

Rev. Dr. Myron Adams, Jr.:



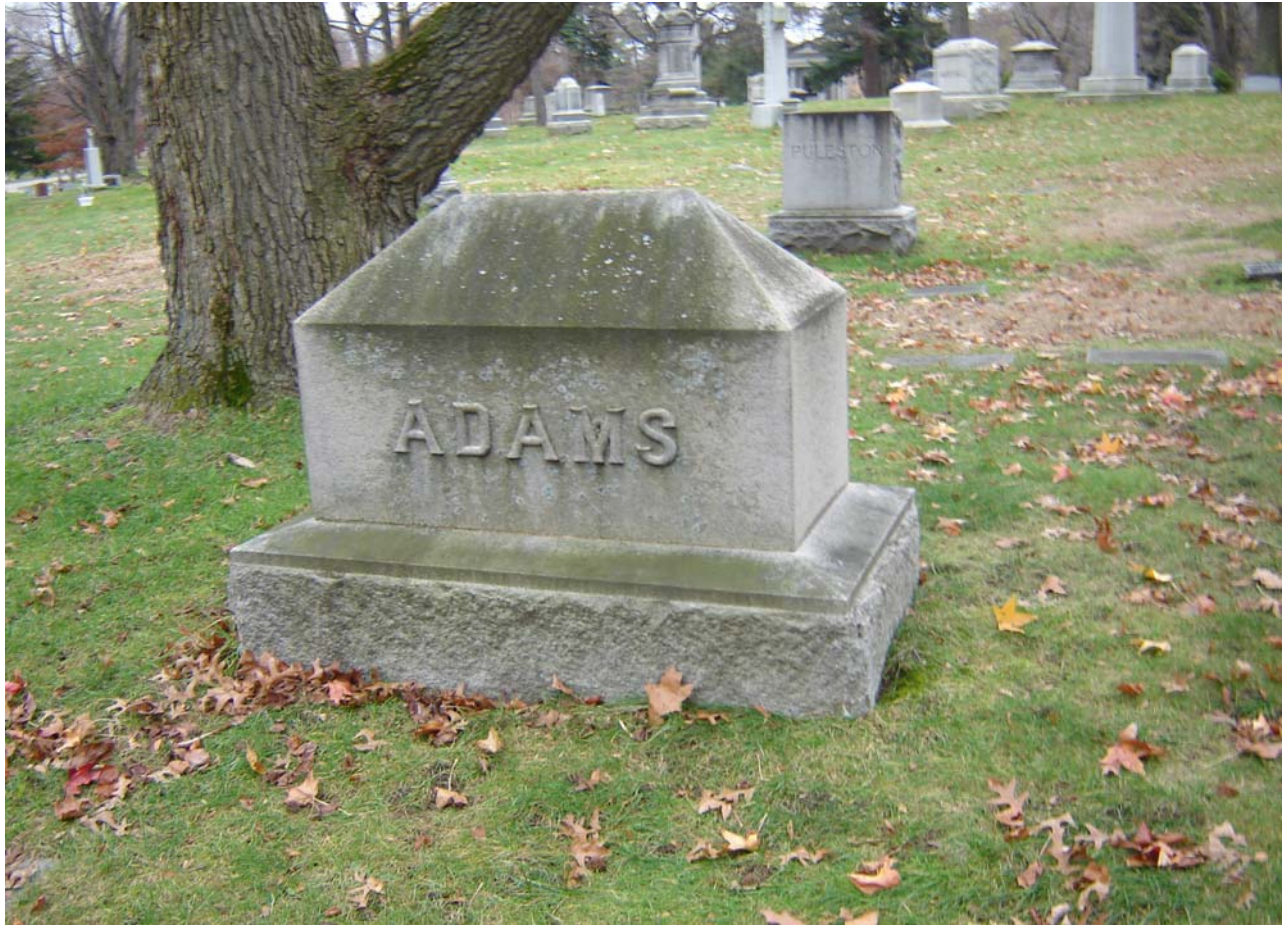
An Open Mind in a World Unkind

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Myron Adams, Rev. Myron Adams, Jr., and Samuel Hopkins Adams

My fraternity, which is a literary society, has been collecting books for 150 years, and I often peruse the rare, esoteric, delicate books that line our house library's shelves. One, *Grandfather Stories*, has been a favorite of mine since the day I cracked it open, reading from the first page: "Back in the last century grandparents were less durable than they are now. Few children got far into their teens with a full quota" (Adams 1). The author, Samuel Hopkins Adams, was a journalist and prolific writer of novels, 17 movie scripts, and biographies, who captured Jazz-age flapper culture in a pair of radically explicit novels, and whose reporting led to the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. In *Grandfather Stories*, Samuel Adams recounts tales told to him as a young boy by his grandfather, Myron Adams, and in doing so poignantly portrays the culture of Western New York in the nineteenth century. Samuel lived from 1871 to 1958, publishing the book in 1947 when he was 76. His grandfather lived from 1799 to 1893, situating many of the stories in 1820s Rochester.

As a student at Hamilton, Myron Adams was a member of the Philopeuthian literary society (Adams 109). Shortly thereafter in 1832, a discontented member of the same organization broke off and founded his own society, which he named Alpha Delta Phi. Little did the elder Adams know that a century later a book chronicling his life would be found in the Rochester Alpha Delt house library. Upon graduating Hamilton, Adams was instrumental in the construction and operation of the Erie Canal ("Ever hear of Adams Basin, you gillychick? Why, the Adamses *built* the Erie" [Adams 21]). It was the canal that was to credit for Rochester's explosion into a bustling metropolis, and this made Myron an integral part of the city, something he would not let people forget in later years. But to be a canal man in those early days was a lifestyle of its own: canallers were essentially the cowboys of the Wild West of New York. Myron's wife documents her parents' attitude towards the marriage: "Daughter of an honorable judge. Graduated at great cost from a Female Academy of Elegant

Learning. You, to throw yourself away upon a rough and rude canaller! Reflect, my child, reflect, ere it be too late!” (Adams 294). But history would prove this early conservatism wrong. She later writes: “My captain has news of another charter... New York! To think of walking on the elegant Bowery! Attending the theater... To visit a Broadway hotel! To see the coffeehouse wits at their cards or draughts! To stroll with the fashionables upon the spacious Batter! Never shall I cease to felicitate my happy fortune. How rich, how affording, how pompous is the career of a Canal wife!” (Adams 312). But there was a certain element of truth in her parents' concerns. In the middle of the night the canal was a hotbed for illicit activity. Adams condemns a nemesis and fellow canaller named Munk Birgo as a “resurrectioner:” Birgo would dig up corpses from cemeteries in the Rochester area and transport them along the canal to sell to medical schools, “where a subject in prime condition would fetch as high as fifty dollars” (Adams 130). On the other hand, Grandfather Adams on several occasions assisted in the smuggling of escaped slaves, once gouging a pistol-wielding slave-catcher’s eye out with a fending pole (Adams 97-100).

Myron Adams contained his rough-and-ready ways to the earlier portion of the 1800s, transforming into an austere and conservative, if bitterly elegiac man. How Myron Adams “would react to any innovation was a matter of anxious guesswork on the part of his family” (Adams 104). The surest way to enrage Mr. Adams was to suggest that the Erie Canal was obsolete: he denounced a *Democrat & Chronicle* editorialist as “A politician! A jimber-jawed, vituperous, injurious politician!” “Don't fret yourself so, Mr. Adams,” his wife counseled. “Take a swallow of your medicine.” He commanded young Samuel to throw the paper in the fire (Adams 240-1).

Although his cottage on South Union Street was modest, Myron was in his elder years a prominent and involved citizen (Adams 6). “Little that went on in the city of Rochester escaped the notice of” Myron Adams (Adams 94). He would address his wife Sarah only as “Mrs. Adams” and claimed to have chided Susan B. Anthony personally for being a bad cook and a nuisance (Adams

269). He was a strict and total abstentionist (“next to drunkenness he reprehended gambling” [Adams 14]), relying only on thrice-a-day doses of his beloved Hops Bitters, a patent medicine marketed by Asa Soule as a cure-all and “Invalid’s Friend & Hope” (Adams 145). Incidentally, the active ingredient in Hops Bitters was high-proof whiskey, and the 40%-alcohol tonic may be to thank for the few moments of unreserved openness (and likely exaggeration as well) that Samuel got from his grandfather. It is surely also what first directed the budding journalist's attention to the mislabeling and misleading marketing of medicines and products in general, so perhaps Myron Adams, Sr. deserves a share of the praise for Samuel Adams' most far-reaching accomplishment, the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Amusingly, the entrepreneurial Asa Soule approached the University of Rochester with a proposal to change its name to Hops Bitters University in exchange for \$100,000 (May). A college named after an alcoholic beverage—misleading labeling or not?

Grandfather Tales paints a portrait of the elder Myron Adams as one of the most interesting personalities one could hope to meet, and our author is a bestseller who had a huge impact on American law and culture. The missing link in between, however, is the author's father, Myron Adams, Jr, who is notably absent from the account.

Myron Adams, Jr. was born in 1841 in East Bloomfield, Ontario County, of which his ancestor, John Adams, was the first white settler (*Union-Advertiser* June 16 1876). The Adamses reportedly shared kinship with the “Boston branch,” the “Presidential Adamses,” including John Quincy Adams, with whom Myron Sr. was personally acquainted. But “being no brag-hard,” Grandfather Adams said, John Quincy “would naturally not press the claim” of their kinship. Grandfather Adams looked down on the pampered, elite Adamses loafing around Massachusetts “while the hardier pioneers of the breed were risking the perils and hardships of the wilderness that made up Western New York in 1791” (Adams 12).

Myron Adams, Jr. graduated from Hamilton College with the class of 1863, a member of the

fourth generation of Adamases to call that school home (Samuel Adams would make for a fifth generation in 1891) (Adams dedication page). But “in nature’s realm he received a training which neither academy nor college can supply, which develops the intuition of the prophet and the poet, which expands the imagination and which made his sermons and even his ordinary conversation so rich in striking illustration that... none ever could listen without receiving fresh knowledge and impulses for purity and goodness” (*Union-Advertiser* Jan 2 1896). An eloquent writer and public speaker, he was elected by the Hamilton College Alumni as their Chosen Poet for 1877-8 (*Union-Advertiser* June 29 1877).

After his junior year of college, in August 1862, he volunteered to fight in the Civil War, and was not discharged until August of 1865, months after fighting had ceased. He attained the rank of 2nd Lieutenant (*Monroe County Veterans' Service Agency*). Having “secured an enviable record for bravery in action and acuteness of thought,” Myron Adams was appointed acting inspector general and acting adjutant of the Second US Colored Regiment. In 1864 he was taken prisoner at Harper's Ferry. In the Battle of Mobile Bay he played an essential role suspended “in the rigging, above the smoke and confusion on deck. Just below him was Admiral Farragut. The admiral gave his orders to Mr. Adams, who in turn signaled them to the other ships of the fleet.” In May of 1865 he was honored with the deeply significant task of taking “the dispatches to the war department conveying the news of the surrender of the last Confederate army east of the Mississippi River.” An extremely patriotic man, he belonged to the “George H Thomas Post, and [had] always been deeply interested in Grand Army matters” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 30 1895), and “there were none outside...his own home, who knew him so well as his comrades in the [G.A.R.] post” (*Union-Advertiser* Jan 7 1896). On January 10, 1896, only a few days after Adams' death, the #84 Post of the Grand Army of the Republic was chartered as the Myron Adams Post (*Monroe County G.A.R. Posts*).

After the war Adams entered the Auburn Theological Seminary. In the fall of 1868 he married

Hester Rose Hopkins, a resident of Auburn seven years his junior and the daughter of Samuel Miles Hopkins, D.D., “an erudite Professor of Church History in a Presbyterian Seminary” (Adams 4). The kindly Samuel Miles Hopkins, who had likely taught Adams, probably served an important position as guide and mentor in Myron's young adult years. Samuel Hopkins was a chief benefactor of Harriet Tubman (Adams 263) and was so important to Myron Adams that Adams' only son bears his name, Samuel. Upon completing his studies at the seminary, Adams “preached for one year in Union Springs, NY, then assumed the pastorate of First Presbyterian Church of Dunkirk” where his brother Edward also preached (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 30 1895). In May of 1878, Adams “received a call to fill the pulpit at Plymouth Church” (*Union-Advertiser* Ap 4 1876) and settled with his wife and son in the “ruffle-shirt district” of Rochester's Third Ward, which “across the river from Union Street, was still the habitat of Rochester's old-time aristocracy” (Adams 3).

Each Friday, Myron Adams, Sr. would “drive across the Genesee River from his home on South Union Street to visit [his son] in his Plymouth Church study and give him doctrinal advice for his upcoming sermon” (Adams 70). While the elder Myron, set in his ways, represented reservedness and stringent doctrinal piety, the younger Myron deviated from his father in his openness to new ideas. Myron Jr. was approached by a young George Eastman in need of investors in a new product, a “clicking box”:

“It's a mechanism,” Father began. “An invention of his own.”

“Inventions are wiles of Satan, and investment in them sheer wastethrift,” Grandfather said. “How much did he invite you to put into it?”

“One hundred dollars was mentioned,” Father said hesitantly.

“A mere nothing to a rich young minister,” Grandfather replied sardonically. “No more than a dozen wedding fees and a few funerals.”

“Surely some inventions have both forwarded human progress and proved profitable,” said my father. “I even thought, sir, that you might wish to look into it yourself, with a view to a small investment.”

The old gentleman glowered at the inoffensive box as if it were an infernal machine. “What is the precise nature of this device?” he asked...

“It is a camera... designed for amateurs, to enable them to take their own pictures by simple pressure on a lever. This camera...”

“Camera? Chimera!” Grandfather broke in... “Camera! Chimera! Press your lever. Take my photograph.”

“This is only a model,” Father explained. “A great deal of adjustment will be needed before it is perfected.”

“Just so! And you would risk your savings and tempt mine in such bobcrackery. No, no, my son. Never trust a cameraman... Cameras. Quimby manipulated a camera obscura and his partner, Carr, a camera lucida, and which was the greater ingler I should be at a loss to tell you.” ... “I recall that the Carr scoundrel bore some resemblance to your friend with the patent box.”

Father shook his head in mild deprecation. “Young Eastman is a very respectable character,” he said.

“What did he call the thing?” Grandfather asked.

“The name escapes me,” Father answered. “It was a rather grotesque, Eskimo-sounding work, something like ‘Kayak.’”

“Under any name you are well out of it, and your hundred dollars saved,” Grandfather said. “No Adams money for such chimera.”

“I suppose you're right, sir,” Father said.

(Adams 71-81)

This exchange was ominous and representative of the opposing forces that would come to define Myron Adams Jr.'s life.

Though scientists and theologians are often regarded as two very disparate camps, Myron Adams, Jr. was an all-around thinker who desired to see how the world works from every angle. “He had a hearty love of nature. He rejoiced in butterflies and beetles. Until he made his fine instrument a present to Hamilton College, he delighted in microscopic investigations of diatoms and rotifers” (Hartwell). He recorded his thoughts on the nature of the world on a Caligraph, an early typewriter (Adams 70).

When Darwin's theory was published in 1859, “Thoughtful men everywhere began to ponder anew the origin and nature of life and society. In Rochester, where an intellectual community had already taken root, nurturing and in turn being nurtured by the university, the theological seminary, and a number of cultural associations, fruitful contributions were to be made in many scientific fields. A plan to make the university a great scientific laboratory failed to mature, yet the city did become a productive center of scientific growth; not, however, without experiencing repeated outbreaks of the current strife between science and theology” (McKelvey 7). Dr. Chester Dewey was a respected

minister with four D.D.'s and a scientific mind as well, and when the University of Rochester opened in 1850 he became one of its first professors of natural science. As early as 1840 in his lectures he attempted to “harmonize the Biblical account of creation” with new geological discoveries. With the founder of anthropology Lewis Henry Morgan, Dr. Dewey formed the Pundit Club, a select literary and intellectual circle that relied upon scientific and scriptural evidence to attempt to understand the universe. A partnership with the Smithsonian gave the group access to a wide audience, making Rochester a global hub for some circles (McKelvey 7).

University of Rochester professor Henry Ward, who had amassed a zoological collection including the first stuffed gorilla in the United States, sold his collection to the University for \$20,000, making the University of Rochester a hotbed of zoological research, but Ward, like university president Martin Anderson, was soon after troubled by a “discrepancy between his scientific knowledge and the theological traditions to which his mother and most of his associates were strongly attached” (McKelvey 11). Many eminent thinkers were essentially believers in Darwin's theory, but nearly all of them avoided the word “evolution” for fear of crossing a theological boundary. “[Lewis Henry] Morgan’s personal copies of Huxley and Darwin, still preserved at the University of Rochester, contain some interesting markings which indicate the care with which the Rochester scholar read these books” (McKelvey 11). A growing and pressing divide between religion and science was coming to the forefront; academics and clergymen were lecturing and preaching about topics like “Theology as Related to the Scientific Method” and “Genesis and Geology” (McKelvey 12).

Reverend Dr. Newton M. Mann, a Unitarian minister in Rochester, invited Professor W. D. Gunning of the University of Rochester to lecture before his congregation regarding Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Biology*, and it was then that the Darwinian controversy exploded onto the public scene in Rochester. Susan B. Anthony, a member of Mann's congregation, was first introduced to Darwin at these lectures, but her thoughts on the matter went unrecorded. From that point, Reverend Mann and

Charles Dewey, the son of Professor Dewey, formed the Spencer Club, which met regularly in the Third Ward, which incidentally, Reverend Myron Adams called home (McKelvey 13).

Reverend Dr. Nesbit conceded in his lectures at the Lake Avenue Mission that “God had used geological forces to prepare the planet for man and granted whatever time span was required, but he was not receptive to the Darwinian theory of man’s origin” (McKelvey 13). Bishop Haven of the Episcopal church, however, ridiculed evolution in Rochester the next week, “yet the opposition was characterized more by reason than by emotion, for a learned piety had already supplanted evangelistic fervor in most Rochester churches” (McKelvey 13). Meanwhile, Rev. Dr. Mann, who prior to the Civil War became the first preacher to note the challenges Darwinism posed to religion, asserted in 1874 that the theory applied not only to physical life, “but to all life functions; furthermore, as man became conscious of his spiritual environment and developed his potentialities in this field, the evolution of the soul occurred” (McKelvey 13-14). This is an intriguing view that has been forgotten as the struggle between creationism and evolution still plays out in some circles.

For the next few years, the debate receded to the background as an economic depression seized the attention of the public and scientists turned to empirical research rather than philosophical discussion. In the late 1870s, though, the Spencer Club resumed discussion, this time including Lewis Henry Morgan himself, and a new clerical member of note: Myron Adams. Spencer had become a symbol of evolution, and Morgan's work *Ancient Society* had strong evolutionary implications. (Karl Marx, incidentally, found additional *revolutionary* implications in Morgan's work, which he used as a foundation for his socialist platform.) In January 1879 the Rochester Microscopical Society formed, comprised chiefly of Spencer Club members and other prominent scientists, including Edward Bausch, with the University of Rochester's Professor Lattimore as president (McKelvey 15).

Rev. Myron Adams was virtually asking for it. In September 1880 he found himself at the center of this historical controversy when he was accused of heresy for his unorthodox views. Perhaps

surprisingly, the objections were not raised on evolutionary grounds; he was charged with deviating from the Church's view on the end of the world. Apparently Adams was too compassionate in trying to understand sin as a disease that should be cured rather than something that deserved eternal punishment (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 5 1880).

The charges could be traced back to May of 1880, when Adams urged his entire congregation to assemble for a sermon that he said might change his status with the Church. He “proposed to study the state of Christianity at the present time with reference to the doctrine of eternal punishment.” It was a “bold step” that one parishioner looked upon “as the possible beginning of a revolution in church doctrine.” Many were surprised by the sermon and were “rather conservative about the expression of [their] views” immediately afterwards. One parishioner declared that “Mr Adams was a man without creed.” That man “did not believe in upsetting a revelation that had stood the test of hundreds of years and made men better.” But the prevailing sentiment at the time was one of love and respect for Adams and his ideas, and the feeling that because most of the congregation was open to Adams' well-reasoned and well-articulated views, the situation would not result in any serious fallout (*Union-Advertiser* May 17 1880).

If convicted of heresy, the Reverend faced disfellowship from the Ontario Congregational Association, “which has jurisdiction over the Congregational churches in the northern tier of counties” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 5 1880). “An impression generally prevail[ed] that Mr. Adams w[ould] be dropped from membership of the organization” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 29 1880) and the Association “did not occupy much time in coming to a conclusion,” announcing on December 25 that “we no longer endorse his ministerial teachings, while as individuals we entertain the kindest fraternal feelings towards him, and we earnestly pray and hope that he may be seen restored to our fellowship. We wish with brotherly solicitude and prayerfulness for the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit for our brother, assuring him of our desire and readiness to receive him again into our fellowship so soon as he shall

embrace the truths of God's word, which are the bond of our union.” They considered “this basis of faith to be a system of truths so related to each other that the denial of any of them impairs and tends to destroy all the others.” Adams was guilty of believing “that the sinner is to be pitied rather than blamed, is unfortunate rather than guilty.” His views on forgiveness and regenerations were “mystical and misleading,” and he denied “the truth of endless punishment, pronouncing the doctrine infamous and blasphemous, asserting that it is his unalterable conviction, upon which he seeks no future right... his eloquence has been turned against essential truths” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 25 1880).

But perhaps good things do come to those with the confidence and determination to keep an open mind. Defying the authority of the Congregational Association, the parishioners of Plymouth Church continued to embrace their beloved reverend, retaining him as pastor for another sixteen years. This inspiring feat captivated the attention of the city, “encouraging the press to give his sermons the fullest coverage accorded any preacher during the period” (McKelvey 20). Myron Adams Jr. now had unofficial authority to say what he believed, and the scholar sometimes preached sermons on topics including “the Course of Human Destiny” (*Union-Advertiser* Oct 19 1885). In 1886 the parish celebrated his tenth anniversary as pastor (*Union-Advertiser* May 10 1886).

The Rochester Microscopical Society “evolved” into the Rochester Academy of Science, and elected Myron Adams Jr. as president. Immediately after Adams' presidency, the “Microscopical Section of the local Academy was hailed as the largest and most active organization of its kind in America” (McKelvey 19). Adams became a living example of the necessity of thinkers to keep an open and inquisitive mind. As eloquent as he was intelligent, he said when retiring as president in 1883:

“A certain ancient writer, not usually regarded a scientific authority, is reported to have admonished his friends not to be forgetful to entertain strangers, 'for thereby,' he said, 'some have entertained angels unawares.' The advice is by no means inappropriate to those who are interested in scientific research. For all discoveries are strangers, and usually have received but a sparse and niggardly hospitality among men; and some of them have been treated quite disgracefully. If angels come to this world at all, they necessarily are obliged to come as strangers, and the unpleasant treatment they usually receive would cause any one but an angel to fly off again in disgust.

“It is not necessary to specify the well-known instances of antagonism which discoverers have encountered, because the law of antagonism has become so well established. A discoverer has not found his pathway one of roses. He has almost invariably been like the old Hebrew prophets, who were persecuted by their own generation, while succeeding generations made such tardy recompense as they could by building monuments to their memory; the most popular reward of merit has ever been the grave stone. The building of monuments is well enough, but it is to be observed that the builders sometimes feel compelled to intermit their work long enough to persecute or kill some new prophet—according to the time-honored custom—and then proceed with their memorials in serene unconsciousness that they are the genuine children of their obtuse and inhospitable fathers. One might suppose that by this time we would have become so accustomed to discoveries of great value that we would not turn the cold shoulder on them, but we evidently have not generally reached that point of virtue yet. Discoverers have not necessarily been men of exceptional genius, as is, perhaps popularly supposed. They have been men who have kept open houses to new ideas. Of course new ideas are not always good ideas. He who entertains them will doubtless make the acquaintance of many a worthless tramp, but his hospitality will very likely be rewarded in his getting a hold of an occasional angel. And that will abundantly compensate him and bless multitudes beside him. The thing is to keep the mind open. An open and candid mind seems to stand always mediate between some great useful truth and the world” (*Union-Advertiser* Jan 9 1883).

Adams may have come under attack for his views of the afterlife, but his remarks upon postmortem remembrance here show a shrewdness possessed by very few men in this world. Drawing parallels between the Hebrew prophets and scientists, he mends the gulf between the opposing forces and with conviction sets himself apart from the rigidly conservative doctrines of his imposing father, Myron Adams Sr. The minister was astute enough to observe and condemn the phenomena of coming to appreciate a specific new idea while forgetting to appreciate the attitude which allowed for such innovation. Adams himself was vindicated by his parishioners in his lifetime by virtue of their love, trust in his good intentions, and faith in his intellect, and after his death by science. He needed not the “tardy recompense,” the “popular reward of merit” of a prominent and extravagant headstone. His work, writings, and spirit were everlasting monument enough.

In 1891, the freedom of thought was again being attacked by the Church and one Reverend McQueary found himself a victim of the heresy witch-hunt. Myron Adams Jr. based his sermon on a topic close to home, and his firm spiritual beliefs remained ever rooted in undeniable logic. Adams stated, “It is a strange thing that the prosecuting clergyman should have distinctly urged upon the court

that with the value or truth of the views of the accused clergyman the court had nothing whatever to do. This is astonishing, because the mission of the Episcopal church is to witness to the world the truth. That was the mission of the apostles and it must therefore be the true mission of their successors” (*Union-Advertiser* Jan 19 1891). Why should the Church have to be afraid of the truth? Adams' faith was too strong to be afraid of some superficial contradictions between science and theology. Advocating for McQueary, he said: “It seems to him that the fundamental principles, the real substance of the religion of the Episcopal church, underlying all its liturgies and canons and creeds, the incarnation and the like, were not disproved by the findings of the great philosophers, but that they were really substantiated by them. Only of course, the creeds and canons and other such things would have to be reinterpreted, or perhaps some of them to be restated. But he felt, no doubt, that anything which gets itself stated, by men, is capable as time goes on, and as necessity occurs, of restatement. And so he addresses himself, as a conscientious minister of the church, to a new interpretation of the things which Episcopalians hold to be true.” Adams concluded with a moving appeal for the freedom of thought, and his voice rang out throughout the city of Rochester. That same week, the confidence of other parsons was sufficiently bolstered to allow for the preaching on topics as controversial as “The Origin of Man” and “Did Man Even Fall?” (*Union-Advertiser* Jan 19 1891).

Hester Adams, influenced by the intellect and independence of her father and husband, exhibited comparable literary prowess as one of four founding members of the Wednesday Morning Club, which quickly attracted the most prominent and intelligent women in Rochester, including Mary Gannett, Edwine Danforth, Emily Barnes Hollister, several Sibleys, Lydia Ward, and Mary Warner. “The Wednesday Morning Club was the smallest, the youngest, and undoubtedly the best of the women’s literary societies” (Perkins). Hester was described by Rose Alling, club secretary in 1940, as a “plump, nice, friendly, smiling person with no pretense of being an intellectual” (Wednesday Morning Club minutes, Rush Rhees Rare Books). The Wednesday Morning Club continues to meet to this day,

with "each meeting... anticipated as a feast of reason and a flow of soul." (Bolger).

On December 29, 1895 at his home at 49 Oxford Street, Myron Adams, Jr. succumbed to valvular heart disease, from which neither prayer nor contemporary science could save him. Never one to adhere to convention, he eschewed the Adams family trait of longevity, departing this world a mere two years after his father, who lived to be 94. The minister was 54 years and nine months (*Interment Records, Riverside Cemetery*). On New Year's Day of 1896, he was buried in Mt. Hope. At the widely-attended ceremony, he was honored with several moving tributes, including a poem by Dr. Landsberg:

He taught the cheerfulness that still is ours.
 The sweetness that still lurks in human powers;
 If heaven be full of stars, the earth has flowers.
 His was the searching thought, the glowing mind,
 The gentle will, to others soon resigned;
 But, more than all, the feeling just and kind.
 His pleasures were as melodies from reeds--
 Sweet books, deep music and unselfish deeds,
 Finding immortal flowers in human weeds.
 True to his kind, nor of himself afraid,
 He deemed that love of God was best arrayed
 In love of all things that God has made.
 He deemed man's life no feverish dream of care,
 But a high pathway into freer air.
 Lit up with golden hopes and duties fair.
 He showed how wisdom turns its hours to years,
 Feeding the hear on joys instead of fears,
 And worships God in smiles, and not in tears.
 His thoughts were as a pyramid up-piled,
 On whose far top an angel stood and smiled—
 Yet in his heart was he a simple child.

Plymouth Church issued a resolution on Adams' death, proclaiming that "Unmindful of consequences to himself, Dr Adams carried his efforts for the development of truth to the utmost limits of a physique which was never too robust. ... His unremitting effort to diffuse the liberality and charity which filled his whole life is largely due the tolerance and kindly feeling which exists among the churches of Rochester.... His life, terminated all too soon, will stand in this community as an exemplification and center from which will radiate more and more brightly as time moves on, the fullness of the principle which actuated him, the fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of

man” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 31 1895). Indeed his legacy could already be seen: “In March 1894 the old creed of Plymouth Congregational Church,” which Adams had been convicted of contradicting, “was replaced by a much simpler and shorter one,” which stated as a main mission of the church: “to discover truth and dispel ignorance and superstition and to bring about improved social conditions” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 30 1895).

Although in October Adams had “had an apoplectic attack and it was then thought that he would not live more than a few days... the end came suddenly... as Mr Adams was about to go to breakfast. Death was instantaneous and without warning” (*Union-Advertiser* Dec 30 1895) and his family was unprepared. In the next five months, his wife and brother bought a family plot, complete with a staunch obelisk bearing simply the five-letter name, “Adams,” in Section G of Riverside Cemetery on the other side of the city. Myron’s body was moved and became the first burial in the plot on April 26, 1896. His grave, like that of all members of the family buried in the plot, is a small ground-level stone, and reads simply, “Myron Adams 1841-1895.” As a minister, Myron Jr. was not a wealthy man, so the small marker bearing his name is not surprising, but because the purchase of the entire plot was prompted by his death, we can assume that the grand Adams monument was erected originally for Myron.

He is flanked by his wife Hester (1857-1917), who did not join him until twenty-three years later, and his brother, Abner (1838-1908). Next to Abner lie his wife Minerva (1842-1920), and their son Robert T. (1866-1932). Other Adams family members were buried in the plot as recently as 1985, with some bearing a small cross in place of the dash between the dates, and others displaying three interlocking rings representative of the Oddfellows Society. John Myron Adams, apparently named as a tribute to Myron Jr., fittingly followed in his footsteps by rising the army ranks to the position of Captain (*Monroe County Veterans' Services Agency*). Although stationed in Baltimore at the time of his death, John Myron, in cremated form, joined his namesake in Riverside Cemetery in 1937 (*Records of*

Internment of Riverside Cemetery). Seven vacant spaces remain on the Adams lot.

It is unknown where that curious and remarkable gentleman, Myron Adams Sr. of South Union Street, found his final resting place. Samuel Hopkins Adams is interred near New York City.

The idea of a young man dwelling on the banks of the Genesee, sledding “on the mounds opposite Mt. Hope Cemetery” (now Highland Park) in the winter (Adams 230), rebelling against the conservatism of an overbearing father by embracing new and perhaps radical ideas, is one that many students at the University of Rochester can relate to. That upon searching beneath an incredibly plain and simple gravestone, one would uncover such a significant figure in history, is something more surprising altogether. The story of Myron Adams Jr. is one of the city of Rochester, the University, and of the continuing tensions between science and philosophy. As Rev. Adams himself was astute enough to realize, it is not his gravestone which is the true monument to his life, but a concept: that of inquisitive open-mindedness and this is one much more timeless, and eternally applicable in the interest of furthering human progress. Acid rain poses no threat to the intangible but ever-present memorial of the scientist-theologian, the charismatic and determined minister who believed that we could learn most about God not by looking up towards Heaven, but around us, on the Earth that He created—for religion, he knew, had nothing to fear from truth.

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"The Last Sad Rites—Funeral of Rev. Dr. Myron Adams is Largely Attended." *Union-Advertiser*, Jan 2 1896.

Appendix

Rev. Myron Adams' View-Several Sunday Sermons.

Union-Advertiser Jan 19 1891

Rev. Myron Adams, pastor of Plymouth Church, preached yesterday morning on the McQueary trial. His text was:

"In that He said a new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged nigh unto vanishing away." -Hebrews viii., 13. In the course of his sermon, the speaker said: "It is a strange thing that the prosecuting clergyman should have distinctly urged upon the court that with the

value or truth of the views of the accused clergyman the court had nothing whatever to do. This is astonishing, because the mission of the Episcopal church is to witness to the world the truth. That was the mission of the apostles and it must therefore be the true mission of their successors. The prosecutor urged the court to consider that it was not sitting to determine the truth, but only the question whether the accused had violated the canons or outward rules of the Diocese of Ohio. Since Jesus, however, was the minister of a new covenant, and since the characteristic nature of that new covenant is that it means a transfer of the laws of God from the outward, and outwardly regulated place, to the inward; and since the Episcopal church undertakes to carry on the work of this new arrangement—as the successor of Jesus and his apostles—it will be seen that the prosecutor has offered the court precisely the counsel he ought to have condemned.”

Continuing the speaker defender the young minister's course in making a study of the subject of evolution and publishing his views in a book. Said the speaker, referring to Mr. McQueary: “It seems to him that the fundamental principles, the real substance of the religion of the Episcopal church, underlying all its liturgies and canons and creeds, the incarnation and the like, were not disproved by the findings of the great philosophers, but that they were really substantiated by them. Only of course, the creeds and canons and other such things would have to be reinterpreted, or perhaps some of them to be restated. But he felt, no doubt, that anything which gets itself stated, by men, is capable as time goes on, and as necessity occurs, of restatement. And so he addresses himself, as a conscientious minister of the church, to a new interpretation of the things which Episcopalians hold to be true. He is a loyal son and servant of the church, as he believes, and in the prosecution of his services writes a book. What he proposes is an adjustment of the Episcopal church to the demands of the development of truth as it has progressed thus far.”

The speaker said the significance of the case rests on the defendant's appeal for liberty of thought. In closing Mr. Adams said:

“The business of hunting heresy may be some time further prosecuted, after a fashion, but it is prosecuted with much less vigor than formerly. Bishops who have heretical clergymen in their own dioceses prefer that the cases of heretical gentlemen in other dioceses should be tried. We may concede that it is better to refrain from such things, and see if, perchance, the hand of God is not in them, and whether, in fact, in proceeding against obscure young parsons, the church authorities may not be proceeding uselessly against God.”

At the Second Universalist Church last evening an able sermon on “The Origin of Man” was delivered by the pastor, Rev. F. J. Chase. This was the first of a series of discourses on “Questions the People are Asking.” The new lecture will be on the question: “Did Man Even Fall?”

At the YMCA music hall yesterday afternoon Joseph T. Alling spoke on a “Hero,” before an interested audience. Prof. P A Shanor, superintendent of the McKeesport schools, opened the lecture course at the Grace Lutheran Church Saturday night with an address on “Perils of the Republic.” Rev W C Gannet, pastor of the Unitarian Church, preached an able sermon yesterday morning on “The Crucifixion of the Jew.”

Academy of Science Annual Meeting—Address of the Retiring President—Election of New Officers—New Business Transacted.

Union-Advertiser Jan 9 1883

The Rochester Academy of Science held last week their regular annual meeting at their hall, Reynolds' Arcade. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved after which Rev. Myron Adams,

the retiring president, delivered his annual address as follows:

In surrendering of the office with which you have honored me, I venture to use the occasion in making a feeble plea in behalf of hospitality to new scientific ideas, not that I suppose such a plea is specially needed here; but it has occurred to me that if our notions upon this subject were even crudely shaped and formulated, it might be of some little service to us. A certain ancient writer, not usually regarded a scientific authority, is reported to have admonished his friends not to be forgetful to entertain strangers, 'for thereby,' he said, 'some have entertained angels unawares.' The advice is by no means inappropriate to those who are interested in scientific research. For all discoverers are strangers, and usually have received but a sparse and niggardly hospitality among men; and some of them have been treated quite disgracefully. If angels come to this world at all, the necessarily are obliged to come as strangers, and the unpleasant treatment they usually receive would cause any one but an angel to fly off again in disgust.

It is not necessary to specify the well-known instances of antagonism which discoverers have encountered, because the law of antagonism has become so well established. A discoverer has not found his pathway one of roses. He has almost invariably been like the old Hebrew prophets, who were persecuted by their own generation, while succeeding generations made such tardy recompense as they could by building monuments to their memory; the most popular reward of merit has ever been the grave stone. The building of monuments is well enough, but it is to be observed that the builders sometimes feel compelled to intermit their work long enough to persecute or kill some new prophet—according to the time-honored custom—and then proceed with their memorials in serene unconsciousness that they are the genuine children of their obtuse and inhospitable fathers. One might suppose that by this time we would have become so accustomed to discoveries of great value that we would not turn the cold shoulder on them, but we evidently have not generally reached that point of virtue yet. Discoverers have not necessarily been men of exceptional genius, as is, perhaps popularly supposed. They have been men who have kept open houses to new ideas. Of course new ideas are not always good ideas. He who entertains them will doubtless make the acquaintance of many a worthless tramp, but his hospitality will very likely be rewarded in his getting a hold of an occasional angel. And that will abundantly compensate him and bless multitudes beside him. The thing is to keep the mind open. An open and candid mind seems to stand always mediate between some great useful truth and the world.

Professor Tryndal gives some account of the discovery of invention of that useful instrument known as the barometer. Before the sixteenth century it was known that water rises in a pump, and the effect was explained by a maxim, 'Nature abhors a vacuum.' But it was not known that there was any limit to the height to which the water would stand until the gardeners of Florence, in attempting to raise water to a greater height found that the column ceased at thirty-two...

“A gray norther from Lake Ontario drenched Rochester and ruined Decoration Day for three of my cousins and me. There would be no parade, no bands, no saluting cannon, no ceremony in Mt. Hope Cemetery, no patriotic harangues--nothing but rain (Adams 82)

The Case of Rev Myron Adams

Union-Advertiser December 25, 1880.

The Ontario Congregational Association did not occupy much time in coming to a conclusion in the case of Rev. Myron Adams, of Plymouth Church, who was charged with having preached heretical doctrines. The announcement that they had decided to disfellowship him appeared in our Third Edition yesterday. The following is the report of the Association as transmitted to Mr. Adams:

Late Tuesday night the Ontario Association of Congregational Ministers, in session at Fairport, reached a decision in the case of Rev. Myron Adams, charged with heterodox preaching. Yesterday morning the following report was transmitted to Mr. Adams:

The Ontario Association of Congregational Ministers, having heard the report of the departure of our brother, the Rev. Myron Adams, from some of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, have felt it our imperative duty to institute such inquiries as would elicit the fullest information upon the subject. This we have done by prolonged personal interviews with our brother, by correspondence and by a committee, also by a careful examination before the Association and by the testimony of the representatives and other members of the church and society of which he is pastor. In the discharge of this painful duty, it will be seen that the Association has neither been hasty nor unkind.

The distress of mind and heart of some of the earnest members of Mr. Adams' church, the unsettling of many members of older churches and the endorsement of his teaching by those who avowedly and essentially differ from us, both in their principles of belief and public administrations, have left us no other alternative.

These proceedings were instituted on the basis of the declaration of faith of the association, which is as follows.

...

To this declaration of faith each brother ascends up by becoming a member of the association. To the faithful setting forth of these doctrines we attribute the success of the Christian church during its entire history. To those doctrines and to the hold which they have upon our own intellect and hearts we attribute under God whatever ... we may have had is our ministry.

We consider this basis of faith to be a system of truths so related to each other that the denial of any of them impairs and tends to destroy all the others, and in that sense the essential truths, so considered by the evangelical Christian churches throughout the world. And wherever these truths or any one of these have been abandoned the effects have been disastrous both to the individual and the church.

The Association has been deeply grieved to find:

First- That Brother Adams has not ...

Second- That his conception of sin is inconsistent with man's moral freedom and personal responsibility, regarding sin as a disease rather than a volunteer transgression, that the sinner is to be pitied rather than blamed, is unfortunate rather than guilty.

Third-That his views of the atonement are exceedingly mystical and misleading, as also his views upon Divine forgiveness and regeneration.

Fourth-That he absolutely denies the truth of endless punishment, pronouncing the doctrine infamous and blasphemous, asserting that it is his unalterable conviction, upon which he seeks no future right.

Fifth-We find that from the pulpit of the Plymouth Church, in Rocheer, a church whose name is dear to all who love the faith of our pilgrim fathers, his eloquence has been turned against essential truths and his ...

Sixth-...

Seventh- That while our brother's mind has undergone its radical change, he furnishes no satisfactory scriptural or rational basis for his belief, but relies upon impressions which he seems to mistake for inspirations.

There being the results of an anxious prayerful and patient investigation, derived from his own confessions and the acknowledgment of his friends officially appointed by Plymouth Church to communicate with us, it is obvious that Mr. Adams has virtually separated himself from us, as a member of the association.

This has filled our hearts with inexpressible pain on his own account and on account of his and our churches, and because we are deprived of the cooperation of a venial brother, gifted and beloved.

We do, therefore, feel constrained to officially declare that we no longer endorse his ministerial teachings, while as individuals we entertain the kindest fraternal feelings towards him, and we earnestly pray and hope that he may be seen restored to our fellowship. We wish with brotherly solicitude and prayerfulness for the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit for our brother, as curing him of our desire and readiness to receive him again into our fellowship so soon as he shall embrace the truths of God's word, which are the bond of our union.

The above was adopted by the unanimous vote of the Association at Fairport.

The Alleged Heresy of the Plymouth Church Pastor

Union-Advertiser Dec 15 1880

Rev. Myron Adams has received an intimation that his ecclesiastical doctrines are soon to be overhauled by the Ontario Assoc., which has jurisdiction over the Congregational churches in the northern tier of counties...

A committee was appointed by this body in September to examine and report upon Mr Adams' orthodoxy, but no public report has been made by such committee, whose proceedings stand adjourned until the 27th inst., at which time a general meeting will be held and Plymouth Church has been requested to send delegates to give information concerning the public teaching of its pastor. All Mr. Adams asks is for representation in the delegation. It is possible that the ecclesiastical meeting may be held in this city.