saturday Night* account appeared to indicate the storm that was about to break. Jenkins's low level of tolerance for dissenting opinions on matters of church policy had alienated a number of members, and these were by definition strong-minded persons who had ventured to disagree with him. The smouldering resentment erputed violently when Scott clashed with him head on and was summarily dismissed. A special meeting of the congregation was called and the fat was in the fire. In vain Victor Knight, a leading and respected member of the congregation for over thirty years, pleaded: 'we as a congregation have too much at stake to be able to lose our dignity, publicize our frictions, turn friend against friend in personal recriminations and break down a congregation that means so much to the lives of the members and the service of the community.'[51] It was

oo late. At the beginning of 1959 Jenkins found himself in a position here the only thing he could do was resign. Like so many successful nen in public life, he had fallen into the trap of thinking that his nswers must necessarily be the right ones, and that those who disaeed with him must be fools or knaves. As long as he found his pponents outside the congregation his position within it was strengthned, but when the conflict became internal the results were disasrous.

The departure of Jenkins, who moved across the lake to the Unitarian church in Rochester, New York, was the first in a series of ministerial changes in the closing years of the decade. Angus Cameron ubmitted his resignation from the Montreal church in the spring of 959. He was at the height of his powers and had been drawing nearapacity attendances to the Sunday services, but despite protests and ntreaties his decision was final. He wanted, he said, to spend at least year in thinking, reading and perhaps writing at his farm in New runswick. Brockway's resignation from Hamilton came almost simulaneously; he too wanted to take time for study before taking another osition. Though the Hamilton pulpit was to remain vacant for some me, the Toronto and Montreal congregations at once set to work to nd new ministers. By the autumn John Morgan, from South Bend, ndiana, had been called to Toronto. He was already well known to he congregation, having deputized for Jenkins during summer vacaons. The Montreal congregation took longer in its search. After going hrough several lists of candidates, it finally turned again to England or its minister and chose Leonard Mason from Leicester. Mason rrived in Montreal during the summer of 1960 – at about the same me as Howard Box resigned from Ottawa.

With the departure from the scene of its chief architects the first hase in the rebirth of Canadian Unitarianism was over. When the esults of the census at the opening of the new decade were in due ourse published, they confirmed in a striking way what everyone had nown for a long time. The number of self-declared Unitarians in anada had more than quadrupled, from 3517 in 1951 to 15 062 in 961. The progress of mankind onward and upward forever might no onger be proclaimed on the walls of their churches, but the progress f Unitarianism onward and upward forever came to be increasingly nticipated by its enthusiastic adherents.

10

National Identity

'May we not hope soon to hear of the establishment of "The Canadian Unitarian Association" corresponding with the British and American?'[1] The question was asked in a letter that appeared in a Scottish Unitarian periodical as long ago as 1828. More than 130 years were to elapse before the dream of this early optimist became a practical reality, but during the intervening period it never died and there were a number of abortive attempts to give it form and substance.

Part of the reason for this long delay lay in the fact that the Unitarian movement in Canada, unlike those of England, Ireland, and the United States, did not emerge out of religious bodies already rooted in the country. The only remotely comparable phenomenon was the move to Unitarianism by a section of the Icelandic Lutherans, and this took place within a confined group of recent immigrants segregated by language from the community at large. In its formative period Canadian Unitarianism necessarily appeared as an import. Moreover, although its earliest assertion of its national identity took the form of a declaration of independence from the Irish synod, in the eyes of the general public Unitarianism was widely regarded as an import not from Ireland but from the United States. During the controversial exchanges in Montreal in the 1830s, its detractors found in this association a means of assailing Unitarianism as not only heretical but also republican and unpatriotic.

The associations with American Unitarianism were indeed there from the outset. From the earliest period there was a wide range of

attitudes toward Canada on the part of American Unitarians. Usually there was goodwill but a genuine inability to understand the full significance of an international boundary. The earliest major spokesman for American Unitarianism, William Ellery Channing, was opposed to both conscious and unconscious imperialism. Speaking to the Massachusetts Peace Society in 1832, he declared: 'Some have said we want the Canadas. Sir, we do not want them. We would have no objection to their voluntary union with us, but we would have them in no other way.'[2] Other American Unitarians, however, behaved more along the lines described by Jay Chidsey in 1962: 'With the best will and the best intentions in the world, Americans who visit Canada usually take the attitude that "the border isn't really important"; that "we're all Americans – North Americans"; and that "we don't think of Canada as being a foreign country at all...."'[3] This attitude was more nakedly expressed ten years earlier by a Unitarian occupying a high-ranking executive position in one of the major American corporations: 'Canada is going to be part of the United States one day, and as far as possible we act as though that day had already arrived.'[4] The effect upon Canadian susceptibilities of such attitudes as this was over the years compounded by the strongly nationalistic flavor of American Unitarianism, even going so far in some instances as to convey the impression that Unitarianism actually originated in the United States.

Whether in reaction to origins in England, Scotland, Ireland or the United States, Canadian Unitarianism was faced from the outset with the necessity of adapting itself to its local setting. It was fortunate that in John Cordner the movement had an early leader who was aware of the need and did his best to respond to it. Cordner was an outspoken proponent of a distinctive Canadian national identity. 'Our nationality as it grows,' he said, 'must savor of the soil on which it grows.... Shall not all former and unseemly rivalries of race and lineage be forgotten, and all hearts and hands unite to build up a nation here where peace shall find a permanent home, freedom a fixed sanctuary, progress a field wide as its requirements, and civilization a place for display and enjoyment of its noblest triumphs and choicest gifts – where the light of our heaven-sent religion shall enlighten all minds and its warmth warm all hearts?'[5]

Cordner's sense of national identity expressed itself not only in his repudiation of the Irish synod's claim to jurisdiction in Canada, but in

his response when invited in 1865 to participate in the founding convention of the National Conference of Unitarian Churches, held in New York. He attended, but wrote on the back of his credentials: 'The Unitarian Congregation of Montreal... desire to testify their sympathy with the movement now to be inaugurated.... Belonging to another nationality, however, the undersigned feels that he can only offer himself as a visitor to the "National Convention of Unitarian Churches in the United States" and as such he would now present himself.'[6] Cordner was invited to sit and act with the Convention with all due respect to these reservations, and agreed to do so. But in spite of this early intimation of Canadian feelings it was not until 1911, after repeated protests from Canada, that the 'National Conference' eventually changed its title to 'The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches'.

As long as the Canadian Unitarian movement comprised no more than two congregations, any attempt to set up a national organization might have seemed superfluous; yet there seems in retrospect to be little doubt that more substantial assistance for extension work in Canada – missionary work as it was called in the nineteenth century – would have been obtained both from the well-to-do Montreal Unitarians and from the AUA if there had existed even a paper organization under whose sponsorship such work could be undertaken. As matters stood, the only moves in this direction were Cordner's frequent and usually successful efforts to have the Montreal contribution to AUA funds earmarked for extension work or support of existing ministries in Canada. After Cordner's retirement this procedure came to an end. The Montreal congregation withdrew from the AUA from 1882 till 1898 through lack of sympathy with what they saw as non-Christian influences within the association. From his retirement in Boston, Cordner strongly resisted this policy; he urged that the congregation resume its connection and throw its weight within the association against policies it opposed.[7]

With the emergence of new congregations in Canada the question of a national association began again to be discussed. The Ottawa congregation, situated in the national capital, took a lead in these moves. In May 1898 G. W. Holland of Ottawa wrote to Barnes in Montreal suggesting 'some kind of Dominion organization of the Unitarian churches of Canada... with headquarters at Ottawa... the secretary of the organization being also the pastor of the Ottawa congregation.'[8]

The Montreal committee of management, seeing in this little more than a device for subsidizing the salary of a minister in Ottawa, replied 'deprecating the organization of a Dominion association as a matter not likely to succeed or to return an adequate result for the necessary capital and energy involved.'[9] Nothing daunted, the Ottawa Unitarians continued to press the idea, and found a supporter in D. W. Morehouse, secretary of the Unitarian Conference of the Middle States and Canada (the AUA's district association). 'The Unitarians expect to have a national Canadian association within three years,' Morehouse told an Ottawa reporter in 1899. 'All the business of the church in Canada will be transacted from Ottawa.'[10] When Samuel A. Eliot became president of the AUA the following year he put out feelers to ascertain Canadian opinion on the subject. Sunderland responded from Toronto that 'the general feeling is that as yet we have so few churches and they are so very far apart, that we shall perhaps be wiser to content ourselves for the present with our connection with the Middle States Conference.'[11]

The cordial absent-mindedness characteristic of most American attitudes toward Canada continued. 'We happened to be with a Canadian congregation not long ago,' ran an article in *The Unitarian*, organ of the Middle States Conference, 'when a most fraternal telegram of congratulation from an officer of the AUA failed only through its inadvertent reference to "all the churches of our *national* fellowship".' The same writer concluded: 'Undoubtedly the time will come when the Canadian churches, while never losing cordial relation of fellowship with the churches in the United States, will find a more immediate community of interest knitting them closely to one another; and a distinctly Canadian centre [*sic*] and method of missionary enterprise be imperative.'[12]

Negotiations with this end in view were in fact already beginning. The British Unitarian leaders who were in Boston for the international liberal religious congress in 1907 had entered into the discussions regarding sponsorship of missionary work in western Canada that were to result in the appointment of Frank Wright Pratt a year later. The British negotiators reported that 'Dr. Eliot suggested the formation of a Unitarian Association in Canada, with a Missionary Agent of its own, whose salary and expenses should be found in equal shares by the AUA and the BFUA.'[13] But Eliot was once again taking soundings at local level before finally committing himself. The minutes of the

Ottawa church recorded early in 1908: 'Dr Smith read a letter from Rev. S. A. Eliot, President of the AUA, inviting our expression of opinion on a proposal to organize a permanent conference of all the Unitarian churches in Canada, with a Canadian department of missionary endeavor and a field secretary for the Dominion, to be maintained jointly by the BFUA, the AUA, and the proposed Canadian Conference. The proposal was discussed and the consensus of opinion was that the Canadian churches were so few and at such great distances from each other that at present such a scheme was impracticable.'[14] The Ottawa Unitarians thus reversed their position within a decade, and as earlier responses from Montreal and Toronto had been in similar vein, the responsibility for holding back at this period has to lie with the established congregations of eastern Canada.

In the West, where any work undertaken by a Canadian association would be chiefly concentrated, feelings were naturally different. When Westwood arrived in Winnipeg in 1912 he was struck by what he called 'a curious psychological attitude toward our movement.' Canada's 'growing sense of nationhood' had resulted in considerable suspicion of points of view seemingly imported from the United States or even from Britain. 'As a consequence,' he wrote, 'I began to realize that unless our Canadian promotional work could be conducted under the auspices of a board drawn exclusively from the Canadian population, this attitude would continue to prevent all possibility of making an effective appeal to the general public.'[15] He discussed the situation at length with Pratt, whose own experience had led him to similar but not, as events were to show, identical conclusions. The two men agreed that the time was ripe for a Canadian organization and decided that if there was no objection from the AUA and BFUA, on whom they were dependent for financial support, they would call a meeting for the purpose of setting one up on the day after the dedication of the Winnipeg church, October 20, 1913.

Pratt wrote to sound out Eliot on the subject, taking care to point out that no existing ties would be broken or arrangements upset. The proposed conference would be 'composed of all the Unitarian churches in Canada, both English and Icelandic . . . with a meeting once a year where strictly Canadian matters can be considered and discussed. . . . The Canadian almanac publishes each year the churches and names of ministers of each denomination. We have never had any place in this annual volume. We ought to be in it with the other

churches. We should also gain the respect of Canadians if we had a national organization and were not merely an appendix to the U.S. . . . The one meeting a year would at least help the local church where it is held and would give an opportunity for a good deal of newspaper publicity.'[16] Eliot responded that he would have no wish to stand in the way of such a project. W. Copeland Bowie, executive secretary of the BFUA, who arrived in Victoria on September 13 to begin his tour of the Canadian churches, gave his enthusiastic support. The plans went ahead. Pratt wrote to all the congregations in Canada. Griffin, in particular, was expected to come to Winnipeg, and it was hoped that there would be representation from other churches as well.

When October 20 came, these optimistic hopes had not been realized. Griffin did not come, nor did anyone else from outside Winnipeg except Pratt and Bowie. Messages of greeting and support, however, were received from most of the churches. But a cloud hovered over the proceedings from the outset. Bowie and Pratt were in radical disagreement as to the way in which the proposed organization should be set up, the former seeing it as invested with wider powers than Pratt felt the AUA would endorse. Moreover, Pratt thought that he himself, with his wide experience of the field, should be secretary, whereas Bowie felt that he was disqualified as an American and a direct employee of the AUA. Bowie, exasperated with Pratt's unwillingness to give way, not only carried the day at the meeting but also terminated the BFUA grant toward Pratt's support, forcing the discontinuance of his position a few months later. Westwood was appointed secretary and Bowie intimated that henceforward BFUA money would go directly to the support of local churches.

The Canadian Unitarian Conference, as now formally constituted, stated its purpose to be 'to diffuse the knowledge and promote the principles of Unitarian Christianity in the Dominion of Canada.' From Boston came a message of greeting from Eliot: 'Very heartily I congratulate you upon this beginning of what I hope may prove to be an effective agent in the promotion of our cause in Canada. . . . The American Unitarian Association will be glad to co-operate in every way it can.'[17] The new organization named as its president Dr Milton F. Hersey of Montreal; all the other officers were from Winnipeg. In addition, there were six regional vice-presidents and twelve directors. Not all these positions were filled at the founding meeting, but the efforts of Pratt had provided names for many of them.

On paper, a national Canadian organization now existed for the first time in history. In practice, almost everything necessary for the success of such a venture still remained to be done. As a 'denominational official' Westwood was now able to use the special concessionary rates on the railways to visit the Western churches, which he proceeded to do. Through the personal generosity of Hersey, a printed publication, *The Canadian Conference Bulletin*, began to appear. After Pratt's departure from the scene, Westwood was indisputably in the driver's seat, and this was subtly marked by unannounced changes. The masthead of the publication now read *The Canadian Unitarian Bulletin*, and the organization was renamed the Canadian Unitarian Association. In seeming fulfilment of the prophecy of 1828, this name now appeared along with those of the BFUA and AUA in the *Bulletin* as a triumvirate of equals.

The odds were heavily against the success of the experiment. The churches were weak, distant, and mostly apathetic. The war made every effort more difficult. And the changes Westwood was making did not go unnoticed in Boston. There was a perceptible cooling in Eliot's attitude, particularly after Westwood's co-operation with Crothers at the 1915 General Conference in procuring aid for the Canadian churches, thereby invading a field of work hitherto regarded as a special preserve of the AUA. As the opportunity diminished, so the plans became more ambitious. Westwood took note of the discussions, already well under way, which were to culminate in the establishment of the United Church of Canada, and recalled some remarks made to him by the executive secretary of one of Manitoba's leading social agencies, a man who had formerly been the executive official for his denomination in the West: 'The probabilities are that there will be some form of united Protestantism; but despite the liberal outlook of some of the leaders who are seeking to bring it to pass, its doctrinal basis will be orthodox and conservative in trend. Against such a background there will be a need for a free religious movement, and once organized it would spread rapidly, especially in our prairie provinces. If your Canadian Unitarian Association would adopt some such name as the Canadian Free Religious Association or the Free Church of Canada, you'd be amazed at the results. Indeed, I can promise in such an event to bring at least fifty western churches, liberal in their constituency, into such a free fellowship. However, they would balk at being tagged "Unitarian", not because of the fear of heresy, but because it does not symbolize what is vital in the religious life of today.'[18]

Westwood was amazed and impressed. Coupled with other experiences that came his way, these comments weighed heavily in his thinking. 'As time went on and I became more familiar with the trends in the religious life of the Dominion, I was driven to the conclusion that the spread of a liberal religious spirit in the Canadian West was more important than the growth of Unitarianism as a denomination. Also I began to reflect upon the possibility of working toward a larger synthesis in which the work of the Canadian Unitarian Association would be enlarged by a process of absorption.'[19]

How to implement a program of this magnitude remained the problem. The CUA had no resources of its own, and was obliged to abandon even the modest *Bulletin* when the initial contribution ran out. Westwood turned again to his friend Crothers. The General Conference of 1917 was to meet in Montreal, and this would be the moment of opportunity. The two of them got together with Richard Boynton of Buffalo, N.Y., and drafted a resolution aimed at getting the Conference's support for the kind of Canadian work Westwood had in mind. It empowered the incoming Council of the Conference to set up a special commission 'to suggest a policy fitly symbolizing the relation of the Conference to the spiritual needs of our fellow-workers in Canada' and 'submit a plan for the creation of a special department of Canadian missions.' In a speech to the Conference, Westwood argued eloquently for his cause. He spoke in glowing terms of the way the 1915 General Conference had come to the rescue of the Canadian churches. Now he called for further material assistance from American Unitarians to make a contribution not simply to individual congregations, but to the spiritual life of Canada. The essential Unitarian concept of religion, he said, was that of a spiritual life rather than a creed or dogma, or an institution or church or program. It was an attitude of mind and heart and will. And this needed to be presented within the specific context of the Canadian consciousness of ripening nationhood. 'Our missionary body must be prepared to deal with our missionary opportunity in this large way. It must be sensitively aware that it is helping to shape the religious life of a young nation.'[20]

It was a magnificent oration, and it carried the meeting by storm. The resolution was carried unanimously. The Conference adjourned. Then the political forces began to make themselves felt. The wording

had not been skilful enough. The incoming Council had only been 'empowered', not 'instructed', to set up the commission described. Nothing happened. Eliot and his allies succeeded in getting the entire project consigned to oblivion. Westwood was bitterly disillusioned. 'I realized that from the moment our opportunity passed us by, our Unitarian churches in the Canadian West, instead of being a part of something large and spiritually significant in the life of the Dominion, would remain struggling outposts of a denomination whose policies were shaped either in London or Boston, or both. As such, they would surely atrophy through malnutrition and long-distance mismanagement combined with possible neglect.'[21]

The events of the next twenty years appeared to bear out his prediction. By the time the General Conference met again in 1919 he had left Winnipeg, and Canada. The last vestige of reality for the CUA went with him. Canadian Unitarians were left without any national organization or any will to create one. Whether the success of Westwood's plans would have really produced the results he anticipated must remain an open question. It could very well have simply duplicated the experience of those Universalist congregations that entered into 'union' arrangements and where, as it was put at North Hatley, the candle of liberalism was hidden under a bushel of orthodoxy. Westwood's final verdict on the whole matter accepted that very possibility. 'A great opportunity was lost for the creation of a free religious movement that might have played a significant role in the life of the Dominion. I say this regardless of the possibility that eventually such a movement might, upon invitation, have become a part of the United Church of Canada.'[22]

While Canadian Unitarians were making their first attempt to organize nationally, a completely separate venture, aimed at including them, was being launched under Universalist auspices. The moving spirit behind this was the energetic and eccentric Charles Huntington Pennoyer, minister of the Halifax Universalist church from 1907 to 1914. To the annual meeting of that congregation in 1909 he presented the idea of a Canadian conference of religious liberals and added that he would like them to have the credit for convening the first meeting. They unanimously endorsed the idea, and invitations went out across the country. But Halifax was a long way from any other centres of liberal religion, so it was scarcely surprising that when the meeting took place on October 27 & 28, 1909 the only response from beyond

the local level consisted of messages of goodwill. Nothing daunted, Pennoyer set up the Canadian Conference of Universalists, Unitarians and Kindred Religious Liberals, with a paper board representing various parts of the country and composed of his personal friends. If the next year's meeting were to be more successful, they needed a more promising locale. Among those sending messages of greeting had been the Unitarians in Ottawa, and what better place could there be for a meeting than Canada's national capital? So Pennoyer wrote asking the Ottawa church to play host to the 1910 meetings of the Conference.

The Ottawa board found itself in a difficult position. They were hesitant simply to pour cold water on an enthusiastic enterprise that just might work, but at the same time only two years had passed since they had turned down a similar approach from Eliot. They requested Troop, their newly appointed minister, to sound out his colleagues as to the merits of the project. Back came the replies that, though the idea was very commendable in the abstract, there were grave and probably insuperable obstacles in the concrete. In the light of this, the Ottawa board declined Pennoyer's request on the grounds that a small attendance would only advertise the weakness rather than the strength of the liberal churches.

This was the nearest Pennoyer ever came to getting any significant involvement of Unitarians in his conference, and for the moment he gave up. Nothing further happened until 1915, when a small-scale meeting, mostly of local residents, was held at the time of the dedication of the new Universalist church building in Harvey, N.B. and designated the second session of the CCUU & KRL. After that, all remained quiet, and the Conference was no more than a printed letterhead for Pennoyer's correspondence.

It was suddenly resurrected in August 1929. Pennoyer came to Harvey from his American church as summer preacher and the congregation agreed to sponsor a meeting of the Conference while he was there. This time Pennoyer sent out numerous invitations not only to attend but also to participate, and met with more success. Although most of those who came were from the immediate locality, there were some from Halifax, several from the Universalist congregations of the Eastern Townships, and a few from over the border in Maine. Altogether, more than two hundred delegates and visitors were present, those coming from a distance being accommodated in the homes or

summer cottages of the church members. There was a succession of sermons and speeches, and no fewer than eight resolutions were passed, including one commending moves toward international disarmament, one seeking co-operation with the liberal wings in all the great religions of the world, and one declaring it wise to have signs on the outside of church buildings. The proceedings were regarded as so successful that it was voted to meet again the following year at the Universalist Church in Huntingville, Quebec.

A similar program was scheduled for this fourth meeting, which took place on August 10 & 11, 1930 – as unusual an event for Huntingville as the previous year's gathering had been for Harvey. Attendance again was mostly local, plus a fairly strong contingent from the Maritimes, including Pennoyer, who was taking time out from the preaching mission in which he was engaged that summer. Resolutions went out from Huntingville conveying greetings to religious liberals in Iceland, the Philippines, Czechoslovakia, and Transylvania, as well as congratulations to the International Liberal Religious Association, later to be known as IARF, which was holding meetings in Holland that summer.

The international association was the subject of discussions of a different kind at the 1931 meeting of the Conference, a smaller-scale gathering held at Summerside, P.E.I. in connection with one of Pennoyer's preching missions. The association's name had been frequently changed since it was founded in 1900, and had not always been rendered in the same way in the different languages of its member groups. In 1930 it had voted to adopt the name 'International Association for the Promotion of Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom'. Pennoyer took great exception to the singling out of Christianity for promotion in this way and persuaded his Conference to pass a resolution deploring the change of name as 'not just to the liberal spirit or true to the unity underlying all the great religions.' The resolution went on to urge a return to the former simple and inclusive words 'International Congress of Religious Liberals'.

The secretary of the association, Professor L. J. van Holk, replied in due course on behalf of the executive council. The former name that had been cited, he said, had not been in official use and had not been accepted by all member groups, as the new one had been. The promotion of liberalism within Christianity was the first priority of the association, and no disrespect to other religious traditions was

intended. 'It is our task as indeed it has always been to work toward international co-operation of liberal Christianity in its various national forms, and of liberal Christianity with the "left wings" of the other religions.'[23]

This did not satisfy Pennoyer. When the 1932 meeting of the CCUU & KRL took place, again at Harvey, he placed before it a resolution with nine 'whereas's' and as many 'Be it resolved's.' The main thrust was that the international association's position was 'indefensible', that the Conference insisted upon the definite expression of friendship with non-Christian liberals, 'that this has nothing to do with erasing differences between the religions, except as the sense of the symphony of all religions gives a place to all thinkers and doers of good and affirms that one holy church of God which appears as in and through the forms and aspirations of all the great movements.'[24] Finally, it concluded, 'if this International Association does not stand for universal unity it must expect to be superseded by a broader society.'

The passage of this resolution was the final moment of glory for the CCUU & KRL. Nothing further was heard from it for more than twenty years. But pretentious though this address from Harvey, New Brunswick to an international organization may have been, it pointed to the direction which that organization, as the IARF, was later to follow. Equally pertinent was another resolution passed in 1932 calling for detailed study on the part of religious liberals of such issues as poverty and unemployment, so that they might take part intelligently and effectively in action to combat these social evils.

The last appearance of the CCUU & KRL was in 1945, when Pennoyer called another meeting in Huntingville. But by now the Universalists were so weakened that even the Maritimers could not come, and the organization faded quietly into oblivion.

Meanwhile, more than twenty years had elapsed since the collapse of Westwood's CUA without any hopes for a Canadian Unitarian organization being actively discussed. Then the initiative came once again from Winnipeg. The letter from E. J. Lucas to Charles Russell at the end of 1940[25] launched the idea into the arena of public discussion, and though the only immediate outcome was the publication of the *Canadian Unitarian*, this in itself was a significant step in the direction of establishing a national identity. By the time it ceased publication in 1946 the whole concept of a Canadian organization was beginning to stir actively once again. Its most vigorous proponent was

Angus Cameron. He circularized the Canadian ministers early in 1945, and on getting a favorable response produced a draft constitution. It proposed a Council of Canadian Unitarian Churches, comprising the minister and one lay representative from each congregation. Its purpose would be to advance the cause of Unitarianism in Canada and to deal with matters of specific interest to Canadian Unitarians. There was no opposition to the idea, and some churches went so far as to appoint delegates; there was no great surge of enthusiasm, however, nor were there any resources to underwrite the expenses of meetings. So the Council remained a paper organization and in the absence of any activity gradually faded out of mind.

Another decade passed. Then at the beginning of 1955 a new initiative came, this time from Vancouver. On January 24 the church board voted to circularize all congregations in Canada with regard to the advantages of a national organization. Considerable correspondence resulted; in particular, the Ottawa church heartily endorsed the idea. In Edmonton, where Charles Eddis had been urging a similar course of action since his arrival as minister in the autumn of 1953, one of the leading members, Richard A. Morton, got together with him in the spring to draw up proposals for presentation to the only existing organization operating at a level beyond that of the local congregations, the Western Canada Unitarian Conference. When that body met at Wynyard at the end of June, Morton presented a resolution proposing a Council that would meet twice a year to supervise the publication of a newssheet, arrange speaking tours, express the views of Canadian Unitarians on issues where there was a known consensus, and act in an advisory capacity to the USC.

A groundswell was now beginning to build up. It was no longer a matter of isolated individuals trying to push an idea. Vancouver was anxious to get the newssheet started and after communication with other congregations issued a prototype in May 1956. It announced that 'the existence of Canada as a political entity, a nation, is a fact of significance for the religious liberals who live here . . . we have responsibilities toward the national life that are of collective concern to all Unitarians living in Canada. . . . On a different level, improved communication can contribute to the growth and welfare of each church and fellowship, through the medium of shared experience.'[26] A year later regular issues of a new series of the *Canadian Unitarian* began to

appear, under the auspices of an informal Canadian Liaison Committee and the editorship of Campbell Sabiston of Toronto.

Moves now began to set up a regional structure in eastern Canada corresponding to the Western Canada Unitarian Conference. At a meeting in April 1957 sponsored by the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Unitarians a steering committee was set up to prepare a constitution for an Eastern Canada Conference, comprising Ontario and Quebec. The steering committee did its work, but no duly constituted body to act on it was convened before the march of events demanded a different approach. In June 1958 the Western Canada Unitarian Conference, pursuing its initiative of three years earlier, passed a resolution 'that we go on record as favouring the establishment of a Canadian Unitarian Council for the consideration of further aspects of denominational activity in Canada, and for implementing action in these areas when this is indicated.'[27]

As these discussions gathered momentum, denominational events of major significance were taking place south of the border. After many decades of sporadic negotiations, the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America were at last moving seriously in the direction of a complete merger of the two denominations. A joint merger commission was appointed in 1955. The smallness of the surviving Universalist remnant in Canada, probably numbering fewer than two hundred, as against 15 000 Unitarians, meant that Canadian Unitarians were directly affected by these negotiations only to a minimal extent; yet as part of the AUA they were involved in the decision-making process, and most Canadian societies voted in favor when the plebiscite was held. More important, the time was obviously approaching when all denominational arrangements would be reshuffled, and if any kind of Canadian organization were to find a place within the new structure, planning would have to begin at once. The denominationally aware Canadians who attended the week-long AUA annual meetings in Boston each May began to meet regularly for their own discussions. There was never any thought of setting up an independent Canadian movement totally separate from whatever would follow the AUA, but rather a specialized agency serving distinctively national concerns and providing a national voice for Canadian Unitarians.

In October 1959 the two denominations, meeting at Syracuse, New York, took the decisive step of agreeing to go ahead with full merger.

The following May the Canadian contingent at Boston established a committee to ascertain from the churches and fellowships in Canada what kind of regional structure they would see as best for themselves in the new denomination. It already seemed apparent that the district organizations being planned would most likely be substantial bodies with a fair degree of local autonomy. The question was therefore of major importance, particularly if the Canadian societies favored a district confined to their own national boundaries.

A few months later Donald Stout called the five ministers then serving churches in Ontario and Quebec together to discuss their own ideas regarding a Canadian organization. They presented these to a general meeting of societies from the two provinces called for December 3. Eight churches and fellowships were represented, and they set up a steering committee under the chairmanship of Charles Eddis, minister of the Lakeshore church. During the ensuing months, Eddis was to devote a large part of his time and energies to this unfolding project, and became the chief architect of national organization in Canada. The committee's first assignment was to prepare specific plans for an organization to deal with the recognized common areas of concern for all Unitarians in Canada, and possibly to provide for some regional or district function within the new continent-wide denomination. The existing international district to which the eastern Canadian societies belonged, the Meadville Unitarian Conference, was due to meet in Montreal in April, and it was decided to use this as an appropriate occasion to call the Canadian delegates together to consider the committee's report.

By the beginning of March the committee had produced a draft constitution for an organization to be known as the Canadian Unitarian Council. Designed to serve the entire country, it would hold an annual meeting at which the churches and fellowships would be represented in proportion to their size and elect a nine-member board to provide ongoing leadership. It was further recommended that this plan be presented for approval not only in Montreal but also to the Canadian delegates attending the inaugural meetings of the new Unitarian Universalist Association, which were to take place in Boston in May. In presenting these proposals, Eddis noted that there had been some initial apprehensions among the American denominational leaders that a separatist plan was afoot, but that they had been reassured when the nature of the scheme was more fully explained. After some

reservations had been expressed the delegates in Montreal approved the plan and referred it to the meeting of Canadians called for May 14 in Boston.

The little group of Canadians duly assembled on May 14, in the midst of the celebrations marking the start of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). They represented eleven churches and fellowships spread from coast to coast. They too approved the proposed constitution and thereby brought the Canadian Unitarian Council formally into existence. Five members of the board elected at this meeting were ministers: Eddis, Cameron, Chidsey, Petursson, and Hewett. Six had originally been nominated, but the sudden death of Stout left a vacancy that was later filled by Pat Chefurka of the London fellowship. The other lay persons elected to this first CUC board were Richard Knight of Toronto and his sister, 'Bunny' Turner of Pointe Claire, together with Cromwell Young of Ottawa.

Some immediate decisions were made. It was felt that as a national organization the CUC should take steps to secure membership in the IARF, the international liberal religious association that was scheduled to hold its triennial congress in Switzerland that summer. It was seen as anomalous that in an organization composed of national member groups Canada should be represented simply by one member of what was generally regarded as an American delegation, and as even more anomalous that this one Canadian should have been chosen in Boston without consultations in Canada. The board was empowered to name its own observer to the IARF congress. Greetings were also to be conveyed from the CUC to the British General Assembly, expressing interest in the development of appropriate links. Bunny Turner was confirmed in the role of co-ordinator for cross-Canada consultations on social action, to which she had been appointed by the previous year's meeting. A modest budget request was prepared for presentation to the UUA.

There was considerable discussion of the new organization's name. Up to this point, no one had given much attention to the question of whether or not 'Universalist' should be included in the title, but there was now considerable pressure from Americans to follow the same procedure as had been adopted at a continental level. Dana McLean Greeley, former president of the AUA now elected as first president of the UUA, commented later in his memoirs: 'it is a sense regrettable that the Canadian Unitarian Council has never changed its name to

Canadian Unitarian Universalist Council.'[28] In view of existing circumstances in Canada, it would have been no more appropriate for the CUC to have done so than for the AUA to have changed its name if three little Baptist churches had sought membership in it. During the course of its previous history there had never been any thought of changing the name of the American Unitarian Association because it also included Canadian congregations, and it was only after many years of repeated protests that the even more specific title 'National Conference' had been changed. The reason why no change was made at the founding meeting of the CUC was that Universalists had become almost non-existent in Canada. Even the three tiny congregations that comprised the remnant of Canadian Universalism were by this time partly composed of Unitarians.[29] In Halifax – the only place of any size with a Universalist church – the old congregation had almost died out and had been replaced largely by Unitarian newcomers. Its lay pastor, John McVittie, was an Ontario Unitarian whose past associations were with the Hamilton and Ottawa congregations. Furthermore, it was pointed out at the Boston meeting, there were considerations of public relations. Only now, at long last and largely through the publicity given the USC, there was some degree of public awareness of the Unitarian name; it made no sense to dilute this awareness unnecessarily by adding another hitherto unknown name.[30]

A milestone in the history of the infant organization was passed when the CUC board held its first full meeting in Toronto the following November. Charles Eddis, elected chairman, reported afterward to the constituency: 'For the first time in the 130-year history of Unitarianism in Canada, Unitarians from coast to coast met at a representative meeting on Canadian soil to discuss the state of liberal religion in Canada and to lay plans for the development of a national organization to relate Unitarianism more effectively to the particular country in which they met ... feeling a bit humorously like the fathers (and mothers) of some latter day confederation.'[31] Many demands competed for a share of the council's limited resources. Two years earlier the Powell River fellowship had asked, in a letter published in the *Canadian Unitarian*: 'Perhaps you can tell us where we can send for "contact" pamphlets of Canadian or British source? We have a good stock of the American ones, but the view has been expressed here that we should avoid the impression that the Unitarian movement is American-sponsored and thus another gimmick for taking over our country.'[32] The board now decided to commission the publication of at least a couple of pamphlets, one of them specifically on Unitarianism in Canada. It was also decided that issues of public concern could be submitted for debate and action at the CUC annual meetings. Douglas Borden, CUC observer at that year's IARF congress, recommended that the CUC take steps to affiliate directly, feeling that '"continental" groups inevitably appear to all outsiders as 100% American.'[33] The address of the Toronto church was adopted as the 'official' address of the CUC, and Barbara Arnott was appointed part-time administrative secretary.

But the major preoccupation of the board, and of Canadian Unitarians generally, was the question of districts within the new continent-wide framework. The commission appointed by the UUA to study this matter recommended that Canada be divided among a number of international districts, in all of which Canadians would find themselves in a minority position. Was this what Canadian Unitarians wanted? In Ontario and Quebec, the first response was to press for the office serving the district they were expected to share with upper New York State to be located in Toronto. If it were at the same address as the CUC office, there could be economies in the sharing of premises, staff, and equipment. It soon emerged that such a plan was totally unacceptable to the Americans. Opinion in Canada now began to swing toward the idea that the CUC should itself assume district functions for Ontario and Quebec, and possibly for other parts of Canada. As the culmination of months of discussion, Eddis circulated at the end of 1961 a memorandum embodying his own personal recommendations. It proposed that the CUC establish a Toronto office comparable to the Canadian head offices of large American corporations, and that the relationship of this office to the various parts of the country should be governed by the wishes of the Unitarians living in those areas. These wishes had already been fairly clearly expressed. For Ontario and Quebec, the Toronto office would handle all the functions of a UUA district office, at the same time encouraging inter-district sharing of activities with Unitarians and Universalists in neighboring parts of the United States. For the Atlantic provinces and the prairies it would serve similar functions, modified by the existence of regional conferences in those areas and their wish to deal directly with Boston in some matters. The expressed wish of British Columbia Unitarians to be part of an international district based upon nearby Seattle would

exclude the province from most of the operations of the Toronto office, but there would still be some specifically Canadian concerns with regard to which an active relationship would be maintained.

It was an imaginative plan, and it drew favorable comment from Unitarians all across the country. When the CUC held its first annual meeting in Toronto in May 1962, Eddis was able to report: 'I have yet to hear a single person in Canada speak against the present proposals ... or anyone in the United States for that matter. It appears that we have reached what Friends call the "sense" of the meeting" and can proceed accordingly.'[34] The meeting did proceed accordingly by amending the by-laws to provide for the proposed new CUC functions.

One of the provisions was for an executive secretary. When the board met immediately after the annual meeting, heavy pressure was put upon Eddis to take this position himself. He resisted, saying that, on the contrary, he wanted to lighten his CUC load and spend more time in his work at the Lakeshore church. In the end he accepted the position on a strictly temporary acting basis, expressing the hope that an experienced minister might shortly be attracted to Toronto who might combine the part-time CUC position with a ministry to the newly established Willowdale fellowship.

Meanwhile the Hamilton congregation, which had been without a minister since Brockway's resignation early in 1959, saw in the proposed CUC arrangements a way of providing a part-time ministry for themselves.[35] By the middle of the year they had a candidate of a calibre beyond normal Hamilton expectations. They were in no position to promise any role in connection with the CUC, but were in effect simply calling another fulltime minister to the Hamilton church, and it was on this basis that in September William P. Jenkins accepted a call in the form of a one-year contract with effect from January 1, 1963. Informal negotiations immediately began with a view to his appointment as CUC executive secretary, and it was not long before this fact became known within the Toronto congregation, where old wounds from the battles of 1958 were still festering. It was alarming enough to his erstwhile opponents to see Jenkins back as close as Hamilton; to have him as executive secretary of their district organization threatened to reopen the conflicts of five years earlier in a new and wider arena. Hasty consultations took place, and at the beginning of February a memorandum was issued in the name of the Unitarian Council of Metropolitan Toronto strongly criticizing the new CUC structure and

championing the original idea of an international district including Ontario and Quebec with upper New York State. This break in the hitherto unanimous support for a CUC plan that was being slowly perfected in face of tepid acceptance in Boston was decisive. The whole process of the previous year now went into reverse gear. In November 1963 the St Lawrence District was formed, with its district office in Syracuse, New York, and comprising three groups roughly equal in numbers if not in orientation: Universalists and Unitarians from upper New York State and Unitarians from eastern Canada. Five months later Jenkins accepted a call from the congregation in Winnipeg.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance for the future of the CUC of this whole sequence of events. No longer was there any possibility of employing a part-time executive secretary. The organization's projected budget plunged, and for the next few years the UUA grant on which it depended for survival stood at less than $5000 a year. The national office now and for a good many years to come was to consist of no more than a few pieces of equipment in the corner of Barbara Arnott's bedroom.

None the less, the fact remained that there now existed a national Unitarian body in Canada holding annual meetings, electing a board to represent Unitarians from coast to coast, publishing a nationally circulating newssheet and cherishing a great many ambitious hopes for the future. At its first annual meeting it had anticipated coming trends by adopting its official name in bilingual form (Canadian Unitarian Council – Conseil Unitaire Canadien) though there were very few francophone members. It was now headed by a president rather than a chairman of the executive board, and Charles Eddis was elected to this office for three successive years. He relinquished in 1963 the additional role of acting executive secretary, which he had reluctantly taken on a year earlier. One third of his working time had been spent on CUC work; the greater part of this had been paid for by the Lakeshore congregation as its contribution to the cause.[36]

During 1963 the first two Canadian pamphlets appeared, one a brief introduction to Unitarianism in Canada and the other a reprint of an outline of Unitarian beliefs by Jenkins first printed some years earlier by the Toronto congregation. A more ambitious project was the production of a Yearbook for 1962-63 giving fuller information about the origins and nature of the CUC and of Canadian Unitarianism gener-

ally. The CUC applied for affiliation with the British General Assembly and was given this status in 1964. But attempts to gain independent membership in the IARF were blocked by the UUA, which had a powerful voice within the international organization and wished to retain the Canadian representative as part of its own delegation.[37]

The first two annual meetings were held in Toronto, the third in Ottawa. Then, taking its national scope seriously, the CUC ventured as far as Winnipeg for its fourth meeting in 1965. Here Eddis's term of office ended and David Pohl, minister in Ottawa, took over the reins for the succeeding two years, being succeeded in turn by Leonard Mason of Montreal. In 1968 the CUC board named its first lay president, John May of Toronto. By now the organization was beginning to have the feeling of being well established, but its leaders experienced continual frustration through the lack of financial resources to do more than provide for the most basic necessities. Those things that could be done without much money through the time and effort of volunteers, the CUC was beginning to do. It was building, slowly but perceptibly, a feeling of corporate identity among Canadian Unitarians as fellow workers in a common cause. The only event of national significance to take place without its sponsorship was the unprecedented gathering of all the Unitarian ministers in Canada for a conference in Toronto in the autumn of 1962, and even this was possible only because most of the ministers from outside Ontario were already there for the CUC meeting. Within a decade the only other existing Unitarian body in the country, the Western Canada Unitarian District, had reconstituted itself as the Western District of the CUC.

Awareness of the national role of Canadian Unitarians expressed itself through the resolutions on matters of public concern passed at the annual meetings. These, as Leonard Mason noted in 1967,[38] showed 'a somewhat narrow and repetitive pattern': there were annual demands for Canadian recognition of the Chinese People's Republic and for the repeal of those sections of the criminal code prohibiting the advertising and sale of contraceptives; on two occasions resolutions were passed urging reform of the archaic divorce laws. It would be pretentious to claim any direct causal relationship between these resolutions and the changes along the lines advocated that subsequently took place, but it may not unreasonably be supposed that, taken in combination with the efforts of many other liberal groups working along similar lines, they were not totally without influence. On three

occasions in its early years the CUC urged changes in the adoption laws to rule out any presumed 'religious faith' of infants as a relevant consideration. As early as 1965 calls began for the ending of the American military adventure in Vietnam and for the conflict to be ended through negotiation. Other resolutions dealt with such issues as nuclear war, world population problems, the rights of Canada's native peoples, and pollution of air and water. The CBC was commended for its policy of presenting a variety of opinion on important political, moral, religious, and cultural issues.

Mason noted at the same time how small a proportion of Canadian Unitarians took part in the process of preparing and discussing the resolutions forwarded for presentation to the annual meetings. The same low degree of involvement showed itself when the CUC, with financial support from the UUA Department of Social Responsibility, undertook a more ambitious project. A part-time social responsibility officer was placed in Ottawa to represent Unitarian views on Parliament Hill, to keep Unitarians informed on matters of concern to them coming before Parliament and to co-ordinate ideas and activities among Unitarians across the country. This position was filled successively by Thomas L. Haley and Mary Lou Church. But problems of communication proved insuperable; Mrs Church's repeated complaints of lack of response from local societies and individuals culminated in her resignation in 1972 and she was not replaced. Once again it had been demonstrated how difficult it was to get Unitarians to rise beyond individualism and work together in concerted effort. It was true that the issues in question were often controversial, but as individuals most Unitarians were by no means averse to taking unpopular public stands.

More successful were the 'capital workshops' that brought Unitarians to Ottawa to hear and discuss presentations by leading experts in various fields of public concern on six occasions between 1964 and 1971. The first workshop, dividing its attention between the problems of automation and penal reform, drew an attendance of 145. Those of subsequent years, which were similarly well attended, focused on one issue at a time, and dealt with poverty, Canada's future prospects, human rights and obligations, the Canadian Indians, and violence in our society. Another moderately successful venture in social responsibility was the 'Tutume project'. The Vancouver church had raised funds to build and equip a classroom at a school and community

centre in Botswana, one of the poorer African countries. An appeal for a similar project on a larger scale was referred in 1970 to the CUC, which raised a substantial sum during the next few years for this purpose.

A curious minuet with the Canadian Council of Churches started from a suggestion at the 1966 annual meeting that the CUC might consider seeking observer status with that organization. Three years of repeated effort brought nothing more than evasive answers from the Council of Churches till in the autumn of 1969 they wrote to say that the CUC would not be eligible for membership as it did not subscribe to its creedal basis (which had been obvious from the outset), but that a CUC observer would be welcome at their triennial assembly. That same year the Council of Churches became actively involved in assistance to American war resisters fleeing to Canada, and sought CUC participation in this work, which was at once forthcoming.[39] However, it proved unexpectedly difficult for the CUC to find persons prepared to serve as observers to the meetings of the Council of Churches, invitations to which now began to arrive. In the end of CUC board found itself in the position of declining the invitations.[40]

Problems in the relationship with the UUA, which had been simmering for years, erupted violently in 1969. During the previous year the UUA board, reacting to its own financial problems, had reduced the already inadequate CUC grant to $4000. This was all some Canadian Unitarians needed to confirm their growing conviction of the low priority given their concerns in UUA circles. As they looked across the border they saw their co-religionists becoming more and more completely preoccupied with the tense social and political conditions in their own country, particularly the racial confrontations. After Jindra Rutherford became editor of the *Canadian Unitarian* in the autumn of 1968 the paper provided a forum for the growing sense of frustration. Under the headline SIGNS OF UNITARIAN SEPARATISM IN CANADA, the Spring 1969 issue noted that although the Canadian churches and fellowships were contributing between $25 000 and $30 000 each year to the UUA, 'some Canadian Unitarians have long been dissatisfied with much of the UUA material they receive. They claim that much of it is irrelevant to the Canadian scene, and that virtually none of it deals with specific Canadian problems and concerns, particularly in the field of social action. These dissatisfied Canadians would like the CUC to do a lot more for Canada's Unitarian movement, be less tied to Boston, and – if necessary – go it alone using some or all of the funds now being sent by Canadian societies to the UUA.'[41]

This view of the situation was backed by letters in the same issue from the chairman of the Unitarian Fellowship of Northwest Toronto (who argued that 'the present arrangement of Districts relegates most Canadian societies to the role of minor satellites on the fringe of larger U.S. bodies') and from Elinor Smith of Fort McMurray, Alberta complaining that the Church of the Larger Fellowship's mailings from Boston to isolated religious liberals contained 'a constant diet of USA.' The following issue quoted Toronto minister John Morgan as saying in an interview for the *Star*, 'Americans have become so immersed in their own society, history, and indeed their own tragedy, that Canadians concerns are more or less tacked on the end of UUA's priority list.'[42] Letters expressing a contrary point of view also began to appear, but it was apparent that there were many unhappy Canadian Unitarians.

The issue came to a head at the May 1969 annual meeting of the CUC in Montreal, when it was put to the test of a vote. Paradoxically, the campaign was spearheaded by Unitarians from the metropolitan Toronto area, which had six years earlier torpedeoed the only plan that might have averted the situation against which they were reacting. A resolution from Unitarians in that area was introduced calling for the reconstitution of the CUC as an organization funded by Canadian societies, with affiliation with the UUA. This would in effect have made the CUC's relationship with the UUA similar to that with the British General Assembly. After lengthy debate, the resolution was rejected by a vote of twenty-nine to twenty-one, which, in view of the fact that there were sixty voting delegates registered at the conference, was hardly a decisive repudiation of a new idea receiving its first test in the public arena. The Americans were thoroughly alarmed. Their attempts to be reassuring had backfired, for frequent allusions to their understanding of the feelings of people living in areas comparably remote from Boston but within their own borders reinforced the impression that they were unable to grasp the international dimension of the situation.

Though the 'separatist' motion had been defeated, the delegates proceeded to pass a resolution 'that the CUC Board present a full report to the UUA Board of Canadian dissatisfaction with UUA along

with a request for higher priority in budget allocation to permit the CUC to do more effectively those services which they agree are suitable to be handled by the CUC for Canadians.'[43]

A CUC-UUA joint negotiating committee met in July and again in November. It was no longer a matter of Canadians going cap in hand to Boston. They had behind them a clear mandate and a clear warning. The change in the relative strength of the two parties to the negotiation was accentuated by the turmoil that had rocked the UUA at its own annual meeting in July and threatened to split the entire movement.[44] The sympathetic reception given at that meeting to a Canadian resolution asking that 'a much higher priority be given to the work of the CUC in the annual budget allocations, and that at least one member of the UUA Board of Trustees be elected through the CUC'[45] also strengthened the Canadian position. The new UUA administration just elected did not need to fear any loss of face in reversing policies of the past.

The result was that the Canadian demands were met to an unprecedented extent. By February 1970 the boards of both the UUA and the CUC had ratified an agreement providing for establishing a CUC office, giving maximum service in the area of social responsibility, expanding publications and communication, and developing a one-week conference on a biennial basis for Canadian Unitarian Universalists.[46] It was further provided that the CUC would be responsible for all fund raising from the churches and fellowships in Canada and that the amount raised would be divided evenly between the UUA and itself. Finally, it was understood that the UUA would withdraw its opposition to CUC becoming a member of the IARF. The CUC annual meeting of 1970 thereupon voted to apply for membership.

The agreement reached by the joint committee was modified several times during the ensuing months in the light of experience. By the end of 1973 it had taken the form that the first $8000 of funds raised in Canada would remain with the CUC and that there would be a fifty-fifty sharing of all funds in excess of that amount. Both sides had come together from extreme positions during the course of the talks. The Americans had moved away from their previous role of receiving all denominational funds and subsidizing the CUC as they saw fit. As for the Canadians, they had seriously looked at an alternative proposal – that of keeping all Canadian money within the CUC and then purchasing such services as they could not themselves provide from the UUA (or indeed from any other source holding the promise of efficient delivery). The compromise eventually reached gave some degree of satisfaction to both parties, and therefore yielded an additional dividend of goodwill.

One further expression of the national identity took place at the 1970 annual meeting. Responsibility for the registration of ministers with the provincial authorities in order that they could officiate at weddings had been inherited by the UUA from the AUA. The meeting voted to take steps to transfer this responsibility to the CUC, and during the ensuing months the transfer took place smoothly. An additional component was added, however, by the decision of the CUC board to register lay persons as well as ministers for this purpose, if they were duly appointed by member societies and met criteria established by the CUC. Such persons were designated 'chaplains' to distinguish them from ministers and it was understood that they had no 'ministerial' functions other than the conduct of weddings and memorial services. Within a few years, there were more chaplains than Unitarian ministers in Canada.

With the added financial resources now at its disposal, the CUC was able at last to enter into areas of work hitherto beyond its capabilities. There had been a long-standing desire to do more in the fields of advertising and publicity, but little had been possible. This interest was now broadened to cover the whole field of extension, establishing new societies and building up existing ones. Unfortunately, the time at which the CUC was able to undertake such a responsibility was, to say the least, inauspicious. Had the organization and resources been available in Canada twenty years earlier the results might well have been spectacular. As matters stood, the 'religious boom' was long since over and the results of much hard work could be quite meagre. If the professionals in the United States were accomplishing little (the denomination was declining in numbers), it was scarcely surprising that the Canadians could do no better. Since the failure of the plan to establish a position of executive secretary in 1963, the CUC had been heavily dependent upon the work of dedicated volunteers, at first ministers and then to an increasing extent lay persons. Barbara Arnott, administrative secretary of the CUC, worked long hours beyond those for which she was paid. As president from 1970 to 1972 Mary Lu MacDonald made a point of attending regional gatherings and visiting most of the individual societies from coast to coast. Her successors in

office, Clayton Peterson, Bert Christensen, and Elaine Royer kept up the same tradition of heavy involvement, which made severe inroads upon their free time and often also upon their professional work. At a more local level, persons such as Michael Liknaitsky on the prairies and Rod Stewart on the West Coast did similar work; the latter, as a member of the CUC-UUA joint negotiating committee, was responsible for the plan under which Canadian contributions were divided between the CUC and the UUA.

Membership in the IARF presented no problems after 1970. The CUC's application was accepted, and the Canadians were received into membership at the triennial congress in Heidelberg in 1972. Not only that, but the IARF accepted an invitation to hold its next congress in Montreal. Preparations for this major event occupied much of the next three years of CUC board attention as well as many days of work for the local committee. In August 1975 three hundred religious liberals from Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America gathered for a memorable week of discussion and fellowship. Prior to the congress, many of them had visited other parts of Canada and had been the guests of members of the local congregations. Appropriately, the congress theme was *Our Unity in Diversity*. There were liberal Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims as well as Unitarians and Universalists. There was simultaneous translation from English into German, with supplementary services in French and Japanese. Even the Vatican sent an official observer.

The Montreal church was packed to the doors for the congress service, with a sermon (appropriately, in view of the church's history) delivered by William McMillan of the Irish Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church. The embattled scene in Belfast within which he exercised his own ministry lent poignancy to his plea for religious liberals to become actively involved in the great issues of the day. After the grand finale, featuring music, singing, and folk dancing from all parts of the world, the delegates returned to their homelands and the tired Canadians sorted out their impressions. Beyond all others, one was paramount: Canadian Unitarianism had just celebrated its national coming-of-age.

11

Turbulent Transition

Though the founding of the CUC was a landmark in the evolution of Canadian Unitarianism, in most other respects the sixties began like a replay of the fifties. For the first seven years of the decade there was little apparent change in the patterns either of growth or of thinking. Fellowships were still proliferating. Munroe Husbands's second missionary journey in 1963 took him to no fewer than twenty-six small and medium-sized towns in Ontario and the prairie provinces, in the great majority of which Unitarianism had never been publicly presented before. A room was rented, a meeting was advertised, and he waited to see who would come. In some places the results were unpromising: 'Owen Sound is one city in Ontario where I think we will never break through – it has a very illiberal look ... Medicine Hat no go. Four elderly gentlemen of German background, one of whom spoke no English – hope he enjoyed the gestures.'[1] But elsewhere fellowships sprang into being – in Sault Ste Marie, Moose Jaw, and Red Deer – while efforts began in Chatham and Swift Current that were consolidated into fellowships when Husbands revisited them during the course of his third journey in 1966. Once again at this time he encountered a mixed reception. No one at all turned out in Portage la Prairie and only three in North Battleford, but steering committees were left behind in Prince Albert and Lethbridge, which in due course brought fellowships into being. Not all the local people participating in this work were new to Unitarianism; some were former members of established congregations or had been members for some years of the

AUA-sponsored church-by-correspondence, the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

Though Husbands was the professional fellowship-maker, local initiative or metropolitan expansion were bringing other groups into being in places he did not visit. On the east coast, Angus Cameron worked until the beginning of 1963 as part-time minister-at-large. He strengthened the existing fellowship in Fredericton and helped form new ones in Saint John and Moncton. An attempt to plant one in St John's, Newfoundland was only temporarily successful. At the other end of the country, fellowships were multiplying in British Columbia. Here there was no minister-at-large, but the Pacific Northwest District employed a part-time executive secretary, Robert Fulghum of Bellingham, Washington. In 1965 he undertook, in company with Phillip Hewett of Vancouver, a journey through the B.C. interior, in the course of which the fellowship at Penticton was re-established and new ones formed in Kelowna, Vernon, and Kamloops. The original group in Penticton had collapsed following the removal from the town of many of its members; two of them, Paul and Tess Fenger, had taken a leading part in bringing a fellowship into existence in 1961 in their new hometown of Terrace. The same year had seen a continuation of the chain of fellowships on Vancouver Island with the formation of another one at Courtenay; even the tiny community of Roberts Creek served for a while as the gathering place for a scattered fellowship on the Sechelt peninsula. Within metropolitan Vancouver, a new fellowship gradually emerged out of a local Sunday school and discussion group in West Vancouver. In the northern sections of the province a fellowship functioned for some years in Prince Rupert and informal groups that never did become fellowships were meeting regularly in Fort St John, Dawson Creek, and over the provincial boundary in Whitehorse.

The only prairie fellowship to arise during this period from work other than that of Husbands was at Brandon, where UUA minister-at-large Grant Butler, who had a summer home in the area, helped to organize a group. It held tenaciously to life in face of unusually intense community pressures in the conservative little town, but operated with a degree of independence seldom matched even in Unitarian circles, building very few points of contact even with its nearest neighbors in Winnipeg.

The language barrier placed an obvious limitation upon extension in

Quebec. An attempt to overcome it was made in 1962, when the *Cercle Unitaire de Langue Française* came into being and applied for fellowship status. Composed originally of francophone members of the Montreal church, its ambition was to put down roots within the population of the province, to sponsor the publication of Unitarian materials in French, and even to serve as the base for Unitarian work in all parts of the world where French was understood. It began holding regular services of a somewhat formal nature, but its leadership and resources were not able to maintain it for an extended period of time. The only other new development in the province was confined as usual to the anglophone section of the population. In 1965 a North Shore fellowship was formed at Roxboro to provide for the needs of Unitarians in the northern suburbs of Montreal.

Ontario was already well supplied with fellowships, but the number was still increasing despite the failure of the one in Sudbury. In 1961 Peterborough, North Bay, and Cornwall were added to the list, though the last one was also short lived. The same year saw the emergence of new groups in the metropolitan Toronto area. The Northwest Fellowship, which had been gathered the previous year as a direct result of its founding members' having become acquainted with each other in the course of organizing the Toronto Memorial Society, was joined by fellowships at Willowdale and – farther out – at Oshawa. The Willowdale fellowship, which appeared to have a good potential for growth, was hampered from the outset by ambiguity of purpose. Some of the original founders were looking for a repetition of what had happened at South Peel and Don Heights, but others were essentially refugees from the atmosphere and financial demands of a large congregation. The format of the Sunday gatherings, early established and maintained almost unchanged in subsequent years, consisted of a talk followed by discussion in which heavy emphasis was placed upon a wide degree of participation. That such a group should look for a minister, as it did in 1963, was to invite trouble. Alfred Fowlie, who like all his colleagues in Toronto since 1943 came from the United States, was described as 'a brilliant 35-year-old with the looks and fire of a college boy.' As an instance of what was criticized by some as an unduly flamboyant approach, 'his efforts to hold up to society the mirror of its own incongruities resulted . . . in the formation of SLOB – the Society against Lewd and Obscene Books. First on its agenda: Censor the Bible, which is full of adulteries, incest and all kinds of

other sex, both natural and unnatural. Meant as a tongue-in-cheek proposition, SLOB obtained serious nation-wide publicity.'[2] Fowlie became the focal point for internal controversy within the fellowship and was blamed, rightly or wrongly, for its failure to grow. He resigned in 1966 to take a full-time counselling position, but continued to maintain an 'associated' relationship with the fellowship until his untimely death from a heart attack in 1971.

The most ambitious of all the extension projects in Toronto was launched in 1963. 'Toronto First', as the main congregation was by now generally known to distinguish it from the suburban developments, was still intolerably overcrowded despite its dual sessions on Sunday mornings. Membership had risen to 850, but the heaviest pressure was on the children's program. Newcomers found their children being placed on a waiting list with few prospects of finding a place in a class for many months. After dallying with the idea of building yet more classrooms, the planning committee, in consultation with John Morgan, the minister, and Robert Wrigley, minister to the School of Religion, came up with an imaginative proposal that was presented to the congregation in June. It envisaged nothing less than the overnight creation of a duplicate congregation located at no great distance from 'First' and providing a near-replica of that congregation's Sunday morning proceedings. Morgan would officiate regularly at First's 9.15 a.m. service and would alternate between the two congregations at 11 o'clock. Existing staff and resources would support both congregations. The project was approved, and services began in September at the YMCA on Eglinton Avenue, East, with an initial attendance of more than a hundred.

This apparent success led to a decision the following January by those attending the services in the new location to establish themselves as an independent congregation with their own full-time minister. But this proved to be only the first stage in a rapid evolution of ideas. Here too, as at Willowdale, a substantial number of members had come not simply because of pressure of space but because of some dissatisfaction with First Congregation or its minister. Some of them were in reaction against the atmosphere of a large church with a minister and a relatively formal order of service. What they were looking for was the intimacy and informality of a fellowship, and so it was the status of a fellowship that the new congregation asked for and received from

the UUA five months later. Large-scale involvement of volunteers during the next few years resulted in a highly active and stimulating program, though it diverged more and more from the normal procedures of a church. Those who arrived in search of such things were referred to 'First'. Thoughts of having a minister or a building were quickly abandoned. Slowly the momentum slackened. Membership and attendance, particularly in the children's program, began to level off and then to decline. The downswing in the fortunes of Unitarianism in the later years of the decade hit this loosely organized group (which had first called itself New Central Congregation, then the Unitarian Fellowship of North Toronto) with particular force. Eight years after its formation the surviving members finally came to terms with what had happened by voting to disband.

None of these developments in metropolitan Toronto after 1960 resulted in new churches. They illustrated the process graphically described by Munroe Husbands when he visited Victoria in 1961 and pointed out that the now fast-growing fellowship there 'was reaching a recognized critical point of unstable equilibrium. It would either grow into a church, with a diversified congregation and diversified interests, or it would relapse into a comparatively small discussion group with a prognosis of ultimate decay. The most usual causes of decay are three: (1) the loss of one or two enthusiastic leaders can destroy a small group almost overnight; (2) it can too easily be taken over and "used" by people whose main interests are elsewhere than in straight Unitarianism, and so become identified in the public mind with these extraneous causes, thus alienating members or potential members who are not interested in them and may even be antagonistic; (3) it can degenerate into an assemblage of more or less like-minded people reiterating familiar points of view until it dies of sheer boredom.'[3]

The work of easing the transition from fellowship to church was the specialty of Grant A. Butler, minister-at-large of the UUA. Though an American, he had unusual qualifications for effective work in Canada. He was a graduate of McMaster University, was married to a Canadian, and maintained a summer residence in Manitoba. Moreover, his soft-spoken manner contrasted sharply with the caricature of the high-powered American against which many Canadians reacted adversely. His procedure was to spend three months with a fellowship helping it expand its membership, sort out its goals and priorities, and improve

its organization and fund-raising procedures. By the time he left it the fellowship should either have attained church status or be close to it, and should be looking for a minister.

This procedure was followed at Calgary in 1960. A year later the new Unitarian Church of Calgary appointed its first minister, Dwight Brown, who had just graduated from Starr King School for the Ministry, and was able to facilitate the process of continued growth. Next in line was Victoria, where the fellowship procured Butler's services for the opening months of 1963, and a few months later welcomed as their resident minister Marvin D. Evans, a tall thirty-eight-year-old Virginian who graduated that year from Meadville. Though he had no previous Canadian experience, Evans exercised a highly successful ministry in Victoria, helping lay durable foundations to carry the congregation into the future. By the time he left in 1967, membership had reached 220.

Less successful was the story in Saskatoon. There the active fellowship was exploring as early as 1958 the possibility of a shared ministry, and a year later were prepared to go ahead on their own if the assistance they requested from the AUA had been forthcoming. But the opportunity passed, and after a few years of hesitation the focus of attention swung to the acquisition of a building. This was accomplished in 1964 with the purchase of an existing church. When the decision was finally reached to make a real push for a minister and one was secured, the year was 1968 and the favorable period for such experiments already at an end. Even so, an outstanding minister might have pulled the fellowship up to the strength it needed to break through and begin functioning as a viable church; this did not happen and the group reverted to its earlier fellowship status and pattern of life.

In the already established churches, growth continued. All except Toronto First increased their membership between 1961 and 1967. In some places the increase was substantial: Edmonton more than doubled its membership to reach 380. Edmonton's annual budget more than doubled in the same period, as did those in Vancouver and South Peel; Ottawa's almost tripled.[4] Toronto First was still struggling with its chronic financial problems, but none the less its budget went up substantially in spite of the loss of members to the new fellowships. Turnover in membership was high; of the 811 members reported in 1961, 113 had joined during the preceding year, and 106 persons had

been dropped from membership. A year earlier the chairman of the property committee had reported that 90 per cent of the existing congregation had made no contribution toward the cost of the still relatively new buildings.[5] Plans began in Vancouver for metropolitan development along the lines of Toronto's. In 1967 the North Shore church, a jointly sponsored project of the Vancouver church and the West Vancouver fellowship, came into being with 118 charter members.

Much of the energy of churches and fellowships alike went into providing themselves with adequate buildings. All across the country the story was repeated. The old Universalist church in Halifax, now part of the national movement, purchased residential property in 1961 and converted it into a chapel with ancillary rooms; for the first time in many years it now had premises that were both presentable and realistic in terms of size. The following year the Fredericton fellowship also purchased and converted a house, an example followed by the fellowships in Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor, and West Vancouver. The St Catharines fellowship, after a first purchase proved inadequate for its growing needs, bought a former Roman Catholic church in the spring of 1967. In Saskatoon it was a former Free Methodist church, in Calgary four years later a former United church. The United church purchased by the Lakeshore congregation in 1957 was radically remodelled and extended five years later. In Victoria a syndicate of leading members of the church bought a former Seamen's Institute, which was converted to Unitarian use under the name of Servetus Hall.

But the major building projects of the sixties were in Edmonton, Vancouver, and Ottawa. After the completion of its religious education building in 1961, the Edmonton congregation turned its attention to replacing the old and inadequate former Presbyterian church it was using for its services. A new building was erected on the same site and formally dedicated in January 1965, Jenkins and Petursson coming from Winnipeg for the occasion. The Vancouver and Ottawa projects were on a larger scale, entailing in each instance the erection of entirely new buildings on a new site. After preparations, which began as far back as 1959, the Vancouver congregation bought nearly two acres of land on a site estimated by planners to be close to the geographical centre of population for the metropolitan area in years to come. The congregation moved into its new home, designed by Wolf-

gang Gerson, one of its own members, in the summer of 1964. The buildings of concrete and wood were ranged around a central courtyard, providing a feeling of light and spaciousness both indoors and out, and segregating the areas devoted to the varied aspects of church activities.

Ottawa's was the last and the most expensive of the rebuilding projects. On Easter Sunday 1967 the congregation met for the first time in its beautiful new premises erected at a cost of $450 000 (half as much again as Vancouver had spent) and overlooking the Ottawa River across the Western Parkway. Constructed of western red cedar, concrete, and glass, it rose to a graceful spire in the centre. Its seating capacity of 350 was the same as Vancouver's, and it included no fewer than twenty-two classrooms for the congregation's church school, which at this point had an enrolment of some 500 children. It was completed so near the end of Unitarianism's period of growth that the congregation later encountered serious problems in maintaining the heavy payments on the mortgage.

The Winnipeg congregation narrowly escaped committing itself to a building program that could have had much more serious consequences for its finances and morale. It had grown steadily in recent years, but without spectacular happenings for good or ill until Petursson announced his retirement in 1964, after thirty-six years with the congregation in the city of his upbringing—his entire ministerial career. This was a record without parallel in Canadian or American Unitarianism; one would probably have to go to Ireland or Transylvania to find anything comparable. Manitoba was his first and last love. In characteristic vein he once wrote to the *Canadian Unitarian*: 'When I speak to non-Manitobans, I assure them that here in Manitoba we have

BLUE SKIES AND BRILLIANT SUNSHINE
CLEAN AIR AND PURE WATER
VAST PRAIRIES AND GREAT FORESTS
BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND RUGGED MEN.

... There is a short period when it turns a bit cooler than at other times – but the sun shines so we never notice the cool periods.'[6]

On his retirement he was appointed minister emeritus, and 'Bill' Jenkins was called from Hamilton as his successor. Nothing in Petursson's genial style had prepared the congregation for Jenkins's aggressive approach to church affairs. Controversial changes began to arrive

unannounced. One Sunday morning the congregation arrived to find that all the pews had been sold and replaced by chairs at the instance of the minister in consultation with only a few leading members. During the same year, 1966, the name on the signboard outside was suddenly changed to read UNITARIAN CENTRE. The chairman of the board later conceded that the congregation ought to have been consulted. 'I myself thought that practically no one would even notice the change. I was wrong.'[7]

One matter on which the congregation had perforce to be consulted was the rebuilding program. Jenkins had presided over the building of new churches – or centres – during two of his previous three ministries, Hamilton already having one. He would have liked to repeat the process in Winnipeg. No one could argue that a new building was, other things being equal, undesirable; in fact the planning committee reported in 1965 that the existing building was not only outgrown but had a limited life expectancy. However, the committee added, rebuilding was out of the question unless the financial situation could be improved. Improved it was, within limits, and in May 1967 the congregation retained the services of an architect. His imaginative plans drew high praise from his professional colleagues when they were published in an architectural journal, but it was already too late, and the congregation sensed this. They hesitated, and the *coup de grace* to the plans came the following year when Jenkins resigned and moved to Chicago.

Other changes were taking place in the ministry. All newcomers to Canadian pulpits during the 1961-67 period were Americans. Box was succeeded in Ottawa by David C. Pohl, a native of upper New York State and a graduate of St Lawrence University, so that he was no stranger to the general region in which he was to minister. He guided the congregation quietly and effectively through the difficult decisions of the rebuilding process, and won sufficient confidence at a broader level to be elected president of the CUC – the only American ever to serve in that office. In the midst of the exuberance over rapid growth he cautioned against the 'scalp-counting' prevalent in all denominations in those days of expansion. Welcoming the new members, he said to the congregation: 'I hope we will see these not as statistics or indicators of numerical progress, but as individuals who have discovered and affiliated with a church community that makes sense to them and stimulates them on their religious quest for meaning and dignity in living.'[8]

As a leader of Unitarians in Canada, Pohl took his place alongside the two colleagues who had recently preceded him to the country. Leonard Mason had arrived in Montreal in 1960, after a controversial career as the theological *bête noir* of British Unitarianism. Avowing himself a humanist, he had a few years earlier shocked a British audience by reformulating the doctrine of the Trinity for their benefit: 'The first Non-Person is the void, the vastness, the unformed, the new geometrical space-time out of which all things come. The second Non-Person is the collective product or the shining pinnacle of evolutionary forces – man as he is now, has been, and will become as far as thought can reach; or some other-than-man yet to emerge from the strange convolutions of time. The third Non-Person is the process itself, the creative nisus, the *élan vital* which whirls on and spins purposes and goals out of itself, discards them and evolves more, coming we know not whence, going we know not whither.'[9] Quixotic and disarmingly ingenuous in his public utterances, Mason sprang into national prominence in 1964 through officiating at the marriage of Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. An outstanding pulpit orator, he had published several volumes of poetry.

John Morgan, who came to Canada in 1959, was a native of Indiana. He too was an outspoken humanist. In an article in a nationally circulating magazine a member of his congregation described him as 'a lean intense intellectual . . . a typical (and controversial) Unitarian minister, appearing on discussion panels, radio, TV, opening art auctions, guest-speaking, helping plan peace marches. He is also chairman of the Toronto Committee for Nuclear Disarmament. . . . The press, with whom he is on excellent terms, call him Canada's most controversial minister – "with the damnable habit of making sense, as well as news" – and assiduously quote him on everything from hellfire to fluoridation.[10]

These three men, together with Eddis until he moved to an American church in 1966,[11] were the leading spokesmen for Unitarianism in eastern Canada. The turnover in the composition of the ministry throughout the country continued, with more comings than goings. In 1963 the *Canadian Unitarian* declared, with more exuberance than accuracy, that Toronto with six ministers now had as many as the whole country had had a decade earlier. The 'Toronto six' were Morgan and Wrigley at First, Chidsey at Don Heights, Fowlie at Willowdale, Arnold Thaw, Stout's successor, at South Peel, and Robert

Carter, who had been appointed minister to students at the University of Toronto, where he was working for his Ph.D. Chidsey, who had been Eddis's adjutant during the formative years of the CUC, returned to the United States in 1964 and was followed by Kenneth Helms, a young minister with an even more individualistic style, who moved to Toronto from California. Other American ministers arriving during this period were Dwight Brown (Calgary, 1961-64), Marvin Evans (Victoria, 1963-67), Robert Hemstreet (Hamilton, 1964-68), Violet Kochendoerfer (Calgary, 1964-67), and Fred Cappucino (Lakeshore, 1967-74). The first three came directly from theological school, while Violet Kochendoerfer, the first woman in the Canadian Unitarian ministry for thirty years, had served only one short ministry since graduating from Starr King in 1962.

By the middle sixties an established pattern seemed to be emerging within Canadian Unitarianism, building upon the growth of the previous decade and expressing for the first time a real sense of cohesion extending beyond the local level. The CUC was still a very modest operation, but it had symbolic as well as practical value. The little church at North Hatley, Quebec, which had hitherto had few points of contact in Canada outside the Eastern Townships, now became the scene of annual summer pilgrimages by the Lakeshore and Montreal congregations. Regional co-operation took a more organized form in the greater Toronto area with the establishment in 1961 of the Unitarian Council of Metropolitan Toronto, a co-ordinating body for the growing number of local units, which also assumed responsibility for the ministry to students at the University of Toronto. Richard Drinon, who succeeded Wrigley at First after Wrigley became minister at Edmonton in 1965, served for a short period as the Council's half-time executive secretary, but financial problems ended this experiment.

The Western District, which had emerged a decade earlier out of the old Icelandic Conference, performed an invaluable function in providing at least one occasion each year when members of the isolated Unitarian societies from the Lakehead to the Rockies could gather together for mutual support and to formulate plans as to how the peculiar needs of this scattered constituency could best be met. Regional organizations were appearing also in British Columbia. In 1961 the Unitarians of Vancouver Island began holding annual weekend camps, with a full conference program, and the Vancouver Island Unitarian Committee came into being to co-ordinate these and other

activities. Four years later, with the growth of fellowships in the interior of the province, similar camp-outs began at Woods Lake in the Okanagan Valley, and in 1968 a full-scale area conference was successfully held in Kelowna. For a while an attempt was made to bring all the societies in the province together in a B.C. Unitarian Council, which met annually in Vancouver.

Most Unitarian conferences were held either at the churches or in places rented for the occasion; but Unitarians also became the owners of four campgrounds suitable for small-scale gatherings where deluxe accommodation was not the primary consideration. The longest-established was at Hnausa, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, where the Icelandic conference had purchased land with the original intention of providing city children with a holiday in a healthy outdoor setting. The camp buildings, which could accommodate some forty people, were joined in 1968 by the church originally built in Arnes, a few miles farther down the lake. In 1965-66 the Moncton fellowship purchased ten acres of land on the Coverdale River, complete with a small farmhouse, which it named Unitarian Park. Over two thousand red pine trees were planted on the property. In 1970 it was the setting for a conference of Unitarians and Universalists from all parts of the Maritimes; some seventy-five attended, most of them camping.

A camp located to draw from the heavily populated areas of southern Ontario was opened by a group of Unitarians in 1969. Situated among rolling hills near the village of Honeywood, some seventy miles northwest of Toronto, it consisted of fifty acres of pine forest and meadowland, with caves, a small lake, and permanent accommodation for more than seventy people. It was incorporated as Unicamp, and maintained a regular program of scheduled events during the summer months. The largest and most primitive of the camps was the Unitarian Wilderness Camp on Kootenay Lake in British Columbia, purchased in 1966 by a body specially incorporated for the purpose: the Northwest Unitarian Wilderness Society. It consisted of 160 acres of lakefront property accessible only by boat or trail and devoid of 'improvements' beyond the most basic necessities to accommodate campers. No organized activities were scheduled; those gathered spontaneously ranged from strenuous climbs in the magnificent mountains behind the camp to total relaxation on the beach.

In the latter half of 1966 a process took place that makes it possible to obtain a more reliable picture of what Unitarians were like then

than at any other point before or since. A continent-wide survey of Unitarians and their attitudes, using the most sophisticated measuring techniques, was commissioned by the UUA. Though the average totals presented for North America as a whole might give a distorted impression owing to the sometimes very wide discrepancy between the outlook of New England Unitarians and those elsewhere, the figures for Canada reflected a much less varied constituency. Moreover, the sample used was unusually large; responses were obtained from almost one in every five adult members of Canadian societies. Although more than half of these were from the country's two largest congregations – Toronto First and Vancouver – the existence of separate tabulations for each of these congregations serves as a check on the national figures, based upon the responses from eight societies altogether. It had been hoped to get a response from all members of those societies; but as might have been expected when dealing with Unitarians, rather more than half of them chose not to co-operate. Some voiced strong objection. One member of the Vancouver congregation resigned in protest against its having involved itself in such a project. The research organization conducting the survey lamented: 'An unknown and possibly large bias of self selection may enter into the results caused by the fact that so many of the individual church and fellowship members did not respond. However, it has been our experience that such biases are not ordinarily large enough to unsettle completely the results of a survey.'[12]

These results contained few surprises. Seventy-three per cent of the respondents had become Unitarians during the preceding decade; fewer than 4 per cent had inherited their Unitarianism from the previous generation. Even allowing for the scale of expansion the movement had experienced, this illustrated a feature that appears to have been present throughout the history of the movement, in Canada as elsewhere. The children of Unitarian parents often fail to become Unitarians in their turn. The movement always depends upon its ability to attract new members in adult life. Where did these new members come from? Exactly one third of them claimed no previous religious affiliation in adult life, 39 per cent had come from 'liberal Protestantism' (presumably the United Church in most cases), and 14 per cent from a 'liturgical Protestant' (in most cases, Anglican) church. Going back to the religion of their upbringing, a different picture appeared: 30 per cent were raised 'liberal Protestants', 23 per cent

'liturgical Protestants', and 16 per cent fundamentalists. Just over 5 per cent had been Roman Catholic, and just under 3 per cent Jewish. The survey made no attempt to ask precisely why they had become Unitarians, but when asked whether this move had provided them with an essentially new value system or supported their previously existing one, an overwhelming 82 per cent affirmed the latter to have been the case.

The age distribution showed a comparatively young constituency. Only 5 per cent were over sixty-five years of age; 61 per cent were under forty-five; 80 per cent were married, never divorced; fewer than 10 per cent had gone through a divorce, though the Toronto and Vancouver rates were both higher, at 13 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. Economically, the Canadian Unitarians were somewhat less well off then their American co-religionists, whose tabulation showed them as 'clearly concentrated in the higher-income brackets, representing the highest income level ever reported for a total denomination. Four fifths of the UU families live at income levels enjoyed by only one fifth of the U.S. population.'[13] But the discrepancy still left the Canadians with a high level of average income, the Toronto congregation being appreciably wealthier than the Vancouver one:

Total Income before Taxes in Unitarian Families

	North America	Canada	Toronto	Vancouver
Under $5000	9%	10%	14%	17%
$5000 – $9999	29%	39%	44%	49%
$10 000 – $24 999	55%	47%	35%	32%
$25 000 or over	7%	4%	7%	2%

The responses to the question asking the occupation of the main earner in the family showed Unitarians as heavily concentrated in the professions (just over 60 per cent), while nearly 18 per cent were listed as 'managerial or business owner'. Only 10 per cent showed in the conventionally 'working-class' occupations. The levels of education were, like the economic levels, below those of Unitarians in the United States but far above those of Canadians as a whole. Thirty-two per cent reported no more than a high-school education; 48 per cent were graduates of a university or college; and no fewer than 20 per cent held a graduate degree, in seeming confirmation of the standing denominational joke: 'You don't have to be a Ph.D to be a Unitarian – but it helps!' Politically, more than half the Canadian Unitarians supported the NDP (in Vancouver the figure ran as high as 60 per cent), 36 per cent voted Liberal, and only 5 per cent Conservative.

The extent to which the religious orientation of the average Canadian Unitarian had changed in a quarter of a century emerged very clearly in responses to the question, 'Would you personally define your own religion as Christian?' In New England, where the characteristic outlook of the earlier generation was still perpetuated, only 26 per cent of the responses were in the negative. By contrast, the Canadian figure was now 70 per cent, and it rose above 80 per cent in Toronto. Admittedly the question represented an oversimplification; one Canadian minister commented at the time: 'I suspect that I am not alone in wanting to apply something like the same percentage figures to my own personal position, so that if someone asks whether I am a Christian I can answer, not "Yes" or "No", but "29 per cent".'[14] Canadian Unitarians tended to define their churches in very much the same way as they defined themselves. In Toronto only 12 per cent of the respondents saw their church as 'Christian'; perhaps even that figure is remarkable in view of some of the things that had been said about Christianity from its pulpit in recent years. As to the direction they wanted their churches to take, only 4 per cent wanted to see a closer dialogue with Christianity (as compared with 33 per cent among New England Unitarians), whereas 41 per cent wanted to be 'closer to an emerging universal religion' and 55 per cent 'closer to a distinctive humanistic religion.'

The reasons given for going to church held out a clear warning for the viability of the organization in the coming years of adversity, though no one noticed it at the time. The motive given far and away the highest rating was 'intellectual stimulation', a process that was not only highly individualized, but also placed the churches in direct competition with university extension courses, Great Books groups or even reading at home or watching educational TV. Hardly anyone thought this motivation unimportant. Seventy-six per cent rated it 'very important'; in Vancouver the percentage rose as high as 83 per cent. Though it scored much lower on the scale, the equally individualistic 'personal reflection' came out as the second strongest motivation both in Vancouver and in Toronto, though it came third to

'fellowship' in the national average. 'Fellowship' was consistently rated as 'very important' by 41 per cent of all samples, though in Toronto as many as 11 per cent rated it 'not important'. At the bottom end of the scale, the lowest rating of all was given to what would have presumably been the most generally recognized reason for going to church in other denominations, 'group experience of participation and worship.' This was the only motivation that more people indicated as 'not important' than 'very important' – by the decisive margin of 37 per cent to 20 per cent. There were differences between congregations, the one in Vancouver voting the opposite way, but only by a 26 to 25 per cent margin, while this still ranked lowest among Vancouver members' motives for attendance. A similarly low valuation was placed on 'celebrating common values', 'music – aesthetic satisfaction', and 'motivation to serve others'.

The question to which the greatest care had been given by the framers of the survey was designed to categorize the respondents theologically along a spectrum with five bands: (1) *traditional supernaturalism*, 'the response that one would expect from most orthodox Christians or Jews in most periods of Western history'; (2) *sophisticated theism*, 'a position that has recently been popularized by Paul Tillich, but which is actually rooted in certain German idealistic philosophers and in certain aspects of Western mysticism'; (3) *evolutionary deism*, related to 'the various kinds of "natural religion" that have been popular since the eighteenth century, and also the incorporations of evolutionary theory into liberal theology that began in the last century'; (4) *religious humanism*, including forms that 'have put a heavy stress upon knowledge and the sciences', and forms that 'have been more concerned with man and his values'; (5) *religious atheism* – religion that is anti-theistic. The questions and responses under these five headings came out as follows:

Which of the following statements comes *closest* to expressing your beliefs about God?

	North America	Canada	Toronto	Vancouver
(1) "God" is a supernatural being who reveals himself in human experience and history	3	1	–	1

(2) "God" is the ground of all being, real but not adequately describable	23	17	10	24
(3) "God" may appropriately be used as a name for some natural processes within the universe, such as love or creative evolution	44	46	45	49
(4) "God" is an irrelevant concept, and the central focus of religion should be on man's knowledge and values	28	33	41	24
(5) "God" is a concept that is harmful to a worthwhile religion	2	3	4	2

Other questions dealt with concerns that had loomed large in Unitarian history. Unitarians had always kept pace with and in many instances contributed to the progress of science, and some had gone so far as to share the rationalistic hope that a new religion and ethics might be founded upon scientific method. So the survey asked contemporary Unitarians whether they believed that 'science can help us choose one value over another'. Only 38 per cent of Canadians said Yes', with the affirmative response from both large churches slightly lower. Traditionally, Unitarians had affirmed a belief in 'the progress of mankind, onward and upward forever'. The survey asked more guardedly for a response to the proposition that 'there has been progress in the history of human civilization'. Here at any rate the traditional belief was reaffirmed: 95 per cent of the respondents agreed, with no local variations.

Finally, the survey moved into the field of ethics, where the issue of individual rights versus socially enforced demands had always been a major Unitarian concern. Here too the traditional stance was reaffirmed, in an even more radical way than in the past. The right of the individual conscience to determine conscientious objection to specific wars in the light of the given situation was endorsed by 64 per cent

(73 per cent in Vancouver), while civil disobedience to 'unjust' laws was endorsed by 80 per cent. In the emotionally loaded area of sexual morality, similar attitudes were shown: the radical proposition that extramarital sexual intercourse should be left to free choice (as against positions arguing that it was never justifiable, or only with the consent of the marriage partner) carried a 51 per cent vote, with the two large churches a few points higher. Even on the question of homosexuality, these 1966 Unitarians voted 81 to 3 that it should be discouraged only by education, not by law; while 16 per cent held that society had no right to discourage it at all.

Such were some of the salient features in the outlook of Canadian Unitarians as they neared the end of their period of rapid growth. There was little awareness of impending changes, so little that as late as the spring of 1968 both the Ottawa and Vancouver churches prepared for further growth by appointing associate ministers. A few public utterances clashed with the prevailing optimism. In Barrie, Ontario a devastating address was delivered by David Smith on 'Why I stopped coming to the Unitarian Fellowship'. He asserted that Unitarians were dilettantes, that their religion was out of date and largely irrelevant to modern society. Attacking the traditional Unitarian beliefs in reason and progress as survivals of eighteenth-century thinking, he added that another view inherited from the same period was the disjunction between mind and body, reason and feeling. Unitarians still talked in this way just as if Freud had never lived. When dealing with sexual problems and juvenile delinquency they took account of modern psychological insights, but not when defining religious ideas or dealing with religious insights.

'The problem for Unitarians', Smith continued, 'is not how far they subscribe or don't subscribe to religions already dead, but how far they are different from the remainder of the population in their genuine affiliations, namely Sport, Entertainment on the media, Technology. These are the real religions of today. Most of the Gods whom Unitarians decry have been extensions of man with human faults and failings but with great virtues too, and in the Christian-Judean God at least the anger was coupled with a notion of justice. But this modern God, the machine, has no human quality, nor love nor hate nor anger nor humour, no sense at all. This time we have made a God of mindless ingenuity. This clever amoral God is the modern threat. What are the Unitarians going to do about it?'[15]

What the fellowship did was to go into shock and become dormant for the next few years. 1968 was the watershed year. Whereas in the early fifties the upswing in the fortunes of Unitarianism had come gradually (and with such a time lag behind similar developments in the United States that many Canadians had looked wistfully across the border asking why their own churches could not grow in the same way), now the downswing came suddenly, swiftly, and simultaneously on both sides of the border. It had no one single cause. At least four factors converged to precipitate the crisis in the 1968-69 church year.

In the first place, the religious boom was now unmistakably over. The way in which the fortunes of organized Unitarianism followed those of mainstream Protestantism was once again to be illustrated, though here there was still a time lag. As early as 1959 the numerical growth of the churches began to fall below that of the population; in 1964 the United Church of Canada reported for the first time in years an absolute drop in membership. Two years later the decline was beginning to assume the proportions of a disaster. 'We are witnessing a great tapering off in church membership,' said the general secretary of the Canadian Bible Society in 1967. 'Last year all major churches suffered a loss in total membership; Sunday school enrolment is badly down.'[16] The change in social pressures had its effect in Unitarian circles. Those individuals who had found their way to Unitarian churches because they felt they had to go to some church, and of all churches the Unitarian was the least objectionable, were now stripped away by the same forces as had brought them. Gone too was the pressure of children clamoring to go to Sunday school because everyone else on the block was going and they didn't want to be different. These same social pressures now urged them to the beaches or the ski slopes, or to stay at home and watch television.

Secondly, the long postwar economic boom had also ended, and again, past history had demonstrated the close correlation between economic prosperity and organizational well-being for the churches. Those congregations that had incurred large debts to put up new buildings were particularly hard hit; but fortunately none of the Canadian congregations found itself in a totally untenable situation.

The third factor was more directly than the others an overspill into Canada of developments south of the border, developments that influenced Unitarians more powerfully than was the case in denominations less closely tied to their American counterparts. The national trauma

through which American society was passing in the late sixties deeply affected all institutions in the country. Unitarians had from the outset shown less support for the Vietnam war than had most religious groups. (As early as the survey of 1966, complete American withdrawal from Vietnam had been favored by 22 per cent of them – as against 46 per cent of the respondents in Canada.) Opposition to the war rose rapidly as its irrational savagery became more apparent, and a great deal of financial support came from Unitarian churches and individuals in the United States to assist the work being done by Unitarians and others in Canada to help the young war objectors who were streaming across the border in their thousands. Much more bitterly divisive for American Unitarians was the racial issue. They had traditionally put much effort into the cause of racial integration as this had been understood ever since the days of the Civil War. Unitarians were heavily represented in the Selma marches of 1965, in the course of which one of their ministers, James Reeb, had been killed. But with the subsequent rise of the militant and uncompromising Black Power movement, demanding racial justice but opposed to integration, Unitarians found themselves torn between their dedication to liberal principles and their sympathy for an oppressed minority whose self-declared spokesmen now openly proclaimed their contempt for those principles.

Canada narrowly missed becoming the setting for the first crucial confrontation over this issue. The program committee for the UUA's annual general assembly, with a Canadian as its chairman,[17] had scheduled the 1968 assembly for Montreal; but insuperable problems of accommodation forced its removal at the last moment to Cleveland. The assembly's dominant theme turned out to be a campaign led by a black caucus, most of whose members had recently come into the Unitarian-Universalist movement. This resulted in a quarter of a million dollars of denominational funds being voted to a Black Affairs Council, which was technically a part of the association but in practice accountable only to itself. More serious for the future of the denomination were the events of the following year's assembly in Boston. This had been planned as a joint congress with the IARF. When the time came, however, the several hundred overseas delegates sat in the galleries in shocked silence as they watched a re-enactment of scenes many of them too vividly recalled from the Europe of thirty years

earlier: confrontation with no sensitivity to human feelings, seizure of microphones in an attempt to deny opposing viewpoints the freedom to reply, 'non-negotiable demands', and a contempt for rational argument in favor of 'speaking from the gut'. Though this time the intransigents did not have everything their own way, the weakness of so many liberals when confronted by totalitarian demands had again been dramatically illustrated, and one young minister who was to have been received into denominational fellowship at the assembly changed his mind there and then. Beyond the assembly itself the fall-out was considerable. Many individuals left the movement; others cut back so drastically on their denominational giving that the association would have faced total catastrophe but for an unexpected and very substantial flow of money to its coffers from investments fortuitously acquired by one of its congregations.

Canadians were more remotely involved in the emotional trauma that affected American Unitarians so deeply. They had their own domestic issues to be concerned with, as they reminded those American ministers serving in Canada who tried to raise money for the Black Affairs Council. Many of them, in fact, were actively involved both in the debates over bilingualism and biculturalism, and in the campaign for social justice for Canadian Indians, which was the theme of the CUC capital workshop in 1969. But the decline in denominational morale and the drastic cutting back of denominational services (which many Canadian Unitarians already considered inadequate) compounded the problems faced by Canadian societies in this new period of adversity.

The fourth major influence in the late sixties came from California and swept violently across North America. There was a sudden and drastic swing of the Unitarian pendulum from the rationalistic pole to the romantic. For decades there had been protests from time to time about the smallness of the scope Unitarianism allowed to intuition and feeling. One psychiatrist wrote in the early fifties: 'Unitarianism attracts intellectuals who have highly developed capacities for thinking and for putting thoughts into words. At the same time they frequently have neglected the feeling and intuitive sides of their natures. Those with scientific educations have cultivated abilities for accurate and analytical observation of objects, but may be much less skilled at sensing other people's feelings or their own motives and emotions.'[18]

The trend continued unchanged until in the late sixties a sudden awareness of deficiency dawned simultaneously on a large number of Unitarians and pushed them urgently to action. Such an awareness arrived at this particular point in time largely because of the widespread frustration over the direction in which scientific and technical progress, undirected by humane concerns, appeared to be leading. Intellectual ingenuity alone seemed to have produced a juggernaut that was about to trample humanity underfoot. And rational argument seemed unable to stop it.

The response was what Gilbert Murray, in his classical analysis of the development of ancient Greek religion, called 'a failure of nerve'.[19] An upsurge of emotional movements filled the gap created by the collapse of rationalism. In the middle sixties the hippie movement and the drug culture were already making a powerful impact upon Unitarian youth, to the dismay of their elders. Now to this was added another powerful movement out of California, the 'encounter culture' based upon the Esalen Institute with a rapidly growing number of satellites. Its focus was upon self-fulfilment, which became dynamite in Unitarian circles when combined with the traditional Unitarian view of the self as an encapsulated unit with a minimum of social ties.

Encounter groups and sensitivity sessions began to find their way into the programs of Unitarian congregations, encroaching upon the time hitherto devoted to supposedly dispassionate discussions or to projects in social action. Intellectuals who had grown accustomed to positions of leadership in Unitarian circles for their skill in rational argument now began to hear themselves dismissed as 'head-trippers' who were 'uptight' and not in touch with their feelings. They watched with growing concern the clumsy attempts to 'be with it' and 'let it all hang out' of their contemporaries who had been converted to the new point of view and were celebrating their release from years of emotional suppression with what looked like incredible orgies. Many of them quickly moved out of this inexplicably changed environment, some to the humanist societies (which were also now in decline), most of them to no other organization at all. They were accompanied in their exodus by some of the more conventionally minded people who were upset by the unwashed and barefoot youth sitting on the church steps or by what they regarded as the bizarre fads of the adults. Some of them took refuge in the more liberal congregations of the United

Church. Some, who were looking for structure as well as emotional expression, moved over as far as the Roman Catholic church. At least four members of the Vancouver congregation followed this latter path, including a one-time vice-chairman of the board of trustees and the church's former religious education director.

In the summer of 1968 Robert Wrigley, minister of the Edmonton church, went down to participate in a course at the Esalen Institute. The following November the *Edmonton Journal* described Sunday morning at the Unitarian church: 'A girl stood in the centre. Two persons approached her and, facing each other, put their arms around her. Five others came forward, then seven more, then others, as each group stretched their arms to form layers around her. Finally, more than 60 persons, packed together like bees in a hive, let out a loud "Uh . . . " as they responded generously in a congregational hug.

'The "hug-in" was preceded by a series of individual exercises in sensory awareness: lying on the floor, rolling one's eyes slowly around, relaxing, listening to and feeling one's regular breathing. Then the congregation wandered around the room with eyes closed. When participants bumped into each other, they were encouraged to stop, face each other and, in turn, touch several other persons' hands, then face, then shoulders. Later, with their eyes open, they felt people's feet and legs.'[20]

The wire services carried reports of this experimental service all across Canada. Eight weeks later the *Star Weekly* published an article in which Wrigley was quoted as saying: 'This isn't an attempt to trifle with anyone's psyche. What I hope to do is to help you recapture that warm, wonderful feeling you had as a child, when you came home from skating and ate your favorite supper, had a warm bath, and were tucked into a clean bed by your mother, who gave you a goodnight kiss.'[21]

Four months later Wrigley resigned from the Edmonton church and left the ministry.

At the same time as these developments had been taking place, a new Unitarian group had come into being in Vancouver, called the Gastown Fellowship. It antedated by a few months the rebirth of the oldest section of Vancouver, which bore the same name and became in turn a haunt for hippies and then an area of boutiques and bohemian restaurants. Something of the same spirit as marked the

Gastown area expressed itself in the Gastown Fellowship, which met in various locations for informal gatherings, celebrations, and picnics. Its *Manifesto* proclaimed:

we belong in the middle of the NOW
OUR NOW close to the living moving breast
where we can feel the beating heart of
the greatest YES
and within OUR NOW is a greater
YES waiting to be born

and all that we DO shall be to enhance
Our BEING and our pleasure in BEING
we shall learn that art of saying WOW
clear and deep from the bell of our throats

we call this our religious experience
for of all religious experiences we put this first

we seek what is immediate, unforced,
unroutine, and spontaneous
and we prefer this to the structured,
established, programmed and predictable in our
desire to enjoy our religious freedom and to
grow mature in it
this is our outgrowth with this OUR NOW and our YES
and our lifelong WOW!
so be it with pleasure-loving grace [22]

True to this spirit, the fellowship had neither constitution, membership procedures, officers nor regular meetings. After about a year it died as informally as it had lived, when no one felt spontaneously moved to call the next meeting.

A much more serious and systematic expression of the new spirit, though not much longer-lived, was the Experimental Unitarian Community of Mississauga. Its origins were in the South Peel congregation, whose minister since 1961 had been Arnold Thaw. From the middle of the decade ownward, there had been increasing difficulties between the minister and the elected leaders of the congregation, who accused

him of domineering attitudes and an unwillingness to tolerate opinions different from his own. In Thaw's perspective, this inflexibility consisted simply of an insistence that religious commitment be taken seriously, by contrast with the easygoing attitudes so prevalent in Unitarian circles. In a 1965 sermon he said: 'How often do I not come across people who say: "I joined the church." What they mean is they signed the membership book. Thereafter, about all we ever see of them is their name in the membership book! ... They say they are Unitarians; what nonsense!'[23]

In the sense that membership implies commitment, it was indeed nonsense. But the fact remained that signing the book was all that was required for membership under existing provisions, and these could be changed only by democratic vote, not by fiat of the minister. It was not likely that such a change would be made without protracted debate over the rights and freedoms of the individual.

Tensions grew, and in May 1968 Thaw announced his resignation, to take effect not less than three nor more than eight months later. Controversy immediately erupted. Thaw had become during recent months an adherent of the encounter culture, and so had some of the congregation, who now defended him vigorously. The congregational meeting called to consider the minister's resignation refused to accept it, only 42 per cent voting in favor. Instead, a committee was set up to look for other ways of resolving the problems. But the prospects of success were slender. Thaw let his resignation stand and his supporters began holding separate meetings, declaring that his ministry 'helped to promote Personal Growth in a very real way, by the inspiration of his philosophy as it was exposed through sermons on Guilt, Structures in Marriage and by the Sensory Awareness Groups.'[24] The summer was spent in preparing a Manifesto, which was published in September. This was much longer and more prosaic than the Gastown Manifesto, but in the same way it threw down the gauntlet to established procedures in Unitarian circles.

What it called for was the setting up of a community of concern, 'a group of people whose earnest intent is to help themselves and others take the risks of responding to the challenges of living.' This would involve the use of techniques to facilitate personal growth. 'An example of such would be the concepts and courses being developed at centres such as the Esalen Institute in California'; these were further specified as 'sensitivity, encounters, marathons, sensory awareness, etc.'

Social action would take place in the name of the group as a whole on issues determined by majority vote. Membership would be restricted to those who were prepared in this way to accept majority decisions, though individuals would retain the right to disagree and withhold personal support. Inactive members were not wanted; everyone would be required to participate in one way or another. Even more radical was the proposal that members' financial contributions would be determined by assessment based upon a declaration of their income and commitments, so that 'each member will have to contribute fully their fair share of the budgetary needs.' The size of the group would be controlled so as not to outgrow the possibilities of full personal interaction; what the promoters of the Manifesto hoped to see was a cluster of such groups all relating to a 'Metro Centre', which would provide professional consultants in such fields as worship and public speaking, religious education, social concerns, personal counselling, sensitivity training, and leadership development. This last would be of great importance, since it was proposed that leadership be widely distributed within the group. Finally, the last vestiges of Sunday school would disappear in favor of informal programs with children in small groups, focusing on sports, hobbies, and creative arts.[25]

Elections for the South Peel congregation's board of management were due in September, and a slate of twelve candidates pledged to implement the proposals of the Manifesto presented itself. Not one of them was elected. Clearly outnumbered, the Manifesto supporters planned to secede. The outside limit of eight months for Thaw's resignation to become effective would be reached in January; in the meantime, however, problems were compounded by his receiving severe injuries in an automobile accident in mid-November. On January 11, 1969, the Experimental Unitarian Community of Mississauga came into being. One of its enthusiastic supporters wrote: 'It was born with pain and hope, fighting its way to life, and we watched the process with excitement, some fear, and a fierce determination to help this audacious infant stay alive.'[26]

The unconventional model for the organization of the Experimental Community reflected the emphases in the Manifesto. Leadership was to be expressed through a Council of Responsibility, consisting of three Philosophers and five Administrators. The structure was to consist of Circles of Concern; by April five of these had been established, dealing respectively with leadership, finance, program, communications, and family. The social concerns circle, to generate policies on public issues to which the Community as a whole could commit itself, never did get formed. Besides meetings of the existing circles, there were regular meetings or services for the entire Community, scheduled on Thursday evenings rather than the conventional Sunday mornings. Initially, the membership comprised forty-five persons, of whom forty-two had come from the South Peel congregation – a dozen of them continued to maintain a dual membership. Attempts to implement the financial requirements laid down in the Manifesto were unsuccessful from the outset. When a statement of the first few months of operation was published at the end of June, it showed that of twenty-eight persons or families making pledges only eighteen had revealed their annual income, and the amounts pledged bore little relationship to this income. Furthermore, all but eight were already in arrears with their actual payments.

There was no Metro Centre to provide the services of professional consultants, and in May the Experimental Community entered instead into a one-year contract with Arnold Thaw, now recovering from his accident. His first recommendations were against any continuation of dual memberships and in favor of restricting attendance at most meetings and services to members only. He also proposed week-long experiments in communal living at a summer cottage. It soon transpired that those who agreed to participate had radically different expectations, ranging from its being the prototype for a residential commune to its being simply a holiday in the company of congenial people. Dissensions began to surface as plans were discussed for the coming year, and by October these had become so obvious that Thaw sent out a circular letter complaining of gripe sessions, suspicions, and hostility. 'The reality we must face,' he concluded, 'is that there appears to be a divergence of opinion on what our goals and philosophy are.'[27] There was immediate reaction. Two of the leading members, who felt themselves personally attacked by Thaw, announced their resignation on the grounds that it was impossible to work with him unless one were prepared to accept his ideas without question. From here onward the course of the Experimental Community was downhill. A hastily convened meeting rejected the members' resignation and terminated the contract with Thaw. But the question as to what demands the group could legitimately lay upon its members remained, and so did the suspicion that Thaw was still, through his

remaining supporters, trying to influence policy. As morale dropped, so did membership, and the resignations of several of the leaders in March 1970 reduced the Experimental Community to a tiny group of Thaw's disciples. Bedevilled from the outset by personality problems and an inability to grapple constructively with the classical Unitarian tension between the claims of individuality and those of community, the Experimental Unitarian Community of Mississauga collapsed.

But the protest against what the Experimental Community had rejected as 'the traditional intellectualism of Unitarianism' continued. In spite of the failure of the more extreme experiments of 1968-69 and the denunciations of the rationalists – from the pulpit at Toronto First, Morgan fulminated against 'personal degeneration, often masked as a search for values through sensory experience alone, reducing human consciousness to a sensory kaleidoscope'[28] – the new emphasis had come to stay. There was exaggeration in the Experimental Community's claim that 'what has happened at South Peel is a microcosm of what is happening throughout the Unitarian Universalist Association, in other churches as well, in our society at large, and finally in the world.'[29] But the trend of the times was certainly toward expressions of the same basic ferment, albeit in less extreme forms. It was reflected within the more traditional denominations in the rise of the liturgical and charismatic movements, as well as in the new emphasis upon community as a basic expression of religion. It was reflected in the shifting of attention from theology and philosophy to myth and symbol, in which there was so much more scope for the expression of imagination and feeling. It was reflected in the soaring popularity of Oriental forms of religion that laid their emphasis upon direct personal experience rather than dogma, tradition or logical argument. In Unitarian as in other churches, the influence of Jungian and Gestalt psychologies grew rapidly, as well as that of new schools of psychology such as transactional analysis. Even the popular preoccupation with the occult had its impact; for the first time since the sixteenth century there were Unitarians who were prepared to take astrology seriously.

Looking at the scene at the end of 1970, John Charles Cooper singled out some of its salient characteristics: 'It seems clear to me that aware, concerned men and women of all ages will more and more turn to the occult as it becomes clear that their organized churches are purely rationalistic and have accommodated themselves to the economic needs of the state and the logical positivism of scientific

thought.'[30] He did not relish this prospect, seeing many demonic aspects to the occult. There would be far more hope in a religion that could become an effective force in the contemporary world, but 'any religion that will be viable in the present or the future must be one of mysticism, mystery, communion, and oneness.'[31]

The wide range of Unitarian response to such a challenge as this was illustrated in a symposium on the theme 'Does Unitarianism have a Future?', which appeared in the Spring 1971 issue of *Canadian Unitarian*. Though they concurred that the movement did indeed have a future, the contributors varied in their views as to where the emphasis should be placed in order to ensure that it did. Some reaffirmed the dominant emphasis of the previous two decades on intellectual stimulation and social action. 'I would like a church once more militant, leading the way in ideas, probing and shocking and, above everything, forming a clearing house for the finest intelligences,' wrote Peter Warren from St Lambert, Quebec.

Others saw the church as a supportive community in their struggle to develop an authentic personal lifestyle. L. J. Hendry wrote from West Vancouver, B.C.: 'As individuals we are constantly assaulted by the forces of our society. Many of us feel a need to share our concerns about this and to make our decisions as to what our personal lifestyles will be in the face of these assaults. The "religion" of our church, to me, is best summed up in just that way.' Margo Tyndall of Edmonton added: 'I hope the human potential movement will contribute to church life but I will still expect the church to provide the opportunity for gradually growing friendships between whole families as well as separate individuals.'

'In seeking new directions,' wrote Donald Willmott of Toronto, 'we must avoid becoming merely a social club for partying, a therapeutic group for saving souls or psyches, or a political group for revolutionizing society.' What more was needed? Ida Wright of Calgary spoke of her own experience: 'I gloried in the mental freedom, but with it came the realization that intellectualism wasn't enough. There was an empty spot inside of me; that part of me that wanted, in a moment of quiet meditation, to feel a togetherness with the whole universe, that part that wanted to worship this great life force that some people call nature, some call God, some call life and which I sometimes call love. And I would like to suggest that, on a Unitarian Sunday morning, we give more thought to our spiritual needs.'

These were some of the varied moods in which Unitarians entered the nineteen-seventies. The turbulence of the transition through which the movement was passing continued to exact its toll. The five years beginning in 1968 brought more than the normal quota of troubles between congregations and their ministers and within congregations themselves. It was cold comfort that other denominations were having the same problems. Membership was falling almost everywhere, in spite of the influx in some places of newcomers who saw the churches as primarily centres for therapy, which in some instances they had been encouraged to do by psychotherapists who referred them. In general the churches in western Canada were making a more determined effort to come to terms with the changed situation than those in the eastern part of the country, but everywhere the process was a difficult and divisive one.

The Vancouver congregation weathered the storm better than most. Its membership dropped from 673 in 1968 to 569 in 1971, though part of this decline has to be attributed to the establishment of the New Westminster congregation in 1970 – one of very few efforts in Unitarian extension during this period – and the residual effects of the founding of the North Shore church in 1967. But the fall in numbers then ceased and membership remained on a plateau during the ensuing years. The new era had come with less of a shock because of the course the congregation had been following during the preceding period. It had never endorsed the outlook of secular rationalism to the extent that many Unitarian congregations in Canada had done. Alan Watts, one of the leading interpreters of the new outlook in California, was introduced to the city in 1967 by a congregation that had become familiar with many of his themes as presented from their pulpit since 1958. In 1963 'personal groups' had been formed as a result of the minister's preoccupation with ideas of Martin Buber and the influence of Watson Thomson, a member of the congregation with extensive theoretical and practical experience of intentional communities. These were followed a few years later by 'extended families', groups of about thirty persons of all ages ranging from babies to the elderly, designed to provide the kinds of mutual support found in blood-related groups in more settled cultures. Finally in this line of development, and not beginning until 1974, came 'family clusters' – groups of about the same size but organized with a great deal more structure and commitment and provided with skilled leadership to facilitate positive relationships within the group. Encounter groups also began to be offered in the fall of 1967. As a result, the emphasis upon intellectualism and individualism was modified over the course of a considerable period of time in the direction of a more extended scope for myth, poetry, and creative imagination. The building of a supportive community in face of increasingly alienated forms of society was also stressed.

The revolution hit with devastating effects in Toronto. The South Peel congregation was, of course, the chief sufferer. Its 170 member-families at the beginning of 1968 had fallen to 70 by the end of the following year. But the other Toronto congregations felt the impact too. Back in 1963, the *Canadian Unitarian* had boasted of the six Unitarian ministers serving in the metropolitan area. Ten years later there was not a single one. This, to be sure, was only a temporary phenomenon, but it was not until the spring of 1974 that First Congregation finally found a minister who was in tune with the mood of the times. Even then he remained the only minister in the metropolitan area.

By this time the composition and outlook of the congregation were changing too, as was revealed by the results of a survey at the end of 1972 that repeated many of the same questions as had been asked six years earlier. The slowdown in growth was reflected in a drop of the proportion who had been Unitarians for ten years or less from 69 per cent to 51 per cent. The average age was rising (from 41 per cent over forty-five years of age to 53 per cent), and so was the divorce rate. The numbers 'married, never divorced' fell from 64 per cent to 50 per cent. The changes in outlook on some matters were also considerable. When asked to rank the importance of various church activities, only 31 per cent had said in 1966 that public worship was very important, and almost as many (29 per cent) said it was not important at all. Now 59 per cent rated it as very important and only 10 per cent as unimportant. Another church activity given a higher rating was fellowship among members: 64 per cent now said it was very important as against 47 per cent in the earlier survey. Lower ratings were given to social action (down from 67 per cent to 53 per cent) and religious education (drastically down from 72 per cent to 47 per cent). Paradoxically, in view of the changes that were going on, the rating given 'personal development' hardly changed at all. 47 per cent now rated it 'very important' as against 46 per cent six years earlier; this advance was more than offset by the figures at the other end of the scale,

however, where those rating it 'not important' rose from 7 per cent to 12 per cent.

The effects of the changed situation upon the fellowships varied as widely as they did for the churches. Some fellowships swiftly disappeared; the one in Windsor, for example, sold its building and suspended operations in 1969. Though each of the next few years saw a decline in the number of active fellowships, some of them closed ranks and built close-knit communities of such warmth that their survival was assured as long as the high mobility of the Unitarian population did not erode their membership – for few new people were coming in. The fellowships at least had the advantage of financial stability, with fewer overheads to carry than the churches had.

Some of the larger churches maintained their position remarkably well, the chief examples after Vancouver being the congregations in Montreal and Ottawa. The Montreal church was facing the additional problem of having a dwindling constituency upon which to draw, as the anglophone population began slowly but perceptibly to move from the province. Yet when the figures from the 1971 census were released, they showed the Unitarian population of Quebec as 2715, up from 1846 in 1961. The overall figures from the census were, in fact, less discouraging than some Unitarians had feared they might be. No doubt some people who had set themselves down as Unitarians were now inactive, but only in Manitoba had there been an actual drop in numbers since the previous census. For the country as a whole the figures had risen from 15 000 to 21 000. What the census could not show was that this represented a rise to perhaps 25 000 in 1967, followed by a decline.

Morale began to rebuild as Unitarians came to terms with the realities of the nineteen-seventies, perceiving in them a time of religious revival and opportunity, though the forms through which this expressed itself in practice were very different from the ones conventionally provided by the established churches. Here and there new signs of progress began to appear, even of numerical growth. The Universalist church in Halifax, now renamed the Universalist Unitarian Church, entered into a new era with the appointment of Fred Gillis as its minister in 1969. Growth was not spectacular, but growth on any scale was a novelty for the Halifax congregation, which had shared only to a minimal extent in the effects of the 'religious boom' of the fifties and early sixties. In 1973 Phillip Hewett was loaned by the Vancouver congregation to the St Catharines fellowship under a plan sponsored by the UUA, and two years later a similar project with the South Peel congregation was undertaken by an American minister, David Bumbaugh. In both instances the congregations were revitalized by even this brief spell of professional leadership. When the UUA General Assembly finally did come to Canada in 1973 it was to Toronto, and was a much soberer affair than the one Montreal narrowly missed in 1968. Eric Kierans was the featured speaker in an attempt to convey to the American delegates some of the realities of life in Canada.

The *coup de grace* was delivered to the assumptions of the 'religious boom' period when Canadian Unitarians gathered on the campus of McMaster University in Hamilton for the 1974 annual meetings of the CUC. Duke Gray, newly appointed minister at Toronto First, pulled no punches as he subjected the Unitarian movement, past and present, to a penetrating analysis. The dominant mood of the period from which the movement had just so painfully emerged, and which had resulted from the evolutionary development of long-standing characteristics within it, he designated the Old Humanism. Its basic tenets were rationalism, moralism, and individualism. These tenets had, he said, 'been tarnished almost beyond repair by the experiences of fascism, war, poverty and exploitation in this century.... To wait in the wings expecting them to be proven correct again is a fatuous indulgence. Rationalism has become abstract, sterile, and inhumane.... The tools of rationalism became the basis for exploitative economic empires and corporate structures, which themselves have become instruments of evil. Moralism has given us people who operate on rules and codes devoid of love, compassion, acceptance, and caring for persons.... And our high god Individualism has taught us to define our personhood and our humanity in terms of competitive and argumentative differentiation of ourselves over against others, instead of self-discovery in relation to others.

'At the more practical level of our own churchmanship the "Old Humanism" has led us to certain difficult and unworkable definitions of the church. Our rationalism has led to an intellectualistic definition of the church as a discussion club. Our moralism has led to the Utopian Idealism of traditional "social action" which defines the church as a moral club. Our romantic individualism has led to a sensation and pleasure-oriented definition of the church as a social

club. Put them all together, and it is still a club. A club is a private association of like-minded persons working together for their own self-interest and self-development.... But the very definition of the church as a private club contradicts its responsibility for public ministry.'

From description Gray turned to prescription. 'Instead of rationalism, we must rediscover the realm of the spirit. Instead of moralism, we must rediscover the realm of politics. Instead of individualism, we must rediscover the accepting and sustaining and creating power of community. The marks of the true church are spirit, liturgy, and politics.... Spirit is the realm of the sacred. Politics is the realm of the profane. Liturgy is the intersection between the two.'

The enthusiasm with which this presentation was greeted by most of the assembled delegates showed how far the movement had travelled in a few years. But the old humanism was still a powerful force in most Unitarian circles. The revolutionary changes Gray wanted to introduce at Toronto First went far beyond what most of the members were prepared to approve or even permit. Even so, vestments, incense, and original liturgies began to find a frequent place in the services. The dominant symbol of the past, the pulpit, was often dethroned from its central position. The blank wall facing the congregation, attempts to ornament which had provoked such furious debates in the past, was now decorated with a banner bearing a multitude of symbols.

Similar though less sweeping changes were taking place elsewhere. In Vancouver, liturgical experimentation continued. Vernon Nichols, who succeeded Pohl in Ottawa at the end of 1971, stressed the themes of community, participation, and social responsibility, attempting to express these in unconventional forms of service. In some congregations, more radical changes were, like Wrigley's venture of a few years earlier, deeply divisive. But many Canadian societies, particularly the fellowships, continued with the established pattern of lecture plus discussion plus projects in social responsibility as though the times were not changing.

Frequent moves in the ministry continued. The fateful year of 1968 saw the start of no fewer than five Canadian ministries. From the United States came Jack Kent to West Vancouver (North Shore church), Arthur D. Wilmot to Victoria, 'Jerry' Howell to Calgary, and Thomas E. Ahlburn to become assistant at Ottawa. From Britain came John Quirk to be associate at Vancouver. By 1973 only Quirk was left,

and he had shifted roles to spend half his time as the church's program director. Kent, Wilmot, and Howell followed a path marked out by a number of their predecessors – Cairns, Brockway, Carter, Wrigley, and Fowlie – in embarking upon another career in Canada rather than returning to a ministry in the United States. Wilmot was succeeded in Victoria by Richard J. Norsworthy (1972-76), but no successors were appointed for Kent, Howell or Ahlburn. In Winnipeg, Norman Naylor succeeded Jenkins in 1969 and remained until 1975. Jenkins himself returned to Canada for a brief joint ministry at Don Heights and South Peel (1971-73). More durable was the ministry of Robert W. Brownlie, who moved to Edmonton in 1970. J. McRee Elrod began a part-time ministry at New Westminster in 1972; the small British-born contingent was reinforced by the arrival of Glyn Pruce at the Montreal Lakeshore church in 1975.

By the mid-seventies there were only ten fulltime ministers serving in Canada. Five of them were Americans, four were British-born, and only one was a native Canadian. He was Leonard Thompson, who moved to the little Universalist church at Olinda, Ontario in 1965. After a long career as a United Church minister in Alberta he had become a Unitarian, and was in fact the first Unitarian minister ever to be called to Olinda. The name of the church was changed to the Unitarian-Universalist church three years after his arrival.

As Canadian Unitarians entered the last quarter of the twentieth century three alternative modes of response to the collapse of the old humanism of the fifties and sixties had established themselves. None of them was peculiar to Unitarianism; 'relevance' was still a strong factor in the evolution of the movement.

The first form of response was marked by a radical shift of attention from the increasingly unpromising attempt to rebuild the social order in accordance with religious insights to the more modest enterprise of rebuilding one's own self – which however, in practice, often turned out to be almost equally intractable. The progress of mankind onward and upward forever might seem a forlorn hope, but the progress of the self onward and upward, even though it seemed unlikely to go on forever, provided an appealing alternative. Within many congregations there was a growing emphasis upon self-awareness, self-fulfilment, and even, in some instances, straightforward unapologetic selfishness. Interest in the past and future gave place to an exclusive focus upon the here and now. Inevitably, this provoked a reaction. There were those

who saw in this trend an expression of narcissism that would ultimately be destructive. Leonard Mason, in a brilliant lecture delivered before the ministers of the UUA in 1975, saw it as an expression of overweening pride. 'We have cast off the mantle of humility and have moved instead in the direction of self-liberation, self-fulfilment, self-actualization.... We are in grave danger.'[32]

The second response was certainly humble enough. It consisted simply in a huddling together for warmth in face of the chill blasts of adversity. For those who took this road the church's sole purpose was to provide a warm, nurturing environment for those inside it. 'The Unitarian Church,' wrote Anna Olson from Winnipeg, 'is a family.... It is enough to be together, to celebrate special occasions, to rejoice over the new-born, to weep over deaths. The sum of its interests comprise its identity.... What I want from my church is an all-encompassing, purposeless relationship.'[33] This was a far cry indeed from the days when Unitarians saw the role of their church as that of cleansing Christianity from all its accretions and corruptions, or completing the Protestant Reformation, or building bridges of understanding between the great religions of the world, or constructing a new religion for humanity based upon reason and science. But it appeared in many other places besides Winnipeg. A candid self-appraisal by a group of its own members declared: 'There can be no question but that the Willowdale Fellowship as it now exists is primarily a group of people who continue together for their own sustenance in Unitarian fellowship with each other and with nearby Unitarians.... It is a group that periodically looks at itself and worries about its "progress" or the lack of it, makes a few useful changes, and settles back again into fellowship, with a more or less comfortable conscience concerning its contribution to the denomination. The opinion was offered at the review meeting that we had become an indestructible and self defining group, which only occasional newcomers would wish to join.... The hallmark of the group is a very real fellowship, evidenced by mutual concern and support, by participation in Fellowship affairs, and by serious individual concerns with social trends and issues.'[34]

The third response, unlike the other two, was once again outward looking, and expressed themes moving powerfully through the religious life of the seventies: oneness, wholeness, liberation, ecological insights, and hope. It took seriously the Copernican revolution that had displaced humanity from the centre of the universe, but it could still revere the earth as a 'symbol of universal power and process,' as Mason put it in his lecture. 'When I revere the earth, I am revering at the same time all else, finite and infinite.... The new Sinaitic prohibition is: Thou shalt not desecrate the divine substance, the beloved earth, lest thou and thy god together perish in some disastrous nemesis.'[35]

Such an ecological ethic and theology appeared to many Unitarians to hold promise and hope, in spite of the intimations of doomsday. But a full restatement of historic Unitarian principles and concerns in these terms had still not taken shape. All across the country those Unitarians who were not content with sitting at a comfortable hearthside or pursuing the latest fad were still trying to find their own way of handling the tension between the polarities that had tested their forerunners in the liberal religious tradition: the tension between rationality and romanticism, individuality and community, freedom and order, openness and conviction. Still unanswered was the question implicit in comments made about the movement by an outside observer fifteen years earlier: 'It could, as some of its leaders believe, become a strong new moral force in space-age life. Or it could fall into a shapeless mass embracing more and more people who believe less and less.'[36]

12

The Social Contribution

The consensus among social historians both in Britain and in the United States has been that the contribution made by Unitarians to the public life of those countries has been far in excess of what might have been expected from a group of such modest size. The same has certainly been true in Canada. Unitarians have contributed to political and economic life, to social development, to literature, art, and culture on a scale unrecognized in any Canadian social history to date.

This lack of recognition may in part be attributed to difficulties in identifying people as Unitarians. But it may also reflect a real question as to how far a person's religion may be regarded as directly relevant to his or her contribution to the life of the community. Such contributions have seldom been overtly Unitarian as a consequence of corporate action by a group. A recent assessment of one of the more radical Unitarian congregations reports: 'At Don Heights social concern was expressed chiefly through the vision of individuals rather than through combined congregational efforts.'[1] The same could be said of any congregation in the country at any period in its history. The individuals concerned were unlikely to have declared their activities to be an expression of their Unitarianism; in fact, it could equally easily be argued that their adherence to Unitarianism was a result of their being the kind of persons who would have set such priorities in their lives.

Whatever the precise nature of the connection, one effective way of assessing the essential spirit of a religious movement is in terms of its members' impact upon the social context within which they moved.

A continuing tension between the claims of individuality and community, of freedom and order, marks the involvement of Unitarians in the life of Canada as of other countries. Arbitrary constraints in all fields of thought and action have always been anathema to them, but their concern for the public good has often led to an agonized wrestling with the question of exactly when constraints are to be regarded as arbitrary. The economic, political, and social issues of the day provided frequent occasion for such wrestling.

In Britain, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the United States, Unitarians figured prominently among the pioneers of the industrial revolution. In both countries they were very active in commercial life. Although their religion was shockingly heretical to most of their contemporaries, what it actually did was to maintain the forms while drastically revising the content of the Calvinism that was so closely associated with the rise of capitalism. This process, through which Unitarianism emerged out of English and Irish Presbyterianism and New England Congregationalism, manifested itself also in Canada through the presence of so many of the earliest Unitarians and their sympathizers in the Presbyterian congregations of Montreal in the 1820s. Frothingham, Gates, Molson, Hedge, and Barrett occupied positions of leadership in these congregations, while others attended without exciting much public comment until they identified themselves with the abortive attempt to set up a Unitarian society in 1832-34.

Such men belonged to the merchant class whose fortunes were made in 'the commercial empire of the St Lawrence,' notably in hardware, the export-import business, and shipping. They were followed by a generation of Unitarians who built a more imposing empire upon the foundations they had laid – Adam Ferrie, Benjamin Holmes, Luther Holton, Harrison Stephens, John Young and the Workman brothers, Thomas and William. In John Cordner this new generation found an eloquent spokesman for its commercial and religious philosophy. Commerce was for Cordner an expression of the inclusive spirit, just as Unitarianism was. In the same way as Unitarianism broke down the fortified walls of religious dogma, so commerce broke down the fortified walls of the earlier feudal era. 'Commerce is a grand pacifier and

civilizer. The warehouse is a nobler and more significant structure today than the baronial hall.... In commerce we see one of [God's] agencies for carrying out his high purposes with regard to man.'[2]

These aspects of Cordner's thinking expressed an outlook identical with that of the Calvinism which gave rise to what has been called the Protestant ethic: 'the life of business, once regarded as perilous to the soul... acquires a new sanctity.... So far from there being an inevitable conflict between money-making and piety, they are natural allies, for the virtues incumbent on the elect – diligence, thrift, sobriety, prudence – are the most reliable passport to commercial prosperity. Thus the pursuit of riches, which once had been feared as the enemy of religion, was now welcomed as its ally.'[3]

Unitarianism carried the individualism implicit in this attitude one stage farther: 'the same spirit as made men pioneers in theology made them pioneers also in industry.'[4] They typified the concept of 'the progress of mankind, onward and upward forever' as they seized imaginatively upon new ideas and inventions and did not hesitate to scrap time-honored traditions. Tirelessly they devoted themselves to their work. Thomas Workman would work sixteen hours a day for weeks on end. Holmes, Holton, and Young all died with their boots on.

Though their original interests were in wholesale and retail merchandising, these men soon broadened their base. The key to Canada's economic development lay in transportation. Frothingham, the Workman brothers, and, in particular, Holton, soon became actively involved in the shipping business on the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes. Holton's aggressive competitiveness in this field laid the foundations of his fortune. Then, as the building of railways began to offer an alternative to the waterways, these Unitarian entrepreneurs transferred their attention to the new possibilities. William Workman was a director of Canada's first railway, the Champlain and St Lawrence, opened in 1836. John Molson, in the closing months of his life, also involved himself actively in this project. A decade later Workman was joined by Frothingham, Holmes, and Young as directors of the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway, designed to provide Montreal with a winter outlet to the sea at Portland, Maine. Holmes was vice-president, and transferred to the same position in the Grand Trunk Railway when the two lines amalgamated in 1853. Holton also became a director of the Grand Trunk through his position as head of the

Montreal and Kingston Railroad, which was absorbed into the Grand Trunk network.

At a later date, Holton became a Montreal harbor commissioner and was responsible for helping improve the port facilities. Chief credit for this work, however, goes to John Young, who became chairman of the commission in 1852 and made it a major focus of his efforts during the ensuing years.

Banking and insurance were the other fields in which the Montreal Unitarians were prominent. Molson and Gates were heavily involved in the founding and running of Canada's first bank, the Bank of Montreal; Holmes was general manager from 1827 to 1846 and subsequently served on the board of directors. The rival City Bank, established in 1831, was presided over by John Frothingham from 1834 to 1849 and by William Workman from 1849 to 1874. When Molson's Bank was founded in 1855 J.H.R. Molson, by now owner of the brewery and an active Unitarian, put in a major share of the capital. Thomas Workman was for many years a director and eventually president of this bank. He was also president of the Sun Life Assurance Company, and John Young was president of the Royal Canadian Insurance Company.

According to the theology of wealth preached in the Unitarian as in the Calvinistic churches, one of the privileges conferred by riches was that of putting the possessor in a position to contribute not only to public works that would benefit the entire community, but also to direct alleviation of the plight of the poor. In nineteenth-century Canada the plight of the poor was often appalling. That the wealthy should ignore this, said Cordner, 'is a matter very humiliating to those notions of advancement upon which this age is so apt to pride itself. We observe great social inequalities, but it is not of these that we ought to complain. With as much reason, I think, might we complain of the existence of hills and valleys in a landscape.... But what we have to deplore is the suffering of the weaker and the poorer classes, and the prevailing selfishness of the wealthier and stronger classes.... A religion so essentially benevolent as ours establishes a link between the different orders of men, the richer and the poorer, the stronger and the weaker, those who suffer and those who enjoy. And herein we may see its admirable fitness to such a world as we have.'[5]

It is impossible to make any complete assessment of how fully this worked in practice. No doubt much unobtrusive help was given that

never found its way into the public records. Cordner intimated more than once that he always knew where to send deserving people in need of assistance. Persons in more fortunate circumstances sometimes placed their health and even their lives in jeopardy, as when Adam Ferrie worked among the cholera victims at the immigration sheds in 1832 and 1834. Frederick Cushing lost his life in similar work during the typhus outbreak in 1847.

More typically, however, the social conscience of the wealthy expressed itself through the establishment and maintenance of charitable organizations. When the future Prince of Wales was born the Montreal elite wanted to mark the occasion with a gala dinner. John Young tried to persuade them to put the money instead into the purchase of three hundred acres of land in the name of the royal infant, to be used as an asylum farm for the poor, where vagrant boys could be taught a trade and shelter could be given to the aged and infirm. His vigorous argument almost carried the day, but the final decision went in favor of the dinner. More successfully, William Workman helped establish and endow the Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, serving as its president for several years. He also gave freely of his time and money to the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society.

A cause that particularly commended itself to persons of this persuasion was that of encouraging self-help and the development of the same values of thrift and industry as they themselves cherished. In 1846 the two Workman brothers, Ferrie, and Holton were among those who joined in establishing the Montreal City and District Savings Bank, in which working people could accumulate their savings. The directors served without remuneration and during the economic depression of 1848-49 Holton dipped heavily into his own resources to save the bank from going under.

Various other projects were undertaken. Under the influence of Philip Carpenter, a former Unitarian minister then living in Montreal, William Workman became president of a Sanitary Association in an endeavor to improve the appalling condition of public sanitation in the city. Carpenter pointed out in 1867 that Montreal had a death rate of one person in twenty-four, as against Boston's one in forty-four. This campaign became part of the platform on which Workman was elected mayor the following year, though suspicion of public controls continued to make progress slow. Much more radical in their affront

to the prevailing philosophy were the actions of Adam Ferrie at an earlier period. For three years in the late thirties he guided the fortunes of the Montreal Public Bakery, established as a co-operative to combat the high price of bread. The bakers finally succeeded in closing it down by selling for a while at less than cost. A co-operative woodyard suffered a similar fate, with Ferrie bearing a substantial loss on the project.

Financial support for educational institutions was almost universal among the wealthier Unitarians. In particular, John Frothingham and Thomas Workman both contributed handsomely to McGill University; Frothingham also supported the Protestant schools of Montreal and Workman helped establish and endow the Fraser Institute and Free Library.

Though these Unitarians were so closely integrated into the commercial elite of nineteenth-century Montreal, there were other respects besides their theology in which they were nonconformists. The business community as a whole was Conservative and protectionist. The Unitarians, with the exception of William Workman, were Liberals and believers in free trade. This last was almost an article of religious faith for their fellow-Unitarians in Britain and the United States; in Canada the two ministers who had become permanent residents (Cordner in Montreal and William Hincks in Toronto) gave their whole-hearted support. Hincks, one of the few academic economists in Canada at this period, also promoted other causes not calculated to commend him to industrialists who considered themselves practical men of affairs. He advocated a shortening of the working week, with training in the rational use of the resulting leisure. Here too Cordner agreed: 'The giant Accumulation, mounted on the back of humanity, rides it close to death . . . a man ceases to be a man when he becomes a mere labor-machine. . . . Men want freedom and leisure from constant pressing labor, that their souls may grow with a fitting growth. . . . It is part of the wisdom of the Roman Catholic church that it has decreed holy-day after holy-day throughout the year as some relief from the pressure of labor. When the world gets wiser it will take more leisure and more recreation.'[6]

Such emphases upon the rights of labor, though not the dominant theme in Unitarian pronouncements of the time, were in advance of most Protestant preaching, and pointed toward changing attitudes in the coming years.

Political activity came naturally to the Unitarian businessmen of Montreal. In the earlier period Molson and Gates had sat as appointed members of the Legislative Council of Lower Canada. After the union of the provinces in 1841 only Adam Ferrie held a similar position, but several of the leading Unitarians sought election to the increasingly influential Assembly. Benjamin Holmes was elected to the first parliament in 1841, possibly before he became a Unitarian and certainly before he became a Liberal. He won his election as a Tory, and his switch the following year to support the Reform ministry of Baldwin and LaFontaine caused considerable consternation in some circles in Montreal. Nevertheless he held on to his seat and also won election to the city council at the end of 1842, a combination of offices he repeated again at the end of the decade. He was an unsuccessful candidate for the mayoralty in 1850 and again in 1860, being defeated by a very narrow margin on the latter occasion.

Holmes was followed by John Young, who entered parliament in 1851 as commissioner of public works in the Hincks-Morin administration. But he was too independent a person to function comfortably in a cabinet position, and resigned a year later over differences of policy. He retained his seat in parliament until 1857, when he withdrew to concentrate on his business interests. After an unsuccessful attempt to win re-election in 1863, he represented Montreal West in the 1872 parliament. His fellow Unitarian Thomas Workman was elected to the first parliament after Confederation, but declined renomination after one term. He returned in 1875, however, also as member for Montreal West. During this same period his brother William was mayor of Montreal, but they were on opposite sides of the fence in their political and economic views.

The most notable political career to arise out of this group was that of Luther Holton. He entered parliament in 1854 and, after his retirement from business three years later, politics became the chief interest of his life. Though defeated in the election of 1857, he occupied a key position as one of the chief links between the Liberals and *Rouges* of Canada East and their western counterparts under the leadership of George Brown. He was appointed commissioner of public works in the abortive Brown-Dorion ministry of August 1858. Four years later he was elected to the Legislative Council, but resigned after eight months to become minister of finance in the Sandfield Macdonald-Dorion administration. Holton was an outspoken opponent of Confederation

and kept one foot in provincial politics, serving in the Quebec legislative assembly from 1871 to 1874; but his major interests still lay in Ottawa, and he sat continuously in the House of Commons from the time of Confederation until his death in 1880. In 1873 and again in 1875 he was offered positions in the cabinet, but declined; he also turned down invitations to become Speaker of the House of Commons and Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. Cordner, who was continually preaching the need for probity in public life, held up his career as an example of 'the possibilities that lie within the reach of the young men of Canada . . . if they are moved and animated by like high aims and carry industrious habits and integrity of life into the pursuit thereof.'[7]

Economic and political influence on the scale exercised by the Unitarians of the Montreal business community was without parallel elsewhere, nor indeed was it possible outside the commercial metropolis. The career of Benjamin Bowring in Newfoundland was an isolated phenomenon. The Unitarian lumber barons of Saint John half a century later had no more than a local influence. The commercial interests in Ontario, though growing, were on a smaller scale and had a comparatively minor impact upon the life of the community at large. John Bertram, a Scottish Unitarian, became a partner in the establishment of the Canada Tool Works at Dundas in 1865, and was returned to parliament as a Liberal a decade later. His younger brother George Hope Bertram (named after George Hope, a pioneer Unitarian in Scotland who was bitterly persecuted for his religious and political views) became president of the Bertram Engine Works. He represented a Toronto constituency in the House of Commons right at the end of the century, serving at the same time as chairman of the board of trustees of the Toronto congregation. A few other Toronto Unitarians achieved some prominence in public life, notably Daniel Lamb, who was a city alderman for many years and founded the Riverdale Zoo. In Ottawa, Alexander Workman was a long-time member of the city council, and as mayor in 1860 had a prominent part in the ceremonies when the Prince of Wales came to lay the foundation stone of the parliament buildings.

These worthies, though subject to the usual denunciations from political opponents, were part of the establishment of the Canada of their time. Unitarian involvement in the more radical protest movements had in Canada as in England more or less spent itself by mid-century, as civil rights and democratic government became better

established. Such protest had striking manifestations at an earlier date. In the twenties there was Captain John Matthews, retired on half pay from the Royal Artillery and a peppery critic of Family Compact policies in Upper Canada. He and Dr John Rolph were elected as Reformers to the legislative assembly after a rousing campaign in 1824. William Lyon Mackenzie, a vigorous promoter of their cause, recorded: 'Happy groups of horsemen from every quarter ride up to the hustings, shouting blithely "Rolph and Mathews!" – "Mathews and Liberty!"'[8]

Matthews made himself so much of a nuisance to the administration that it contrived to have him recalled to England on charges that as a pensioned officer of the British Army he had acted treasonably in standing up in a Toronto theatre and calling for 'Yankee Doodle' to be played in honor of a visiting troupe of American players. He was exonerated of any suggestion of disloyalty and returned vindicated. After several years, however, he went back to England, before he could become implicated in the events that were marching toward the rebellion of 1837.

Several Unitarians or sympathizers did get involved in the rebellion. The extent to which François-Benjamin Blanchard and Dexter Chapin were Unitarians is uncertain, but their names appear on the subscription list for the Unitarian chapel in Montreal in 1833. Both played an active role as propagandists in the rebellion, though neither actually took up arms. Blanchard talked his way out of arrest on no fewer than three occasions, but Chapin spent five weeks in jail before being released without any charges being formally laid.

The one undoubted Unitarian who did take up arms was the colorful T. S. Brown, for a while Blanchard's partner in an ill-starred hardware business. Nicknamed 'Copper Brown' after the commercial tokens that he minted, he was co-founder of the radical newspaper *The Vindicator*, to which he was a frequent contributor. He reacted with increasing exasperation to the oppressive political climate of the time, and became 'General' of the *fils de la liberté*, a paramilitary body modelled deliberately on the Sons of Liberty of revolutionary America, complete with bands and marching songs. When fighting broke out in 1837 his contingent faced British troops at the battle of St Charles on the Richelieu River. Brown's ineptitude in military tactics led to disaster, and he fled ignominiously across the border. In 1844, after an amnesty had been declared, he returned to Montreal, where he became a sober and respectable citizen, having renounced both his Unitarianism and his radicalism.

Of all the Unitarians playing a part in the public life of nineteenth-century Canada the most prominent and most enigmatic was Francis Hincks. Coming as he did from a well-known and respected Unitarian family in Ireland, he had been subject to much the same formative influences as Cordner, though with very different results. During his early years in Canada he had no opportunity to participate in the life of a Unitarian congregation, but after his arrival in Montreal in 1844 he at once became an active member. When the seat of government moved to Toronto in 1849 he does not appear to have joined that church, and in fact from this point onward his connection with the movement became progressively weaker. By the time he returned to Canada as Sir Francis Hincks following his terms as Governor of Barbados and then of British Guiana, he had become an adherent of the Anglican church, though he still put in occasional appearances at Unitarian functions such as the congregational gathering to celebrate Cordner's silver wedding in 1877.

After his early Toronto career in business, bank management, and journalism, Hincks took his place in the first parliament of the united province as an outspoken Reformer. He was architect of the alliance between Baldwin and LaFontaine, which was the key to the slowly accomplished success of the Reformers in gaining responsible government. Meanwhile his considerable talents were exercised as inspector-general, as the minister of finance was then called. He gave strong but unavailing support to the proposal from the Governor, Lord Sydenham, that a central bank should be established, which alone would have the right to issue paper currency. He helped pass the Municipal Act of 1842 that took the first steps toward establishment of responsible government at a local level.

Hincks resigned in 1843 along with his colleagues in protest against the unyielding attitude of the new Governor, Sir Charles Metcalfe, and was defeated in the ensuing election. At a later date he was re-elected to resume his position as inspector-general in the more successful Baldwin-LaFontaine administration of 1848-51, and succeeded Baldwin as premier on the latter's retirement. He held this office, in joint harness with Augustin Morin, until his resignation in 1854, following a defeat in the House.

As premier, Hincks worked to develop the economic and financial

resources of the country and to stimulate trade and industry. He negotiated the change from pounds, shillings, and pence to Canada's modern decimal currency. A major preoccupation of this period was the construction of railways. Hincks went to England in 1852 to press the idea, already approved in Canada, of an intercolonial railway to link Toronto and Montreal with the Maritime provinces. Such a project would be entirely dependent upon its being guaranteed by the British government and largely financed by British capital. This support was not forthcoming, but Hincks was successful in negotiating with private interests to promote and build the more limited but still very large-scale undertaking of a Grand Trunk Railway to link Montreal with Toronto and on to Sarnia. The St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway, having been saved from impending disaster by a provincial guarantee of the interest on half its stock, was absorbed into this system. There was a flurry of railway building elsewhere, stimulated by the same government guarantee, which was backed by a large loan floated by Hincks in London. In the autumn session of 1852 no fewer than twenty-eight railway charters were approved by parliament.

The railway boom put a heavy strain upon the finances of Canada, as costs were continually escalating beyond the estimates and the government had to come to the rescue. The Montreal-Toronto section of the Grand Trunk was opened in 1856, an occasion marked by Cordner with a sermon that pointedly questioned the priorities that had fastened themselves upon the life of the nation: 'Material development is useful to us only so far as it promotes the growth of upright, noble-minded and holy men. . . . Unless we are a nation loving righteousness more than railways and hating iniquity more than mercantile failure, we are raising a national structure which must fall and perish through its own lack of soundness.'[9]

Francis Hincks was not present to hear this. By this time he was Governor of Barbados. But it is unlikely that he was entirely absent from Cordner's thoughts. The intimate association of government financing with private speculation during the railway boom raised conflicts of interest that few people in public office were able entirely to avoid. Hints of improper dealings pointed to a number of the leading figures of the day, but to none more than Hincks. In particular, he had participated in a dubious scheme involving the conversion of a number of railway bonds many of which he had quietly bought up himself, clearing a very substantial profit on the transaction. Further activities of a similar character came to light as a result of outrage in parliament and in the press. Hincks and his associates suffered a permanent loss of reputation and a weakening of their political power. 'He followed rather than guided the ethics of his contemporaries,' comments his biographer. *'It seems clear that Sir Francis Hincks made* his best contribution to Canadian development before 1851, and that after this date he was too often a combination of shrewd politician and efficient administrator.'[10] Though his positive contribution to the national life was very considerable, it may be just as well under the circumstances that Cordner was spared the necessity of preparing a funeral oration for him of the kind he delivered for Holton.

Despite their preponderance in numbers during the nineteenth century, the contribution made by Universalists to public life was slight by comparison with that of Unitarians. Dr Basil R. Church of Merrickville represented North Leeds and Grenville in the parliaments of 1854 and 1858; his wife, Mary Ann, had been the earliest Universalist woman preacher in Canada. Right at the end of the century W. F. Todd, a wealthy lumberman, was elected as a Liberal to the New Brunswick legislature, and proceeded to the House of Commons in 1908. From 1923 to 1928 he was Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick.

By far the most outstanding Universalist was L. S. Huntington. A lawyer and newspaper proprietor from the Eastern Townships, he entered parliament in 1861. He was a vigorous opponent of Confederation, campaigning instead for complete Canadian independence. He came to national prominence in 1873 when he rose in the House of Commons to expose the massive financial contributions given Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative party by Sir Hugh Allan and his friends in return for the contract to build the Canadian Pacific Railway ('a breach of trust which is treason to the country,' declared Cordner from the pulpit). The government fell as a result of the ensuing inquiry, and Huntington entered the Mackenzie cabinet that succeeded it, first as president of the council and then as postmaster general. He continued his career in parliament until defeated in the general election of 1882.

Changing conditions in the closing years of the century spelt the end of the era of individual entrepreneurs, particularly within Unitarian circles. 'Our *rich* people have died out'[11] wrote George Washington Stephens of the Montreal congregation in 1892 – not quite accurately, for the personal fortune he had inherited from his father, Harrison

Stephens, and passed on to his son was worth more than a million dollars before World War I.[12] Nor was political activity from these circles quite at an end. Stephens himself followed seventeen years on the Montreal city council with almost as long in the provincial legislature, becoming a cabinet minister at the end of the century. His son of the same name played a leading part in the final act of Unitarian political involvement in Montreal. After a period of excellent service as chairman of the Harbour Commission, he was induced, against his own inclination, to run in 1914 for the office of mayor.

For many years there had been an unwritten understanding that the mayoralty would alternate between the anglophone and the francophone sections of the population, and this was the anglophone year. Backed as he was by all sections of the establishment and of the press, it seemed that Stephens's election should have been assured. But into the fray at this point charged a flamboyant demagogue of a new type, Médéric Martin. He cared nothing for arrangement made within the establishment, and campaigned on the basis that whereas Stephens was a millionaire he was an ordinary man of the people from the east end of the city. This, perhaps, was not the most important difference between them. Stephens was a model of integrity, the embodiment of all the accepted business and civic and personal virtues of his age and station. Martin operated on the principle that to the victor belong the spoils. He was prepared to spend public money prodigally, and to reward his own personal friends from the pork barrel.

When the polls closed, Martin was ahead, not by a large margin, but enough. A new era had begun, and his style was to dominate civic life in the coming years. Never again would the anglophone community provide a mayor of Montreal; the Unitarians of the twentieth century would have to content themselves with seeing their member Roy Campbell elected mayor of Westmount. As for Stephens, his public service was transferred to the international field. He was appointed after the war to the League of Nations commission administering the Saar territory, serving successively as minister of finance, food, and forests, then of foreign affairs and the interior, and for the year 1926-27 as president of the commission.

This record of service in an international agency was continued later in the century. J. T. Thorson was a member of the Canadian delegation to the League of Nations in 1938, and from 1952 to 1959 served as president of the International Commission of Jurists. He was a

member of the Winnipeg church. From 1948 to 1953, G. Brock Chisholm was director general of the World Health Organization. Hugh L. Keenleyside followed a career in external affairs, including a period as ambassador to Mexico, with service as director general of the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration from 1950 to 1958. Both men became members of the Unitarian Church of Victoria; Chisholm was the 1952 recipient of the AUA annual award for distinguished service to the cause of liberal religion.

Well before the nineteenth century ended, changes in social and political outlook had begun to take place that would have a marked effect upon Unitarian involvement in public affairs. The individualistic liberalism and 'Protestant ethic' that had carried the earlier generation to positions of power and influence began to wane. Following a trend already clearly discernible among Unitarians in Britain and the United States, the pendulum began to swing back in the direction of social radicalism. Acceptance of the Single Tax theory of Henry George was an early manifestation of this that continued, particularly in the Ottawa congregation, until well after World War II.

There was nothing uniquely Unitarian in this trend. It was one expression of the rise of the Social Gospel, which affected all denominations with its call for redemption through the transformation of social, political, and economic life and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. Many of its leaders in Canada as in England were Methodists, with Salem Bland of Winnipeg as their foremost spokesman. It had many points of contact with the New Theology, which made it much easier for Unitarians to participate. Bland had been deeply influenced by his reading of Unitarian authors such as Channing, Emerson, and Darwin, as well as of others who moved within the same orbit.[13] In turn, he influenced some of the later Unitarian leaders, particularly William Irvine (who studied under him at Wesley College, Winnipeg) and Horace Westwood, with whom he worked in close collaboration. Within six months of the opening of Westwood's new church in 1913, he was one of the speakers in a series of Sunday evening services on the theme of 'The Church and the New Social Reformation', along with such others as J. S. Woodsworth and Nellie McClung.

One result of the new movement was a revival in Unitarian circles of radical, even socialistic, preaching. In 1898, while their congregation was still in process of formation, the Social Gospel arrived among the

Ottawa Unitarians in the person of M. Kellogg Schermerhorn, an outspoken minister from New York. Taking as his text the lines from Goldsmith, 'Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,/Where wealth accumulates, and men decay,...' he had some harsh words to say about those 'who go about in silks and diamonds preaching charity' and about the evolution of capitalism from a system of small businesses in which an ethical relationship could exist between owner and workers into one of vast corporations concerned only with the unprincipled maximization of profit.[14] From the Toronto pulpit a few years later, J. T. Sunderland too fulminated against the giant corporation: 'It allies itself with the liquor, gambling and other bad influences of society; it shirks taxes; it buys votes of men with money; it bribes legislatures; it defies laws; it steals the people's streets; it gains by fraud valuable franchises which belong to the people; it monopolises the source and means of public subsistence.'[15] The need for the church to address itself to such issues provided the theme for R. J. Hutcheon's farewell address when he resigned from the Ottawa pulpit in 1905 to undertake a year of studies in social ethics: 'The church has taken a strong stand against the sins of individual life, sensuality, profanity, drunkenness and atheism. But it has very seldom attacked the sins of the economic and social world.... No minister that I know in Canada has ever had a training in the problems of industrial organization, of finance and taxation, of stock exchange and municipal government, of the general problems of social ethics. Theology and the Higher Criticism must largely give way to social ethics in the education of the preachers before they can become the leaders of the modern conscience and the helpers of the social life.'[16]

Attacks upon the corporations were accompanied by praise for the labor movement. Hutcheon's successor in Ottawa, C. W. Casson, said bluntly that there was more of real religion in the average trades union than in the average church.[17] This line of thinking was carried to its ultimate conclusion in a Sunday evening address by Westwood in Winnipeg: 'Jesus himself came from a long line of social prophets. ... His message was a gospel to the poor! It was an invective against the rich! ... He was put to death because of his revolutionary utterances.

'Since the aims of true religion and labor are one ... why should not the masses make the church their own? Why not by sheer weight of numbers make it the great sword in your hands? ... Religion is the greatest ally the workers possess, and since the church is the handmaid of religion, it may be made BY THE WORKERS the greatest weapon for democracy.'[18]

Some of the workers took him at his word less than three years later, not in taking over existing churches (though All Souls' was available for the taking) but in following the example set a quarter of a century earlier in England, when a Unitarian minister, John Trevor, resigned his pulpit to set up a separate Labour Church movement. In Winnipeg the initiative came not from Westwood but from his Methodist friend William Ivens, and Westwood found many of his congregation moving over to this new setting, which he had in effect assured them would be so congenial. Before he left Winnipeg he even had the experience of seeing William Irvine, whom he had welcomed into the Unitarian movement and settled at Calgary, come to preach for several successive Sundays in the rival establishment.

The Labor churches, which had spread to six western cities by 1921, were in many respects direct competitors for the Unitarian constituency. J. S. Woodsworth, their leading spokesman in 1921, declared: 'The religion of the future will be ... dynamic not static. It will lay no claim to finality but rather be "going on toward perfection".... We shall not be afraid of truth, rather welcoming it, remembering that the truth only can make us free.... Our immediate concern is with this present world rather than with some future life.... When we evolve a religion that is big enough and broad enough and loving, it will make a universal appeal.'[19]

Unitarians, in western Canada at any rate, could add very little to this. Though the new movement was depleting their own ranks, they did not greet it with the hostility shown by some other denominations. In fact, they co-operated with it during the few brief years of its existence. J. H. Hart, then Unitarian minister in Winnipeg, took advantage of W. H. Alexander's visit to his pulpit in 1922 to speak at the Labor church in Elmwood; Alexander himself had spoken at the Labor church in Edmonton. Irvine lavishly praised the new movement in an article for the American journal *The Nation*.[20]

Most of the Unitarian ministers in Canada during this period were markedly affected by the Social Gospel, the notable exception being Hodgins. Even within the limitations imposed by the Montreal Church's traditions, Griffin and Snow made their contribution. Snow, who had been a pacifist during the war, invited such persons as Irvine

and Woodsworth, Agnes Macphail and Emmeline Pankhurst to speak at his Sunday evening People's Forum. This latter institution had become a widespread vehicle for the Social Gospel, originated by Woodsworth at his All Peoples' Mission in Winnipeg in 1910 and launched simultaneously by Pratt in Calgary under the auspices of his newly founded Unitarian congregation. During Irvine's ministry the Calgary Forum became a major focus of his activities. A few years later J. B. Tonkin, also deeply committed to the Social Gospel, launched a similar venture at the Vancouver church. Woodsworth spoke on several occasions, and the socialist mayor of Vancouver, Dr Lyle Telford, was a frequent participant. Tonkin contributed regularly to *The Challenge*, a paper issued by Telford during the early years of the Depression. Later in the thirties, the most vocal Unitarian social gospeller was 'Ingi' Borgford, who from his Halifax pulpit and in numerous writings spoke out for social justice and warned of the rising threat of fascism.

In other denominations, many of the more radical ministers were singled out for reprisals of various kinds, sometimes losing their posts. The only such instance within Unitarianism is that of Irvine,[21] and this was an action by the AUA rather than the local congregation. Just why the Boston officials should have followed the course they did is not altogether easy to understand. Though they were under pressure from Alexander, even a slight knowledge of the local situation could have warned them that they were unlikely to succeed in depriving Irvine of his prominence – or, in their eyes, notoriety. Moreover, his utterances were no more radical than those of Westwood, who was similarly dependent upon a grant toward his salary from the AUA; in fact, they were scarcely more so than the official pronouncements of his former Presbyterian denomination, or of the Methodist General Conference, which in 1918 called for 'a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of co-operation and service.' This latter declaration drew warm approbation from the Unitarian paper *The Christian Register* within a few weeks of the decision in another room of the same building to cut off the grant in aid of Irvine's salary.[22]

Irvine was the only Unitarian minister of this period to make a move into a fulltime political career, though Albert Kristjansson sat for two years (1920-22) in the Manitoba legislature as a member of the Farmers' Progressive Party. But a number of Unitarian laymen were

active in political life as representatives of the Social Gospel. In Canada as in England[23] the first Labour member to be elected to the House of Commons was a Unitarian. He was Arthur W. Puttee, who had come from England in 1888 and worked for a number of years as a printer. In 1897 he became joint proprietor and editor of Winnipeg's Labour weekly, *The Voice*, a position he retained until 1918. He was elected to Ottawa in a by-election in January 1900, holding on to his seat in the general election of the following November. Later he transferred his political activities to the local level and served from 1916 to 1918 as a member of the Winnipeg Board of Control. A long-standing member of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, he was repudiated by the latter along with Westwood and Bland (who served on the council as representatives of the Ministerial Association) when the three of them urged a negotiated settlement rather than a strike of civic employees in wartime. The more extreme faction in control of the council at this point denounced them as traitors to the workers' cause, and Puttee's newspaper was one of the casualties of this clash.[24]

Also associated with Westwood's congregation was S. J. Farmer, leader successively of the Dominion Labor Party, the Independent Labor Party, and the CCF in Manitoba. He served two terms as mayor of Winnipeg and sat in the provincial legislature from 1922 to 1949. Farmer moved over to the Labor church in 1918, but maintained some Unitarian connections.

Irvine was the most prominent Unitarian politician of his time. From shortly after his arrival as Unitarian minister in Calgary in January 1916 he was heavily involved in the political scene. Within ten months he was producing and editing his own newspaper, *The Nutcracker*, which was in many ways the Calgary equivalent of *The Voice*. The following year he ran unsuccessfully for parliament. He became secretary of the Alberta Non-Partisan League, working with a good deal of success toward putting together an alliance between the mutually suspicious farm and labor interests. This brought striking results in the federal election of 1921, when Irvine was returned for Calgary East. He was defeated in the Conservative revival of 1925 but came back in the following year as member for Wetaskiwin, a seat he held until the Social Credit sweep of the entire province in 1935.

In his earlier period Irvine espoused the farmers' platform of government through negotiated programs representing a consensus between interest groups, rather than the adversary system of party

politics. In his address to the People's Forum at the Montreal church 'he likened an Opposition to a situation on board a steamship where one captain surrounded by his little crew sought to do something, and another captain on another bridge surrounded by his little crew sought to prevent him doing anything.'[25] The same idea was propounded in his book *The Farmers in Politics* (1920). In the light of later experience he was converted to party politics and became one of the chief architects of the CCF. During his first term in parliament he doubled as regular minister of the Unitarian church in Ottawa; in later years he preached more occasionally. After he left the House in 1935 his links with Unitarianism weakened, but he retained his status as a minister in good standing with the AUA until 1937.

Though Irvine and Woodsworth were the only Labor members elected in 1921, no fewer than sixty-five Progressives were returned, mostly by the rural vote. In the Battle River constituency, Henry E. Spencer piled up a majority of 10 521. He had come from England in 1908 to homestead in Alberta, and in the course of subsequent political activities had become closely associated with Irvine. In Ottawa he began attending the Unitarian church to hear his friend preach, and the result was a life-long attachment to Unitarianism. Spencer was one of the leading figures in the Progressive Party, and a member of the 'Ginger Group' that ultimately became part of the CCF. After his defeat in 1935, he became provincial director for the United Farmers of Alberta, a member of the Senate of the University of Alberta, and secretary-treasurer of the Canadian School Trustees' Association.

The only other Unitarian in parliament during the inter-war years was J. T. Thorson, a brilliant Winnipeg lawyer who was first elected as a Liberal in 1926. After being defeated in 1930, he was returned in 1935 and again in 1940. He served briefly in the wartime cabinet, but was too independent for Mackenzie King's liking, and was soon moved to the presidency of the Exchequer Court of Canada.

The postwar era saw a continuation of the more radical trend that had marked most Unitarian involvement in social and political concerns since the early days of the century. There was increasing debate as to whether the freedom of the individual would be violated if congregations – or indeed the entire Canadian Unitarian movement, as it began to take identifiable form – should take a corporate stand on such issues rather than leaving this to individuals as in the past. Apart from the occasional brief endorsed by a congregation for presentation

in its name and the resolutions voted at the annual meetings of the CUC, there were in fact few modifications of the traditional practice. Outspoken utterances on public issues continued to be a part of normal pulpit fare, and individual Unitarians continued to involve themselves in public life at all levels.

In the 1963 election four Unitarians were returned to the House of Commons: Lloyd Francis, Douglas Fisher, Robert Prittie, and William Howe. Of these, Francis was a Liberal, the others all members of the NDP. The following year Fisher was the theme speaker at the CUC's annual meeting. In provincial and local politics there was a wide range of Unitarian activity. The provincial NDP leader in Ontario, Donald Macdonald, was a member of Toronto First Congregation; so too was Liberal Senator Joan Neiman. The Schreyer administration in Manitoba contained no fewer than five Unitarian cabinet members: Leonard Evans, Russell Doern, Ian Turnbull, Ben Hanuschak, and Philip M. Petursson, who had followed his long ministry at the Winnipeg church with a new career in politics and had been appointed Minister of Cultural Affairs. At the local level the succession of Unitarian mayors continued with William Dennison in Toronto, Robert Prittie in Burnaby, B.C., Robert Lockhart in Saint John, N.B., and Peter Jones in West Vancouver.

The age of the great Unitarian industrialists was almost over, though several, such as Arthur McMaster and John B. Frosst in Montreal, carried on something of the old tradition. In the new world of corporate business and finance there were prominent executives such as James E. Coyne, Governor of the Bank of Canada, Derek Keaveney of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Ian Gray of CP Air. From both inside and outside the centres of economic and political power, Unitarians continued to make their contribution. The tortured period of the late sixties produced contrasting attitudes toward social change. From the Toronto pulpit John Morgan declared in favor of violence under some circumstances, while at the CUC Capital Workshop two years later Leonard Mason appealed for a permanent devotion to the cause of non-violence.

Two major issues have dominated Canadian history. The first has been that of the unification and integrity of the country, emerging out of a number of isolated colonies each dependent upon Britain and facing continuous pressures of all kinds from the United States. The second has been that of its composition as an uneasy co-existence of

two strong but separate cultures. On the first subject Unitarians were inescapably drawn to express themselves, though with no more unanimity than members of other churches, apart from such staunch upholders of the imperial connection as the Anglicans.

Cordner became an eloquent spokesman for the emerging national identity, though he remained silent on the subject of Confederation, in support for which his congregation was certainly divided. Back in 1849, reflecting the desperation to which economic and political setbacks had driven the Montreal mercantile community, more than a dozen of the leading Unitarians had signed the Annexation Manifesto, calling for full union with the U.S.A. The attitude this action expressed evaporated rapidly with improving conditions, and always had to contend with horror of the American institution of slavery. P. P. Carpenter noted after crossing the Canadian border in 1859, 'one's heart seemed to beat with home feelings, particularly when, after riding a mile, I felt that the slave-catcher had lost his power, and the poor fugitive was free.... I have felt in the country of the alien and the despot all the time I have been in the States.'[26]

Such views notwithstanding, many of the nineteenth-century Unitarians in Canada were suspected of being annexationists at heart. John Young, one of the few Montreal merchants to refuse his signature to the Manifesto of 1849, became in later life an advocate of a North American commercial union, which many people saw as only a small step short of political union. Albert Walkley, Ottawa's first minister, supported in turn the idea of one great North American republic and that of two. Neither proposal won him great acclaim in the Dominion capital.

The best-known annexationist of his day was Goldwin Smith, whose formidable historical scholarship and literary talents were deployed to pour scorn on the concept of a separate Canadian identity. He quoted with gusto the comment that confederation, designed to bind rods into a bundle that would gain strength from its union, was in fact more like seven fishing-rods tied together at their ends. Though never formally a Unitarian, Goldwin Smith had close associations with the movement. As early as 1868, while still in England, he had presided at the inaugural meeting of the 'Free Christian Union', a shortlived attempt on the part of some of the leading Unitarians to bring all their fellow liberals in religion together under one umbrella. Toward the end of the century he became a familiar figure at the Unitarian church

in Toronto, speaking at its meetings and contributing generously toward its support. His widely circulated book *The Founder of Christendom* was first delivered in lecture form to the Toronto Unitarian Club, and he became a close personal friend of Jabez T. Sunderland.

Despite Goldwin Smith's logic, and the influence of substantial numbers of American ministers in their pulpits, most Canadian Unitarians remained obstinately nationalistic – often, at least until the most recent period, imperialistic. 'Unitarianism cannot grow in Canada as a form of Americanism; it must take root in the soil of *Canadian* life,'[27] declared W. H. Alexander, and on this point at any rate most of his co-religionists would have agreed with him. They dealt with their southern neighbor with the traditional Canadian blend of fascination and apprehension. At an official level, two Unitarians (John Young and Francis Hincks) were heavily involved in the long-protracted negotiations to bring into being and maintain the Reciprocity Treaty, which facilitated commercial dealings between the two countries between 1854 and 1865. At an unofficial level, many Unitarians welcomed and housed the runaway slaves who made their way to Canada, in the same way as more than a century later they gave similar aid for similar reasons to refugees from the draft for the Vietnam war. In each instance the national policies from which these refugees were fleeing were vigorously denounced from Unitarian pulpits.

When the American Civil War broke out, the English Unitarians defied the Confederate sympathies of many of their fellow countrymen (and their own economic interests, heavily involved as many of them were in the cotton industry) to give vocal support to the cause of the North. Placed in a similar situation, the Canadian Unitarians acted in the same way. The Universalist minister in Halifax, Nathanael Gunnison, even served for a while as American consul. Cordner's sermon on 'The American Conflict' was widely reprinted and quoted on both sides of the Atlantic. 'This is a discourse,' said the London *Daily News*, 'which might well have the two nations, with all their sections and parties, for audience – not an oration or a poem, but the right word, spoken in the right spirit, in the right time and place.'[28]

While Unitarians were saying a great deal about Canadian identity in terms of relations with Britain and the U.S.A., comparatively little was being said about the relationships within the country between 'the two solitudes'. Early Unitarians such as Benjamin Workman and Adam Ferrie reached out hands of friendship to their French-speaking

compatriots, and T. S. Brown took up arms in the *patriote* cause – but these were the actions of isolated individuals. Cordner's address to *l'Institut Canadien* was more of a gesture of defiance to the Catholic church than of understanding to French Canadians. At the beginning of the following century Walkley might express his hope for such understanding – 'I long for the day when we shall see the men of Quebec as truly our brothers as those of Ontario . . . the thought and feeling of genuine brotherhood is the only one that can weld our people into one.'[29] But less than a decade later Griffin could complain from the Montreal pulpit about the city's language problems and offer as his solution, 'in view of the predominance of the English language the obvious road out of the difficulty would be its adoption.'[30] Less provocatively but no more realistically, Snow announced a decade later still that 'here, better than anywhere in the world, the problem of two races, languages and cultures occupying the same soil has been solved.'[31]

As time went by and it became clearer how very far from being solved the problem actually was, some Unitarians began to examine it in a little greater depth. It was one of the subjects for discussion in a series sponsored by the Unitarian Free Forum in Vancouver called 'Towards Canadian Unity' and held during the winter of 1943-44. Twenty years later the Toronto congregation sponsored a similar series, focusing more specifically upon the various aspects of biculturalism. But in spite of these small manifestations of interest, the subject never became one on which the Unitarians of Canada felt moved to express themselves through a resolution passed at the CUC annual meetings, and when the CUC attempted to respond to an invitation to present a brief to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism there was so little interest in participating that the project had to be abandoned. The two Montreal congregations, however, prepared their own joint brief, calling for full equality and better communication, with bilingualism as a requirement for all persons aspiring to positions of national leadership.

'The right of the churches to exercise political influence has been a constant factor in Canadian social and political development,' wrote H. H. Walsh.[32] Of all the issues on which the churches have attempted to exercise such an influence none has been more fundamental than that of the relationship that should exist between church and state. This was a matter on which there was never any question as to where

the Unitarians stood. They were, like most of the Protestant bodies, consistent defenders of the voluntary principle in church support, as against the earlier claims of the Church of England, and to a lesser extent of the Church of Scotland, to enjoy state support as established churches. Unitarian participation in the campaign to abolish the clergy reserves, which were tracts of land set aside to produce revenue toward the salaries of clergymen, was unaffected when in 1848 the government invited any interested denomination to apply, and even the Universalists temporized. The chief Unitarian protagonist in this cause was Francis Hincks, who gave it unwavering support though paradoxically it was his political gamesmanship in choosing the time to implement it that precipitated his downfall from office, and he participated in the vote that finally abolished the clergy reserves from the opposition benches.

Although this particular application of the principle of the separation of church and state placed the Unitarians within a popular movement embracing members of many denominations, other issues have left them standing almost alone. This has happened where the issue has been one of accepting public subsidies through the exemption of church property from local taxes rather than through direct grants as in the case of the clergy reserves. In 1914, it was claimed,[33] the Edmonton church was probably the first in North America to vote that it would forego its legal exemption from taxation and pay taxes like any other property owner. Such a vote was not called for in Vancouver, since all churches in the city were obliged to pay property taxes until 1936; thirty years later the issue was revived when the Vancouver minister urged from the pulpit that indirect subsidies to churches from public funds through exemption from taxation should be brought to an end.[34]

Writing of the situation in England, R. V. Holt claimed that 'education might be described as a passion with Unitarians. They believed in education as such, and not as a form of sectarian propaganda. They have contributed to all those movements of the last two hundred years which have improved education in quantity and quality.'[35] Few modifications would be necessary to make this statement apply to Canada. The involvement of Unitarians at every level of the educational process has been a constant feature of each decade, whether one looks at Montreal in the 1820s, when Benjamin Workman's Union School was established, or at St Catharines in the 1970s, when both the Chancellor

and the President of Brock University were Unitarians, as well as a number of the faculty.

Experiments in the direction of a broadly based educational system have been particularly congenial to Unitarians. Benjamin Workman inveighed in the *Courant* against clerical control of education; twenty years later Cordner's *Bible Christian* proposed a system of public education open to everyone 'entirely irrespective of sectarian personalities and considerations.'[36] A system on precisely this basis had been advocated by Joseph Lancaster, an English Quaker. His British and Foreign School Society, established in 1814, drew immediate support from the Unitarians and vigorous denunciation from the Anglicans. Though it had many and obvious shortcomings when judged by the educational standards of a later day, the system represented an honest attempt to keep education free from sectarian controls, and it was not surprising that when a British and Canadian School Society was organized on the same lines in Montreal, Horatio Gates became its president and John Frothingham one of its directors.

In Upper Canada the *Education Act of 1843*, drafted and piloted through the House by Francis Hincks, has been described as marking the zenith of liberal influence on legislation affecting education.[37] It provided for a large measure of local self-determination; the schools, however, had to be open to all children without discrimination, and no child could be given religious instruction objectionable to his or her parents. There was to be a chief superintendent of education, together with a number of district superintendents. The position of chief superintendent went to Egerton Ryerson, the prominent Methodist leader, who rapidly began to move in the direction of a more centralized system with a broad religious and ethical basis: 'the general system of truth and morals as taught in Holy Scripture.'

Among those appointed to the positions of district superintendents were two Unitarians, William Hutton in the Victoria District and Hamilton Hunter in the Home District. Hutton in particular soon developed an excellent relationship with Ryerson, and urged upon him the need for a uniform set of textbooks. He strongly recommended a series with which he was well acquainted, the Irish National Readers.[38] What influence this recommendation had upon the final decision is arguable, but it was in fact the Irish National Readers that were in due course adopted for use. Though they drew heavily upon religious subject matter they did not lean obviously toward any one denomination and were therefore non-sectarian by the standards of the time. Ryerson's educational philosophy and policies were also heavily influenced by another Unitarian, this time from outside the country – the American educational pioneer, Horace Mann.

A powerful Unitarian voice in the educational debates of this period was that of Joseph Workman. This remarkable man, who had begun his Canadian career as a teacher in the Montreal Union School, graduated in medicine from McGill in 1835. Shortly afterward the sudden death of his brother-in-law William Wasnidge induced him to take the latter's place as a partner with his brother Samuel in the Toronto hardware business they had been struggling to get onto an economic footing. During his early years in Toronto he took an active part in political controversies on the Reform side and regularly wrote the editorials for one of the Toronto newspapers. In 1845 he was vice-president of the Toronto Board of Trade. He resumed his medical career the following year, becoming a lecturer in Dr John Rolph's medical school as well as engaging in private practice. He was elected a city alderman in 1847 and retained this position for three years. In 1848 he was appointed to the government's three-man commission of inquiry into the affairs of King's College. This institution was a storm centre of controversy. Bishop Strachan, its president, was determined to make it into a university under purely Anglican auspices, along the lines of Oxford and Cambridge. The Reformers and most non-Anglicans wanted to make it into a secular university open on equal terms to all. Political pressures forced the government to act before its commission could report, and in 1849 the University of Toronto was created out of King's College as a purely secular (in Strachan's eyes 'godless') institution. When Workman presented the commission's report the following year, it was regarded as a vindication of the action already taken.

In September 1850 the first elections took place under recently passed legislation making school trustees elective. Workman was elected to the Toronto School Board, and became its chairman. During the two years he held this office he resisted all attempts to bring sectarian influences into the schools, or to undermine their character as institutions supported by public taxation and open without fees to all.

The ensuing years saw this same battle fought repeatedly in province after province, as attempts to turn public education into an

instrument of religious indoctrination were resisted. During the nineteenth century it was taken for granted that Canada was a 'Christian country', however discordant its inhabitants might be in their interpretation of Christianity. Apart from the small and self-effacing Jewish community, avowed non-Christians were hard to find. The teaching of what were regarded as the basic, universally accepted truths of Christianity was therefore not regarded as sectarian. As the range of religious beliefs within the population grew broader, it became more evident that neutrality in education must mean the avoidance not simply of denominational peculiarities among Christians but of any kind of religious teaching beyond an acceptance of the broad ethical principles that hold a society of any kind together. This became a more pressing issue after the large-scale immigration in the wake of World War II brought a much more diversified population to Canada.

For a while it seemed that the pendulum was swinging in the opposite direction. 'The rise of Hitlerism with its godlessness and the subsequent outbreak of World War II strengthened the movement for increased emphasis on religious education in the schools.'[39] In 1944 the Ontario government inaugurated a system under which two half-hour periods each week were to be devoted to an exposition of the 'common faith', which meant in practice the consensus of the major Protestant denominations. Vigorous dissent was voiced by the Liberal Opposition in the legislature, which accused the government of violating 'the cherished democratic right of each to worship according to his conscience free from interference from the State.'[40] A public opinion poll showed less than half the population as supporting the proposal. None the less, it was implemented.

As Unitarians became conscious both of their own growing strength and of the extent to which public sentiment was moving in their direction they took a leading part in mounting a counter-offensive. Rather than take the negative position of simply opposing religious instruction in the schools, they stressed the responsibility of the educational system for fostering the growth of moral values, and on this basis had put together by 1959 a coalition including Jews, humanists, and a number of Protestants. Thus the Ethical Education Association came into being, with most of the original impetus coming from the Unitarian Congregation of South Peel. Its influence soon began to be felt, and not only in Ontario. All across the country the period was one in which educational systems were under review. The Winnipeg

congregation had presented a brief to the Royal Commission on Education in Manitoba in 1957; two years later the Vancouver congregation did the same when a similar Royal Commission held hearings in B.C.

In 1960 the Calgary Unitarian fellowship launched a vigorous campaign to have religious observances removed from the city's public schools, but the school board, backed by strong support from the churches, refused to budge. Two years later a very different situation arose in Winnipeg, where the chairman of the school board, Andrew Robertson, was a Unitarian. The board turned down a request from a group of parents for religious instruction to be given in the schools. The Anglican diocesan newspaper promptly accused 'Jews, Communists, and Unitarians' of conspiring to deprive children of their religious freedom. P. M. Petursson, minister of the Winnipeg church and himself a school board member from 1942 to 1952, denounced these 'smear tactics' and pointed out that a majority of the board members voting against the petition belonged to none of the groups singled out for attack.[41]

In British Columbia it was the teachers who raised the issue, with Unitarians prominent among their spokesmen. The 1200 delegates to the 1964 convention of the B.C. Teachers' Federation voted overwhelmingly to recommend the discontinuance of religious exercises in the public schools. The provincial government ignored their recommendation. Even in Quebec there was restlessness on such matters among Unitarians, who expressed their scepticism regarding the degree of success in implementing such publicly declared aims as 'fostering growth of a spiritual interpretation of life' and 'preserving the religious character of our schools' when, as Rosalind Languedoc put it in the Lakeshore church *Newsletter*, 'in high schools, everything that is not nailed down or locked up is stolen.' None the less, she added, 'our position as a minority within a minority is difficult. Most of us would hesitate to absent our children from religious instruction for fear of the abuse that could follow such a step.'[42]

But it was in Ontario that the chief battle of this period was fought. Already in 1961 the *United Church Observer* was complaining of minorities who wanted to deprive the children of 'what the majority believes is good.' A few months later, under the headline THE JEWS AND UNITARIANS ATTACK, it reiterated, 'we must not permit our educational system to be completely secularized.'[43]

Another five years passed before the major confrontation came, in a rural community quite unprepared for the polarization it brought in its wake. The little Universalist church at Olinda, which had only recently become part of a merged movement with the Unitarians, was at the centre of the storm. A group of parents from that congregation began to compare notes in growing concern over the way in which the provincial regulations regarding religious instruction were being implemented in the local schools. The whole program had been placed in the hands of an American-based fundamentalist missionary organization, the Bible Club Movement. Typical of its procedures was the so-called 'sword drill'. When the teacher called 'Draw swords!' the children raised their Bibles high above their heads. A text was then announced, followed by the command, 'Charge!' The first child to locate the text was the winner.

Protests to the school board proving unavailing, the unhappy parents got in touch with the Ethical Education Association. As a result, the board's meeting of April 1966 was attended by a delegation comprising not only the parents but a Toronto lawyer, Alan Borovoy, together with two ministers, one Anglican and the other United. They urged that the board apply for exemption of its schools from religious instruction, as it was entitled to do under the Ontario regulations. The school board responded with outraged rejection. 'As long as I am trustee, I'm going to love God more every day,' was one member's reaction.[44] The resulting furore not only caused much ill will within the local community, but made headlines across the province and beyond. Both parties to the dispute carried their case to the special committee appointed that year to look into the whole matter of religious education in the schools of Ontario, under the chairmanship of J. Keiller Mackay, a former justice of the Ontario Supreme Court and Lieutenant-Governor of the province. Six Unitarian congregations were also among the 141 individuals and organizations presenting briefs to the committee.

The Mackay committee's report, published three years later, vindicated most of the positions taken by the Ethical Education Association, recommending that the existing courses of religious study be dropped in favor of a program of character development that would permeate all school activities. An objective study of the great religions of the world should be incorporated into the high school curriculum. The Ethical Education Association, rejoicing prematurely in the

accomplishment of its aims, virtually disbanded. But the Ontario government paid no more attention to the recommendations of its own committee than the B.C. government had done to the representations of the teachers. The existing program was continued with only minor modifications.

From one point of view it might be argued that the long campaign to keep divisive religious indoctrination out of public education has met with comparatively little success. There are still places where procedures similar to the ones complained of by the Olinda parents continue. But without the work of Unitarians and others, the situation could well have been worse. Public opinion has moved slowly in a more progressive direction as a result of the open discussion of the issues, and in many places there has been increasing unwillingness to implement policies still officially in force.

It should not be inferred from their opposition to sectarian teaching in public schools that Unitarians have ever been indifferent to religious education. Their argument has been that in a pluralistic society the responsibility for all aspects of this beyond those that could be described as general character development lies with the church and the home. They have devoted much time and effort to the production of suitable materials to help in this process, building upon vital first-hand experience. Canadians have had a part in this. Angus MacLean, a former Presbyterian from Nova Scotia, was for many years professor of religious education at St Lawrence University in Canton, New York, one of the centres of training for Universalist and Unitarian ministers. From the same Olinda congregation that was the focus of the controversy in the middle sixties had come Edna Bruner, who entered the Universalist ministry in 1930 and spent a large part of her career in denominational posts in religious education.

The controversies surrounding state support for particular forms of organized religion or religious education illustrated the Unitarian dedication to civil and religious liberty, which has survived all changes in theological outlook. '*Freedom to think, freedom to speak, freedom to read.* This must be the motto of every progressive community,' wrote John Cordner in 1855. 'Where their wide freedom of reading is going to land the thoughtful and inquiring minds of the present day, we do not presume to determine, nor are we oppressed with any fears as to the result.'[45] 'You can't hide reality from children,' said William P. Jenkins exactly a century later. 'The thing to do is develop their ability

to make judgments, to develop their critical faculties.... Banning books would destroy their opportunity to make a choice.'[46] Both men were responding to Roman Catholic-sponsored attempts to suppress literature alleged to be objectionable.

Such public defence of the liberal principle of freedom of choice often placed Unitarians on a collision course with other churches, none the less direct for the Unitarian recognition that there was principle on the other side as well. It was not pleasant to oppose censorship in company with purveyors of pornography and in conflict with people whose dedication to moral concerns could not be doubted. Similar problems arose in relation to laws governing Sunday observance. Even in the earlier period most Unitarians had outgrown a rigid sabbatarianism, but favored the observance of Sunday simply because, as Cordner noted,[47] it provided an occasion for rest, recreation and, above all, for cultivating our higher nature. But people could not be coerced into a wise use of leisure. 'To undertake to make [people] wise or good by legislation has always proved a failure,' said Walkley at the opening of the twentieth century; 'the true observance of the Sabbath will be brought about by the free exercise of the spiritual nature of man.'[48] He denounced the hypocrisy of those who opposed Sunday streetcars ('the poor man's carriage') while using their own horses and carriages on Sundays.

In 1906 Parliament, under heavy pressure from the major Protestant denominations, passed the *Lord's Day Act*, proscribing all work or paid entertainment on Sundays, apart from certain specified 'works of necessity and mercy'. It was not until the social changes following World War II that these provisions were seriously challenged; at this point Unitarian spokesmen again pressed the principle of freedom of choice. 'A doctrine of particular forms of organized religion has been written into our criminal code,' said Hewett from the Vancouver pulpit in 1957. 'The state should not attempt to legislate on matters of religious opinion.'[49] In the same year Jenkins wrote in a nationally circulating magazine: 'Few Canadians would welcome a commercial Sunday, but most of them would like a Sunday that offered a wide choice of cultural and recreational pursuits.'[50] Acting on this principle, the Calgary congregation led a campaign in 1963 for the opening of the city's public library on Sunday afternoons. It drew support from a wide range of organizations and from the city's newspapers, but not until four years later did the Library Board finally accede.

One basic component of civil liberties is equal rights for all without discrimination. In recent years Unitarian congregations, like those of many other persuasions, have been heavily committed to the cause of women's rights. For Unitarians, however, this is no recent development. 'Probably no religious body except the Quakers has given such wholehearted support as the Unitarians to the cause of women's freedom in all its forms,' wrote R. V. Holt forty years ago, tracing this cause back to such early Unitarians as Mary Wollstonecraft.[51]

This was one of the many progressive causes supported by John Cordner: 'We are of those who believe that this question of Women's Rights and Wrongs is one which ought to be fairly met and honestly considered by the public.... The position of woman now is one of sheer dependence. She ought to have a wider sphere for her activity, to the end that she may become more self-reliant and self-dependent. ... Women have a natural right to a more extensive range of remunerative employment than they now possess, and to a more thorough and systematic mental training than they now generally receive.'[52]

This was written in 1854. The following year he reprinted an address by Caroline Dall (whose husband had just resigned from his ministry at Toronto), who had already embarked upon her career as one of the most outspoken advocates of women's rights in nineteenth-century America. 'We want,' she said, 'the inalienable rights of human beings.'[53] Though some years were still to pass before women received many of these in society at large, the Toronto congregation had ten years earlier given women members equal rights with men in its constitution. But in practice many years would go by before women were elected to office within the congregation. Their presence, however, was not likely to be overlooked. In 1879 Emily Stowe became a member. She was the first women to practise medicine in Canada, after being forced to take her training in the United States because the University of Toronto would not open its classes to women. She became the foremost figure of her day in the campaign for women's rights in Canada, which she began organizing under the politely camouflaged Toronto Women's Literary Club. Ten years later, in 1889, she founded the more aggressively named Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association, of which she remained president until her death in 1903. Among the speakers she brought to Canada in support of the cause were two prominent American Unitarians, Susan B. Anthony and Julia Ward Howe. The latter preached from the Toronto pulpit in 1891.

In the West, an early and tireless worker in the cause was Margret

Benedictsson, one of the founding members of the Icelandic Unitarian congregation in Winnipeg. Together with her husband, Sigfus, a radical Unitarian poet, she launched in 1898 a monthly magazine, *Freyja*. Though its chief focus was on women's rights, it was also an attractive literary journal, and published poetry by Stephan G. Stephansson and others. For a number of years the chief support for the women's suffrage movement in Manitoba came from the Icelandic community, including many Unitarians. Margret Benedictsson founded the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association in 1908, and it played a continuing part in the more broadly based campaign led by Nellie McClung that made Manitoba the first province to give the vote to women, in 1916.

Other Unitarian leaders in the movement for women's rights included Eliza Sunderland, who shared actively in her husband's Toronto ministry from 1900 to 1906, besides preaching frequently elsewhere. She had a wide reputation as an educator and writer, and from 1886 to 1891 was vice-president of the American Association for the Advancement of Women. In Ottawa the cause was promoted by Margaret Graham, who had a distinguished career in journalism and was president of the Canadian Women's Press Club. Originally a Presbyterian, she had become a Unitarian by the time she married Albert Horton, one of the leading members of the Ottawa congregation and editor of the official record of the parliamentary debates.

In Montreal, Helen Reid pushed against the doors of McGill University with greater success than Emily Stowe had earlier enjoyed in Toronto, becoming the first woman to graduate, and going on to enjoy a distinguished career in social work. She returned to McGill as director of the school of social work and a member of the university's governing body. The Montreal church, despite its reputation for conservatism in Unitarian circles, had elected women to its own governing body before the turn of the century, though only in an advisory capacity. They became full members of the committee of management in 1909, and the following year a woman presided for the first time. A far more militant voice was heard at the church in 1924, when Charlotte Perkins Gilman addressed the People's Forum. 'Now that the gospel of womanhood was coming to the fore there would be an end of all the old ideas of strife, she maintained, and a new influence of love, care and service would take precedence of the old man-made ideas.'[54]

Other aspects of human rights assumed growing importance with the passage of time. In the nineteenth century the civil rights of homosexuals was an almost unmentionable subject, and not until the late 1960s did any widespread dialogue begin, with Unitarian congregations across the country making their facilities available for this purpose. In a press interview in 1974 the Vancouver minister called for an ending of social discrimination against homosexuals simply as homosexuals, and expressed his openness to officiating at religious ceremonies celebrating personal commitment between persons of the same sex, using the same criteria as when asked to officiate at a legal marriage.[55] In the same year the Winnipeg minister tried to force the issue by officiating at such a ceremony and attempting unsuccessfully to have it registered as a legal marriage.

Another area of discrimination concerning which little was said in the nineteenth century, though for different reasons, was in the treatment of Canadian Indians and Inuit. Outspokenness in the churches on the subject of slavery in the United States contrasted with virtual silence regarding Canada's aboriginal population. An exception was P. P. Carpenter, who worked actively with the Aborigines Protection Society on behalf of the rights of the Oka Indians. After World War II Unitarian concern in this field mounted rapidly. Congregations all across the country presented programs to acquaint their members with the issues, and in 1968 the annual meeting of the CUC adopted a resolution calling for direct dialogue with the native peoples. An attempt to implement this was made at the Capital Workshop in Ottawa the following year. But despite continuing efforts at a local level and resolutions passed almost annually by the CUC, the complex issues involved in working with people from a radically different culture produced considerable frustration and disappointingly few results. One positive outcome was a growing awareness of the dimensions of the problem.

In 1961 a 'tempest in a teapot' (as it was described by a Baptist minister at the time) arose in Victoria, B.C. as a result of Unitarian action on a human rights issue. The provincial Fair Employment Practices Act, which had come into effect five years earlier, prohibited inquiries regarding the religion of applicants for employment. The Unitarian Fellowship of Victoria sent a letter to the city council pointing out that the city itself was asking this question on the forms it provided for would-be employees, and requesting that this be discontinued. The council turned down this request by a vote of five to three

after a debate in the course of which an alderman, who was a Presbyterian minister and former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, denounced 'the so-called Unitarians' as 'a rather noisy group ... made up of people who very definitely are anti-Christian.'[55] The resulting controversy raged for the better part of a month, with both Victoria newspapers defending the Unitarian stand, till the issue was closed by the council's retraction upon receipt of a formal notification from the Labour Relations Board that it was in violation of the law.

A somewhat similar principle was at stake three years later when Unitarians protested the refusal of the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe county, Ontario to let an otherwise qualified couple adopt a child because they were atheists. Adoption irrespective of conventional lines of demarcation had become a Unitarian cause. In 1960 the Open Door Society had been founded by the Montreal Lakeshore congregation as an organization to support couples planning to adopt children of mixed race. A struggle for the right to adopt across international boundaries came later, and some war-injured children from Bangladesh were eventually received into Canadian Unitarian families.

In the postwar era Unitarians concentrated heavily on the effort to liberalize Canadian attitudes and laws with regard to sex, marriage, and the family. Many members took a leading role in family planning associations and worked for the repeal of those sections of the criminal code that made it illegal to advertise or recommend procedures for birth control. Year after year the CUC urged such repeal at its annual meetings and one of their number, Robert Prittie, tried to bring it about by way of a private member's bill in the House of Commons. Unitarians reacted in precisely the same way to Canada's archaic divorce laws. In both these areas the struggle was eventually successful, and the same was true to a large degree of a third area to which it then moved, that of the legalization of abortion. At the same time, Unitarian congregations moved to establish procedures to strengthen family life and mitigate the hardships arising from marital breakdown. 'Extended families' were established in a number of congregations, being essentially mutual support groups that attempted to provide a deliberately planned replacement for the old-style extended family in long-settled societies where large numbers of closely related persons of all ages lived in close proximity to each other. In 1971 the Vancouver church established the Unitarian Family Life Centre, which enlisted

and trained lay persons to work as volunteers under skilled supervision in providing counselling services and courses in human relations, open to the general public. The value of this work was recognized from 1974 onward by way of an annual grant from the provincial government.

A field with obvious possibilities for conflict between the principle of freedom for the individual and that of concern for the common good is that of health. To what extent can it be justified to do good to people by compulsion? In some cases the decisions are easy, in principle at any rate. P. P. Carpenter's long campaign for public sanitation in Montreal had to contend with formidable obstacles; but they were those raised by ignorance, apathy, resistance to public expenditures, and self-centred vested interests. In other controversies there were defensible principles on both sides. Vaccination was a case in point. Some Unitarians opposed it vigorously, notably Albert Walkley. He claimed that the use of compulsion, however well-intentioned, presupposed a more infallible knowledge of all aspects of the situation than actually existed, and was moreover 'against British ideas of liberty'.[56] In taking this stance he was probably in a minority among Unitarians, but there was a much more even spread of opinion with regard to fluoridation of public water supplies, where the scope for conscientious objectors to contract out was so greatly reduced.

Unitarians encountered fewer difficulties in bringing their principles to bear when dealing with mental health. Canada's record in this field was a dismal one, and the churches in general did little to urge improvement.[57] Some Unitarians took up the cause. Cordner in Montreal and Dall in Toronto were both outraged by the practice of confining mental patients in the common jails, which was widespread in the first half of the nineteenth century and far from unknown in the second half. Cordner was a leader in the agitation for the building of a mental hospital in Montreal (the jail was still used in the 1850s), and wrote a pamphlet on the subject. But the foremost Unitarian contributor to this field was Joseph Workman. 'No one until we come to Osler,' wrote the historian of the Canadian Medical Association, 'commands our attention and respect to a greater degree.'[58] In 1852 he was placed in charge of the newly built Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto, and the appointment was placed on a continuing basis the following year. 'Workman spent twenty-one years turning the Asylum into a modern institution, and incidentally making himself famous for

his methods of dealing with the insane. He gave them a freedom which shocked his contemporaries, and did all he could to improve their surroundings.... His originality and freshness of expression made him an unusually attractive personality. He contributed abundantly to the medical journals and even translated most of the work done in Italy at the time on the anatomy and physiology of the brain.'[59]

Languages were Workman's hobby. In addition to Italian, he had a working knowledge of French, German, Danish, and Spanish, and used this to translate medical articles for the North American journals. He was an honorary member of the Italian Societa Freniatra and was the only person in North America to be elected an honorary member of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain.

In more recent times Unitarian congregations have contained an unusually high proportion of professionals from all fields of medicine, and especially psychiatry. Work has also been done by lay persons in this area, particularly in the Canadian Mental Health Association and in the organization within the Toronto First Congregation of the White Cross Society to assist in the reintegration into society of persons discharged from mental hospitals.

With regard to the non-medical use of drugs, Unitarians have tended to draw a distinction between such powerfully addictive and socially destructive drugs as heroin and 'soft' drugs such as marijuana, which are less obviously harmful in their effects upon the individual and upon society at large. To deal with the former, the CUC annual meeting of 1974 echoed the sentiments expressed by many individual Unitarians in recommending a program based on control and rehabilitation on the British model rather than reliance on harshly punitive measures. Typical of the reaction to the latter has been the recommendation that control of soft drugs be placed under the Food and Drugs Regulations rather than the Narcotics Control Act. Resolutions to this effect were twice passed by CUC annual meetings, and similar representations were made on behalf of several congregations to hearings of the LeDain Royal Commission on the subject.

The drugs that have been at the same time most acceptable socially and subject to the severest strictures from some religious circles have been tobacco and alcohol. Not until the most recent period, when the full extent of its damaging effects has been more clearly demonstrated, have Unitarians had much to say about tobacco, and even in this period they have focused more upon protecting the rights of non-

smokers to breathe unpolluted air than on any direct critique of tobacco itself. Such a critique was occasionally evident in the past; for instance, it was noted of one incumbent of a Canadian pulpit before the turn of the century that 'his moral tone ... has not been improved by his tobacco habit, and it gives him the appearance of wanting somewhat in that perfect cleanliness and refinement which should characterize a Unitarian minister.'[60]

The crusade against alcohol on the part of many Protestant churches in Canada began in the 1820s, when the first temperance associations were formed. From the outset, Unitarians were divided on this subject. Some, like Benjamin Workman, gave their immediate and wholehearted support to the campaign. Others felt that *abusus non tollit usus*, and that the causes of intemperance rather than the symptom should be the object of their concern. Very few Unitarians were prepared to advocate such limitations upon individual freedom as were inherent in legal prohibition, though the Universalists called for this at their annual convention for Canada West as early as 1852 and reiterated the stand in 1887. At a personal level, Unitarians were likewise divided between those who saw no harm in the moderate use of alcohol and those who were strictly teetotal. Charles Dall was disconcerted when he visited Montreal in 1852 to discover that Cordner had wine at his table, as did some of his leading members such as Luther Holton and William Workman. Dall was himself a vigorous advocate of total abstinence, as were other Toronto Unitarians such as William Hincks and G. M. Rose. It was recorded of Alexander Workman that he wished to bequeath this motto to his posterity: 'Our ancestor, Alexander Workman, did not use strong drink, not even wine, nor will we ever do it.'[61]

The twentieth century saw swings of Unitarian sentiment in both directions. J. T. Sunderland was an outspoken temperance advocate, and with the rising influence of the social gospel Unitarians began to move toward support of legal prohibition. C. T. S. Bullock had scarcely arrived as minister in Ottawa in 1914 when a plebiscite came up on the subject of curtailing the number of saloons in the city. 'When you go to the voting place tomorrow,' he urged his congregation, 'think of the "weaker brother" rather than of the man who profits by his weakness.'[62] As the war progressed and the Prohibition forces met with success in province after province, William Irvine told the Unitarian General Conference at Montreal in 1917: 'We have

experienced a temperance revolution.... We have abolished the bar and all retailing of drink within the Provinces. The result as to the consumption of liquor, the amount of crime, and the decreasing of poverty has been amazing.... The victory we are struggling for... must be complete and final.'[63]

Seven years later, when reverses for the Prohibition forces all across the country had replaced the earlier successes, the board of trustees of the Vancouver church associated itself with the interchurch campaign spearheaded by the B.C. Prohibition Association to oppose any extension of facilities for procuring alcoholic beverages in the province. But Unitarian enthusiasm for this cause was already waning. Despite the increasingly alarming statistics about the extent of alcohol abuse in the postwar period, the subject found practically no place in Unitarian pronouncements or activities at either an individual or denominational level.

Another subject which has provoked strong attacks from other churches but little comment from Unitarians has been that of gambling. References to the issue recur from time to time, but few as forthright as that of C. W. Casson from the Ottawa pulpit in 1906: 'The gambling spirit is the curse of the modern time.... It is the will-o-the-wisp of dishonest profits, enticing men from the firm ground of financial integrity into the morass of the immoral.... Dishonesty is worse than intemperance, and a gambler than a drunkard.'[64]

The treatment of offenders against society has been a long-standing Unitarian concern. Emphasis has been placed upon rehabilitation rather than retribution or deterrence as the guiding principle of a penal system. As early as 1831 Benjamin Workman published a strongly worded editorial in the *Courant* in opposition to the current practice of flogging. Abolition of the death penalty had been urged by the Polish Unitarians back in the sixteenth century, and the Unitarians of Canada stood strongly in the same tradition. Agitation on the subject began in the nineteenth century, with Cordner and William Hincks among its leaders; the Universalists of the period took the same stand through a resolution of their Canada West Convention in 1853. More enlightened treatment of offenders was closely associated with Universalist theology; harsh penal methods combined naturally with the punitive hellfire theology widespread in other denominations.

One of William Irvine's earliest moves after his election to parliament was to introduce a private member's bill calling for the abolition

of capital punishment. In the second half of the twentieth century, as the prospects for success increased, the tempo of Unitarian activity in this field was stepped up. All across the country sermons were preached on the subject and congregational action was initiated. A unanimous resolution from the Vancouver church was forwarded to the federal government at the beginning of 1960. A few months later the social action committee of Toronto First Congregation, which had taken a particularly active part in the campaign, conducted a poll to see how fully the congregation as a whole stood behind it. Only 15 per cent of the respondents favored retention of the death penalty, whereas 72 per cent gave unqualified support to abolition. Twelve years later, when parliamentary victory for the abolitionist forces hung in the balance, the Toronto social action committee travelled to Ottawa for talks with the Solicitor-General, and the following annual meeting of the CUC endorsed abolition unconditionally.

Rehabilitation and preventive work were the dominant themes of Ada Tonkin's role from 1929 on as the pioneering director of the Women's Protective Division of the Vancouver Police Force. The same was true of the work twenty years later of the Unitarian Women's Alliance in Toronto, which sponsored and actively participated in the local Elizabeth Fry Society, organized to assist in the reintegration into society of women being released from prison. Conditions within the penal institutions themselves, which have placed Canada among the more backward countries of the world, have also been a continuing concern going back at least as far as Cordner's first public lecture on the subject in 1847. In recent years this too has taken an increasingly important place in congregational discussions and action.

No issue has loomed larger among Unitarian concerns than that of international peace and co-operation. Of all the social questions dealt with in Cordner's *Bible Christian* during its five years of publication (1844-48) this took up most space by a considerable margin; Cordner even crossed the Atlantic to attend the Paris Peace Congress of 1849. Other nineteenth-century Unitarian leaders such as William Hincks expounded the same theme. In the opening decade of the present century Albert Horton was director of the Canadian Peace and Arbitration Society, which promoted an annual observance of Peace Sunday in churches of all denominations. Speaking at one such service at the Unitarian church in Ottawa, Horton pointed to the 'awful destructiveness of conflict' as illustrated in the Russo-Japanese war. He

denounced the growth of militarism in Canada, expressing itself through the increase in military spending to more than six million dollars a year and the introduction of military training into the schools.[65]

Unitarians were never content simply to deplore war, but proceeded to diagnoses of its causes and prescriptions for its cure. Sunderland, like Cordner before him, minced no words in his excoriation of imperialism, particularly the British record in India. The Western treatment of Orientals in general he branded as arrogant and indefensible. Even after World War I had broken out, Unitarians devoted a great deal of time and attention to uncovering its origins and discussing plans to prevent a recurrence. Lukewarm public support for such plans after the war drew bitter comment from Snow in Montreal and later from Tonkin in Vancouver. The latter quoted the prophet Obadiah's judgment upon those who 'stood aloof', adding, 'Multitudes do stand aloof when considerations of common sense, apart from any of idealism or Christianity, demand that they enlist in the great campaign for peace.' He called for support of the League of Nations and for hard thinking on the issues that divide rather than 'emotional ideals'.[66]

Emotional ideals as well as hard thinking were expressed in the action of the Vancouver congregation eight years later, when at a congregational meeting they passed a formal resolution 'urging upon our members their duty to resist all efforts to induce them to engage in or to aid war; and pledging our support to any persons or agencies who seek to further the cause of peace through active opposition to war or preparation for war.'[67] Meanwhile, Sunderland's earlier role as analyst of causes was being taken up by Borgford in Halifax, with repeated warnings about the impending consequences of the rise of fascism in Europe. He called for a boycott of goods from aggressor nations such as Germany and Japan and urged collective security.[68]

In the postwar period the campaign for peace and international understanding was taken up vigorously. Brock Chisholm spoke at Unitarian meetings and services across the country warning that the very survival of humanity was at stake. The various Canadian initiatives for peace in the fifties drew praise and support from Unitarian congregations. There was substantial support for the founding and continuing operations of the Canadian Peace Research Institute. The healing work of the Unitarian Service Committee continued, and the urging of steps toward understanding such as the establishment of

diplomatic relations with the Chinese People's Republic became a recurrent theme at annual meetings of the CUC. In the early sixties the congregations in Toronto worked actively with the African Student Foundation in pioneering efforts to bring young Africans to further their education in Canada, contributing to the support of such students and in some cases accommodating them in Unitarian homes. Alongside such action to build co-operation at an international level went growing opposition from Canadian Unitarians to the brutal and purposeless war in Vietnam.

Action to promote peace flowed over into concern for environmental issues in the long campaign to combat radiation hazards. This began as a reaction to the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, which was a subject of protest from Unitarians in Canada from 1958 onward. Before long it generated a broader study of the environmental effects of all radioactive materials and the hazards to health inherent in them. Unitarian congregations expressed their opposition on all scores to the presence of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil, and they urged caution and more careful research before proceeding with the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Other sources of environmental pollution and degradation became a growing cause of concern, expressed almost annually in CUC resolutions from 1967 on.

This concern for the natural environment and its conservation has been a comparatively recent development. It scarcely appeared in the nineteenth century, though as early as 1898 Walkley called from the Ottawa pulpit for action to ensure that the Michigan lumber interests, 'after depleting their own rich pine lands, are not allowed to repeat the experiment in Ontario.'[69]

With rising consciousness of ecological considerations, this type of utterance from Unitarian ministers and congregations has grown much more frequent in the past few years.

Prominent among the members of Unitarian congregations at all periods in their history have been persons engaged in scientific pursuits. Some have worked as amateurs (John Frothingham and Joseph Workman both kept regular meteorological records, which are the earliest ones extant for Montreal and Toronto respectively), but many have had distinguished professional careers. Of these it is possible to cite only a few leading examples. William Hincks was in his day president of the Canadian Institute (now the Royal Canadian Institute) and editor of its journal. T. Sterry Hunt did outstanding work in the

Geological Survey of Canada. He was elected a Fellow of the (British) Royal Society in 1859 and in 1882 helped found the Royal Society of Canada, of which he became president two years later. Thorbergur Thorvaldson, professor of chemistry at the University of Saskatchewan during the inter-war years, won international renown for his work in developing an alkali-resistant cement for use in the foundations of buildings and bridges. W. E. Swinton's many distinguished positions included those of professor of zoology at the University of Toronto and director of the Royal Ontario Museum. He was the author of a number of popular books on zoology. So also was Norman Berrill, professor of marine zoology at McGill: his books included *The Living Tide* and *Sex and the Nature of Things*. Another zoologist, Fred Urquhart of the University of Toronto, became famous for his work in tracing the elusive migratory habits of the monarch butterfly.

A number of Unitarians have likewise risen to prominence in the arts. The best-known painter was certainly Arthur Lismer, a member of the Group of Seven, who came originally from a Unitarian family in England and was a member successively of the Toronto and Montreal congregations. Frederic Steiger, a member in Toronto, won considerable renown as a portrait painter. In the following generation have been several B.C. artists: Don Jarvis, J. A. S. Macdonald, and Sinclair Healy. Emanuel Hahn, formerly head of the Department of Sculpture in the Ontario College of Art, made some of the models for Canadian coinage. In music, Edward Fisher was the founder and first director of the Toronto Conservatory of Music; Luigi von Kunits created the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and was its versatile and talented conductor for nineteen years. A skilled concert violinist, he performed frequently at the old Unitarian church in Toronto, as did also Boris Hambourg, the renowned cellist who was another member of the congregation. In Montreal, George M. Brewer, organist and choirmaster of the Church of the Messiah, was a leading figure in the city's musical life for many years.

Since their love of words has been a frequently noted characteristic of Unitarians, their substantial contribution to all branches of literature from poetry, drama, and novels to political and religious writings, journalism and even publishing comes as no surprise. The first Unitarian literary figure in Canada combined most of these varied fields of activity in one person. He was Ariel Bowman, poet, journalist,

publisher, printer, and bookseller. As early as 1816 he made a short-lived attempt to establish a Reform newspaper in Montreal, which he called *The Sun* and dedicated to freedom of expression. In 1820 he published a volume of his own poetry, *Hours of Childhood and Other Poems*. After another unsuccessful attempt to launch a new newspaper, *The Canadian Times*, he joined with Benjamin Workman in 1829 to purchase and edit *The Canadian Courant*.

During this same early period, before the Unitarians had publicly announced themselves in Montreal, William Hedge edited *The Christian Register*, published in 1823 by the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society, which had a number of Unitarians among its directors. It was intended to 'contain the current news of the day in all the various fields of religious exertion.'[70] Later ventures into journalism included T. S. Brown's association with *The Vindicator* and the founding and editing of *The Examiner* by Francis Hincks.

For much of the nineteenth century there was widespread hostility from the Protestant churches toward all types of fiction, particularly plays and novels. Typical of this attitude was the declaration in a Presbyterian magazine in 1840 that 'professing Christians ought not to countenance the production of novels.'[71] Few Unitarians shared this point of view, though there were some among those who came from the Irish Presbyterian background. During his early period as editor of the *Courant*, Benjamin Workman inveighed against the theatre, which in combination with his similar campaign against alcohol could hardly have endeared him to his fellow Unitarian John Molson. The latter had been one of the chief promoters of Montreal's Theatre Royal, which brought new dimensions to the city's cultural life with a Shakespeare festival in 1826.

Though Benjamin Workman's attitude soon disappeared in Unitarian circles, other churches continued their campaign against the theatre well into the twentieth century. Troop noted its prevalence in 1910, when he claimed from the Ottawa pulpit that 'some of the best sermons are acted from the stage and not preached from the pulpit.'[72] Some of his own sermons, in fact, were pulpit reviews of current plays; the same procedure was followed by other Unitarian ministers both before and after his time. Many Unitarian congregations had their literary and dramatic societies; some had groups that produced plays in the churches, notably the Everyman Players at the Montreal

church, who enjoyed a wide reputation for their presentations of religious drama, particularly the medieval play from which they took their name.

The most notable Unitarian literary figures in the middle years of the nineteenth century were three sisters living in Montreal. All of them contributed on a substantial scale to *The Literary Garland*, which during an unprecedentedly long life for a Canadian magazine (1838-51) expressed a genteel culture inspired by the salons of London and Boston. Elizabeth L. Cushing was the prime mover in the successful attempt to re-establish a Unitarian congregation in 1841-42. She and Harriet V. Cheney wrote historical fiction as well as a great deal of poetry, which appeared not only in the *Garland* but also in Cordner's *Bible Christian*. In 1847 they established a children's magazine, *The Snow Drop*, and Elizabeth Cushing became editor of the *Garland* upon the death of its original editor, John Gibson. The third sister, T. D. Foster, who in due course became the wife of Unitarian minister Henry Giles, wrote articles on cultural life and book reviews.

There was little poetic output from other nineteenth-century Unitarians. A few poems by Hilary Bygrave, minister in Toronto from 1881 to 1886, appeared in British and American literary journals, and at a later date J. C. Hodgins published a small book of sonnets. R. S. Weir wrote two volumes of poetry in the leisure hours of an exacting legal career; he is chiefly remembered, however, as the author of the most commonly used translation of the original French words of *O Canada*. There were some distinguished journalists such as G. M. Rose, who became co-founder of the Toronto publishing firm of Hunter Rose and Co., and E. G. O'Connor, editor of the Montreal *Star* and subsequently general manager of the *Herald*. In later years many newspapermen were active Unitarians. During C. F. Potter's Edmonton ministry, for example, the editors of two of the city's newspapers were members of his congregation. More recently two Unitarian editors of *Maclean's*, Blair Fraser and Ralph Allen, had an impact upon Canadian life through a variety of literary forms.

Outstanding among Canadian poets was Stephan G. Stephansson, of whom it was said by Watson Kirkconnell that 'it is quite possible that he will some day be acknowledged as the earliest poet of the first rank, writing in any language, to emerge on the national life of Canada.'[73] Though he won recognition as the leading poet in Icelandic of his time, the fact that he wrote in that language meant that his work remained little known to the community at large. The same could not be said of another Canadian of Icelandic descent, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who gained a wide circle of readers for his vivid accounts of his Arctic explorations, which embodied an imaginative interpretation of life and broad human sympathies.

The most prominent Unitarian literary figures to appear later in the century have been poet Dorothy Livesay, novelist Margaret Laurence, and playwrights Mavor Moore and Lister Sinclair.

The Unitarian contribution to the overall picture of religious thinking and practice in Canada is difficult to document and assess. Often its effects may have been very indirect. But Unitarians have no doubt played some part in bringing about the gradual emergence in most religious circles of a greater willingness to accept the results of contemporary research and to abandon the extreme conservatism of Canadian religion in days gone by. The growth of tolerance and respect for varieties of personal conviction may be seen as a vindication of Unitarian principles. Their organizations may have remained small, but their influence has not.

Notes

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V CHURCH RECORDS

Most congregations possess historical records with varying degrees of completeness. These are still in the possession of their original owners, with the exception of the early records from Ottawa, which are lodged in the Ottawa City Archives, and those of the Experimental Unitarian Community of Mississauga, which are in the personal possession of Helen Tucker. I am indebted to her for the opportunity to examine them. The records of the CCUU & KRL are at the University of New Brunswick, those of the Canada West Universalist Association at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, and those of the Ontario Universalist Convention at the Olinda church.

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