A SHORT UNITARIAN HISTORY

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this little book is to give a short account of the historical development of our Unitarian Faith. It makes no pretension to completeness, for several important periods are not dealt with at all, and others only very slightly.

Most of the chapters have already appeared in America ('A Short History of Unitarianism since the Reformation,' Boston, U.S.A., 1893). These have been completely revised and new material added.

The book is written mainly for young people, and that is why the story centres round the names of a few great leaders and thinkers, such as Erasmus, Ochino, Servetus, Sozzini, Bidle, Lindsey, Priestley, Channing, Emerson, Parker, and Martineau.

In the last chapter an attempt is made to sketch the principles and faith of modern Unitarianism—the religion of the future, as it appears to the writer.

Southport, *January*, 1906

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'Many people limit the name Unitarian simply to the fact that it is the opposite of Trinitarian. But look at its larger significance. It may well stand for the greatest and most significant facts of the world: the unity of the universe, the unity of God; the unity of life; the unity of man; the unity of truth; the unity of the religious aim of the world, that is, the endeavour to get into right relations with God. All these may be summed up in our denominational name. We stand for all of them.'—M. J. Savage, D.D., 'The New Unitarian,' January, 1906.

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I

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

The Bible from Moses to Jesus is unitarian—Growth of Dogma—Revival of Learning and the Reformation started new inquiry—Intellectual upheaval gave birth to the pursuit of Truth—Erasmus—The Scriptures studied in the Original Languages—First Greek Testament printed—Timidity of Erasmus—Results of his research.

THE great writers of the Old Testament literature were unitarians. That is to say they taught that God is one undivided, indivisible Being. Moses was a unitarian. The great Prophets of the eighth century before Christ, proclaimed the unity of God, opposing their unitarianism to the polytheism of the surrounding peoples. Jesus was a unitarian: so were his disciples and immediate followers. Later writers in the New Testament exalted Jesus, but they never deified him.

Growth of Dogma.—During the first two centuries of the Christian era, the religious

teachings of Jesus came into contact with the speculative thought of Alexandria and Greece. Gradually a systematic dogma coiled itself round the primitive faith of Christians, and an elaborate ritual fastened itself upon the observances of public worship. The Trinitarian doctrine, suggested by Tertullian (150–230), developed by Apollinaris (d. 390) and Augustine (354–430), became an established ecclesiastical creed by the edict of the Council of Nicæa (325).

From the date of the Council of Nicæa the power of Rome held the civilized world in its grip, so that for something like a thousand years unquestioning submission was the rule. For the restoration of the faith held by Jesus we have to look to the revival of the spirit of inquiry which accompanied the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

It is there we find the beginnings of that patient pursuit of truth which is the historical line of progress towards modern Unitarianism ; for the Unitarian message of to-day is the faith which has been built up by the fearless application of reason to the facts and experiences of the religious life.

We cannot with any certainty point to a particular country as the birthplace of Unitarianism in its modern form, nor name one man as its originator. There were many groups of eager seekers, scattered about Europe, among

whom discussion of the doctrinal teaching of the Roman Catholic Church led to an enlightenment and religious freedom far beyond that reached by Luther or Calvin.

Erasmus.—Among such students one of the most distinguished was the Dutch scholar Erasmus, who early in life showed remarkable proficiency in forsaking the old path of obedience to tradition and striking out into original lines of research in an earnest desire to discover the truth. He travelled extensively in France and Italy, and twice visited England, remaining for periods long enough to leave a deep impression of his great scholarship and his broad liberality.

First Greek Testament.—He revived the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, and prepared the first printed edition of the New Testament in Greek. His notes to this work were the chief source of reference for the new liberal school of theology. As a scholar, he approached the errors of the Roman Church from the side which is especially characteristic of liberal thought—the side of intellectual assault—in a quiet spirit, desiring peace and tolerance, anxious only to know more of religious truth, and looking to Christianity for *Revelation*, not *Redemption*.

It is difficult for us to-day wholly to realize the really revolutionary effect of the publication

of the New Testament in its original Greek, with a Latin translation to bring home the niceties of meaning, and with notes making very vivid applications of Scripture teaching to the practices of the day. We have to remember how very little was then known of the Bible; copies were very rare and only read by a few students; the people only heard the chapters from the Gospels and the Epistles which were intoned during church services, and these were generally unintelligible. This great work of Erasmus was therefore a revelation to an astonished world. Froude says, in his 'Life and Letters of Erasmus': 'For the first time the laity were enabled to see side by side the real Christianity which converted the world, and the Christianity of the Church. The effect was to be a spiritual earthquake.'[1]

His Timidity.—Erasmus was no hero. He says himself that he wanted to establish truth, but had no inclination to die for it. 'His natural timidity of temper, his extreme love of peace, and his hopes of reforming abuses gradually and by gentle measures'[2] determined his actions. If Erasmus did not dare to pronounce himself a heretic, he was soon proclaimed such by others; and the influence of

[1] 'Life and Letters of Erasmus.' Lectures delivered at Oxford 1893–4, by J. A. Froude. Lecture VII. p. 120.

[2] Robertson's 'Charles V,' vol. i. p. 279.

his writings was seen in heretical societies all over Europe.[1]

His Influence.—As showing Erasmus's influence, and how his writings contributed to the support and advancement of anti-Trinitarian views, read the following sentences from the inquisitional examination of a Dutch Anabaptist.[2]

This examination (1569, Bruges) was before the Inquisitor Broer Cornelio (Cornelius Adrians) and the Anabaptist examined was Hermann Van Flekwyk, who was afterwards burned at the stake. I select only the sentences which go to show the influence of Erasmus.

[1] In the Dutch and English Anabaptist societies, in the Arminianism of Holland, the Socinianism of Poland, and the anti-Trinitarian societies of Italy, and again in the Latitudinarianism of Hales and Locke, which is theologically indistinguishable from Unitarian Christianity.—Martineau's Preface to Bonet-Maury's 'Early Sources of English Unitarianism.'

[2] At the fermentation period of the Reformation the Anabaptists had many features in common with Unitarians. They placed Scripture above the traditions represented by the papacy, proposed radical reform of the Church, would suppress every rite or dogma which was not expressly set forth in the Bible, preferred moral and practical questions to metaphysical and doctrinal. 'Life, not dogma, makes the Christian,' was their constant cry. But the Anabaptists differed from Unitarians in resorting to a mystical interpretation of the Scriptures, and degraded religious belief by confounding divine sanction and the voice of the Holy Spirit with sensual and selfish instincts.

Anabaptism became mystical fanaticism; while Unitarianism, proclaiming reason as the ground of interpretation (without losing spirituality), ended in toleration and rationalism.—Bonet-Maury's 'Sources of English Unitarianism,' chap. ii. p. 51.

Inquisitor : 'Christ, the second person of the Trinity, you refuse to call him God ?'

Prisoner : 'I call him the "Son of the living God," as Peter does, and "the Lord," as the other apostles call him, and with Paul "that man—by whom God shall judge the world in righteousness."'

Inquisitor : 'These are the wretched arguments of the wicked Erasmus in his treatise "On Prayer" and in his "Apology to the Bishop of Seville." Does not Saint John say, "There are three that bear record in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" ?'

Prisoner : 'Erasmus in his annotations shows that this text is not in the Greek original.'

Upon this the Inquisitor, turning to the secretary and clerk who were present, exclaimed: 'Gentlemen, what do you think of this ? That wicked anti-Trinitarian, Erasmus, has the boldness to tell us we have added these words.' Then, continuing the examination, he asked, 'If Christ is not God, how is it we call the holy virgin "Mother of God" ?'

Prisoner : 'Because those of your communion generally affect to speak a different language from that of Scripture. The virgin is called in Scripture "the mother of Jesus," and *never* "the mother of God."'

Here the inquisitor called the prisoner a

'blasphemer,' 'a diabolical anti-Trinitarian,' etc. The prisoner continued: 'You say there are three persons in the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . . If the three jointly are but one God, it follows that the virgin is the mother of all three.'

Inquisitor : 'May you be roasted in hell-fire, you wicked and abominable anti-Trinitarian ! You would make a hundred thousand doctors of divinity mad.'

This extract gives us an idea of the influence of the writings of Erasmus, and this influence was felt throughout Europe.

Erasmus foresaw the inevitable result of violently suppressing heresy, and wrote to a friend: 'Theologians, schoolmen, and monks fancy that in what they are doing they strengthen the Church. They are mistaken. Fire is not quenched by fire.'

Results of Research.—But if Erasmus himself hesitated, and under cover of the Church devoted himself more to scholarly investigation than to public declarations of his own convictions, the methods of critical inquiry that he originated bore in bolder minds richer fruit. He supplied the material which, in the hands of succeeding thinkers who dared to publish their opinions, and to face death, made modern Unitarianism possible.

ERASMUS, 1467-1536

Born at Rotterdam in 1467. Early left an orphan. Educated in a convent of the order of Saint Augustine. Appointed secretary to the Bishop of Cambray. In 1497 went to England, and remained three years. Travelled in France, Holland, and Italy. In 1509 returned to England, and remained four years; at one time the guest of Sir Thomas More. Travelled again through Europe, and settled 1520 at Basle, as general editor of Froben's press. His whole life was spent in incessant mental activity, continued to within a few days of death, 12 July, 1536.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'Adagia,' Paris, 1500; 'Greek Testament,' Basle, 1516; 'Colloquia,' Amsterdam, 1650. Best edition of his works edited by Le Clerc, ten vols., Lyons, 1703-6.

II

BERNARDINO OCHINO

Degraded condition of the Church of Rome rouses reformers—Inquisition spies—Persecution—Service to Unitarianism—His influence in England—Great thoughts: God is love, conscience above authority, eventual Church Universal.

BERNARDINO OCHINO was a man of gentle and unassuming temper, who won the high opinion of even his enemies. His oratorical gifts were as powerful as his purity of character was lofty. It was said of him in the early days of his preaching that he could 'draw tears from the very stones.' He was born in Siena in 1487, that proud city which boasts of being the mother of six popes and fifty cardinals; but, strangely enough, was also the home of the founders of that most revolutionary of the Reformation movements—Socinianism.

Franciscan Monk.—Very early Ochino determined upon a life of devotion to religion.

With the enthusiasm of a poetic and self-sacrificing nature, he entered the severest of all the monkish orders, the Franciscan. After some twenty years of devoted service he resigned, only to join the Capuchins, established for the express purpose of introducing greater strictness, as a protest against the growing worldliness of other orders. In four years Ochino became their vicar-general.

Relations with the Pope.—Whether judged by his eloquence, generalship, or character, he was unsurpassed as the head of an order. He came into frequent personal relations with Pope Paolo III in his new position. At Rome he became acquainted more especially with the degradation and secret sinfulness of the highest church dignitaries, and longed for some practical reform. He met and was greatly influenced by Juan de Valdés, and, with many others, such as Peter Martyr (Vermigli), found in Valdés's refined simplicity and brilliant intellect an inspiration.

Radical Reform.—Ochino began to give voice to liberal sentiments in his great Lenten sermons preached at Venice and Naples. The hint of any reform always startled the Inquisitorial fiends into an attitude of expectant attention. They stood on tiptoe with hand to ear, and presently warned the earnest preacher to avoid certain points of doctrine.

Inquisition Spies.—Caraffa had his spies out, and soon came the nuncio's order for Ochino to stop preaching, and almost immediately a letter summoning him to appear at Rome and answer a charge of heresy. From Cardinal Contarini he ascertained that there was not the least hope of leniency or tolerance of his views from Rome, that he was in fact a marked and doomed man. His own religious views were now so advanced that he could not and would not deny them, yet he felt no call from God to actually seek out destruction. He felt, indeed, that far from completing he had but begun the reformation of his *own* belief, to say nothing of the reformation of the Church.

Left his Home.—He therefore decided, after a severe mental struggle, to leave his beloved country. Proud son of Siena as he was, he chose at the age of fifty-five to change his position of influential and admired leader of a Catholic religious order for an uncertain dependence upon foreigners and a life of danger and exile. And why? At his age most minds are settled in ruts of belief; but his was one of the greater natures that widen rather than grow cramped in intellectual capacity, and at this mature age he grasped a larger view of God's purpose and Christ's mission, and had the strength of soul to pursue that grander ideal, even to the sacrifice of all the ties of country,

of reputation, of friends. He had accustomed himself to self-sacrifice, and he never looked back either as a malcontent or as a coward.

Agitator of Liberal Thought.—Renée, of Ferrara, daughter of Louis XII, aided Ochino to leave Italy (1542). He went first to Geneva (September, 1542). After three years he was called to preach at Augsburg, only to be driven away by the Schmalkaldic War (1547). At the invitation of Cranmer, he went to England, and was the first real agitator and preacher of liberal religious thought since Wyclif.[1] He aroused much enthusiasm on one hand and much opposition and alarm on the other. That we may regard him as indeed one of the Fathers of liberal Christian faith is plain from the odium in which his name was and is still held by the Church whose errors he opposed. When a Unitarian divine from the west of England, in an interview with Pope Pio IX, sought from his Holiness some account of the early history of the Unitarian movement in Italy, the first name that the Pope held up as associated with the 'vile heresy' was that of Bernardino Ochino.[2]

Service to Unitarianism.—His service to Unitarianism in England was not only through

[1] Bonet-Maury, 'Early Sources of English Unitarianism,' chap. viii. p. 152.

[2] Gordon, 'Theological Review,' October, 1876.

his writings and preaching, but through his personal influence in Society. He was 'intimate with all the distinguished men of the times—the Earl of Bedford, Lord Burleigh, Sir John Cheke, Sir Anthony Cooke.' He was introduced at Court, and dedicated his 'Tragœdie,' a series of dialogues against the papacy, to Edward VI. These dialogues rank among the most eminent literary productions of the Reformation.

Ochino had many conversations with the Princess Elizabeth, upon whom his words and spirit made a great impression, and to whom his 'Labyrinths' on free will and predestination were afterwards dedicated, when Elizabeth was Queen of England. As to his preaching, he seems to have been the most popular as well as notable of the learned divines who occupied the pulpit of the Strangers' Church; and it is interesting to notice that some twenty-five of his sermons on predestination were translated by no less a hand than that of Anne Cooke, who, afterwards marrying Sir Nicholas Bacon, became the mother of the great Sir Francis Bacon.

But, wide and lasting as Ochino's influence on English thought became, his opportunities were suddenly cut short by the death of his royal patron, Edward VI. From England, under Mary, the liberal-minded preacher had

to depart, and seek a shelter among other strangers. After visiting Geneva and Basle, he became pastor of a band of Italian Protestant refugees in Zürich, where he remained eight years. He then published his 'Thirty Dialogues,' which immediately brought down upon his aged head a violent storm of persecution. He was hunted from place to place, and finally died in an out-of-the-way corner of Moravia (1564).

Great Thoughts.—The leading idea of Ochino's theology was that God is love, and that the Spirit of God lovingly speaks in every man's conscience. This 'inner voice' is the final judge, and must stand above even the word of Scripture. He had great faith in an eventual Church Universal, where all separate pretentions to infallibility would be swallowed up in universal submission to the will of God.

Ochino, by the power of his word, by the purity of his life, and by the influence of his personality, did a great work in clearing away the arguments and opposition that held back advancing liberal thought, so preparing a place for our modern Unitarianism. It was in Ochino's 'Dialogues' that the Socinian idea of Christ's mission was first published; namely, that Christ came to effect a change in man's relation to God, and not a change in God's relation to man.

BERNARDINO OCHINO, 1487-1564

Born at Siena, Italy. Entered order of Capuchins, 1534. Elected vicar-general, 1538. Fled from Italy, to escape Inquisition, 1542. Joined Calvin in Geneva. Went to England, 1547. Accession of Mary drove him again to Switzerland, 1553. From Zurich he fled to Poland, driven thence, he died in obscurity at Schlackau, Moravia, 1564.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'The Tragedy,' a series of dialogues in favour of the rebuff of papal authority by Henry VIII (supposed to have suggested the plot of Milton's 'Paradise Lost'). 'The Labyrinth,' a discussion of Free Will. 'Thirty Dialogues,' in which he attacked the Trinity and Calvinistic doctrines.

III

SERVETUS THE MARTYR

Intellectual character of Michael Servetus—His doctrines—How he differed from Calvin—His great book, 'The Restoration of Christianity'—Arrest, Trial, Sentence—True to his faith even at the stake—Influence of his life and martyrdom.

MICHAEL SERVETUS, born at Villanueva, in the kingdom of Aragon, Spain, in 1511, was an original and powerful thinker, and one who boldly departed from the orthodox Christology.[1] His

[1] See Willis's 'Servetus and Calvin,' 1877. There seems to have been a good deal of orthodox calumny heaped upon the name of this martyr, for which there appears no foundation in facts. His greatness has not been altogether unrecognized, however. E. B. Hall, in the 'Christian Examiner,' vol. xx., says, 'The time may come, it will come as surely as knowledge shall be increased, when few names shall stand higher among those honoured for the Reformation than that of Michael Servetus.' Dr. Willis, in the preface to his 'Servetus and Calvin,' admits his surprise, upon studying up the real facts of the life of Servetus, to find not only 'a philosopher and scholar, a physician, a geographer, an astronomer, and a Biblical critic, but, alas for him! the most advanced and *tolerant* of the Reformers.'

first education was in a Spanish Catholic convent. Precocious ability and pious temperament eminently fitted him for the priesthood in the eyes of his friends; but his own spirit demanded a religion that he could think out for himself, and not such as the Catholic Church presented ready shaped for his acceptance. Leaving the convent, he studied four or five years at the University of Saragossa, probably under the Italian Angleria, one of the greatest scholars of the age. Servetus, at the end of his university course, went to Toulouse, and studied law for two or three years. But to theology his mind naturally turned; and, while at Toulouse, he first read both the Old and the New Testament, and the impression made upon his mind by thus coming alone face to face with the great Book was deep and permanent. He speaks of the Bible as a book 'come down from heaven, and the source of all Philosophy.' Here, also, Servetus read Erasmus, to whom he always acknowledged indebtedness. He further studied general history and geography to such advantage that he was the first at a later date to apply such knowledge to Biblical interpretation.[1]

Service under Charles V.—In 1529 an event happened which probably determined his future studies, and directed the course of his thoughts

[1] In notes to his reprint of the Pagnini Bible.

for the rest of his life. He was recommended by his old teachers of Saragossa as secretary to Juan Quintana, confessor to the great Emperor, Charles V. This position gave Servetus opportunities of observation that brought before his notice some of the most glaring wickednesses of the high church functionaries, and stamped in his mind that detestation and abhorrence of the degrading practices of both Pope and priests that he afterwards expressed so boldly. Almost immediately after this appointment Servetus, in his capacity of secretary to the Emperor's confessor, had to attend the great coronation at Bologna, 1529; and a grand market this was for the Church's financiers. Indulgences were offered at prices to suit all personages.[1] Servetus's service under the Emperor was soon at an end, however, and he began at once to devote himself to the study of theology, though as a layman. He entered into correspondence with Œcolampadius and others, but soon found that most were either unable to see with his unprejudiced sight or were too much afraid of the consequences to agree with the opinions he advanced. We find even Zwingli writing to Œcolampadius to do everything possible to suppress such dreadful blasphemy as Servetus proclaimed. The learned doctors thought it perfectly in-

[1] See Robertson's 'History of Charles V, vol. i. p. 242.

sufferable that a mere layman, and a young man, too, should not yield at once his own opinions to theirs; and they heaped upon him the very terms the Catholics had already used toward themselves, 'diabolical,' 'blasphemer,' and so on.

Moral Courage.—But Servetus, though he possessed, like every leader of thought, his own earnest opinions—opinions so clearly defined that they were not easily obliterated by false reasoning—and although future events have shown how much more he anticipated the results of modern thought than the other scholars of his day, yet held himself freely open to conviction, and anxious for the advice and arguments of those with whom he came in contact. He is blamed for not accepting their arguments: rather should he be praised for the moral courage he showed in refusing to be convinced by arguments that he saw were false. But in 1531 he published his book on 'Trinitarian Misconceptions,'[1] and this brought down upon him the rage of learned doctors, Catholic and Protestant alike. From the mention of the work in the letters of leading scholars, these great men found in it arguments which threatened their most treasured doctrines, and they looked at each other aghast. Luther writes[2] that

[1] De Trinitatis Erroribus, Hagenau, Alsace.
[2] Table Talk, 1532.

it is a fearfully wicked book. He says that he himself had temptations to disbelieve the Trinity at one time, but 'set the word of God against my thoughts, and got free.' Melanchthon felt the force of the blow, and pathetically exclaims, writing to Camerarius, 'Good God! to what tragedies will not these questions give occasion?'

His Doctrines.—In this work, besides stating that 'God is one and indivisible,' and that the Trinitarian doctrine had been a great obstacle to the spread of the religion of Christ,[1] he further attacked the one pet and cherished doctrine of the Lutheran Reformers, that of Justification by Faith. He shows that they thought it was enough to believe in the *suffering* of Christ; but, says Servetus, it is by belief in the *worth* of Christ that we show our acceptance of the new covenant instead of the old law, nor is belief or faith alone sufficient. The justification thereby attained is only negative. To become positive, it must be associated with love, i.e., with charity, in the widest sense of the term.

The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination he also argued against, and maintained that,

[1] He states also that Christ is *not* God, but *son* of God, a man, though manifesting some of the divineness of God; and he who appreciates the priceless treasures of Christ's love easily attains to a knowledge of God the Father.

'though God may deal with us as a potter deals with clay, it does not follow that we are nothing more than clay, and have no power of action in ourselves: the *power* to do is one thing, the necessity of doing it another.' Servetus only escaped imprisonment as the result of this his first book through promising to reconsider his views, and write another treatise on the same subject. He went to Hagenau, Alsace, where in a few months he published 'Two Dialogues on Trinitarian Error,' saying in the preface, that what he had before published was incomplete and imperfect. The 'Dialogues' are, in fact, a defence of his previous position. The result of this publication was to make Germany and Switzerland 'too hot to hold him'; and he fled to Paris under an assumed name, that of his birthplace, Villanueva. He studied medicine here, and later went as editor to Lyons. He was never long anywhere before his unusual abilities and unyielding freedom of expression first brought him into notice, and then into trouble.

Letters to Calvin.—Wherever he went, he found opposition to his views. While engaged in literary work at Lyons, in 1546, he began that correspondence with Calvin which resulted in arousing the bitter and revengeful hate of the 'pope of Geneva.' It was now that Servetus

began fully to feel that he was called of God to proclaim a purer form of Christianity than that set forth by either Luther or Calvin. He declared that it was not alone a reformation of the *Church* that was needed, but a reformation of principles and a return to the pure teaching of Jesus himself;[1] and, although in the beginning of the correspondence Servetus was as a learner from Calvin, the tables were soon turned, and the narrow limits of the latter's vision were rudely burst apart by the 'seer of Spain.' In no gentle language he bares to the quick the very doctrines that were Calvin's rocks of faith.

'All that men do,' says Servetus, 'you [Calvin] say is done in sin, and merits nothing but eternal death. But therein you blaspheme. Stripping us of all possible goodness, you do violence to the teaching of Christ, who ascribes the power of becoming perfect to us: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."[2] In the works of the saintly I say there is nothing of the corruption you feign.'

[1] 'He left Rome not to join Luther. He brushed aside the Trinitarian dogma in his haste to get at Christ. His idea was to rally and reinspirit the Christian mind by recalling the primary allegiance of the Christian heart. Let Christ be known in his true self, and neither the pure majesty of Christ's truth nor the sure bond of Catholic unity could fail.'—Gordon, 'Theological Review,' April, 1878.

[2] Matt. v. 48.

Calvin declared the law of Moses was still to be observed. Violating it, he says, we violate the law of God. To this Servetus replied: 'What are the laws of Moses? If conformable to nature, then they are the laws of God, and to be observed, independent of Moses. . . . But the law of Moses was unbearable: it slew the soul, it increased sin, it begat anger. God never asked such obedience: he but asks of each according to his strength.'

Calvin's Threats.—Calvin became enraged at the cutting and fearless attacks of Servetus, and cherished a bitterness that is best shown in his own words. Writing at this time to Farel (February, 1546), Calvin says: 'Servetus wrote to me, offering to come hither. Did he come, if I have any authority, I should never suffer him to go away alive.' Also to Pierre Viret, of Lausanne, Calvin writes almost the same words. Speaking of Servetus, he says, 'I have determined, did he come, that I would never suffer him to go away alive.'

Restoration of Christianity.—But we are more concerned with the work of Servetus than with the errors of Calvin. Servetus now secretly published his greatest work—secretly, for it was a dangerous undertaking to attempt publication even with every precaution not to let the authorship be known. The title, 'Christianismi Restitutio' ('The Restoration

of Christianity'), indicates its character. It was printed in 1553, one thousand copies. The preface begins: 'The task we have set ourselves is truly sublime: it is no less than to make God known in his substantial manifestation by the Word and his divine communication by the Spirit, *both* comprised in Christ, through whom we learn how the divineness of the Word and the Spirit may be apprehended in man. God is manifested and communicated to the end that we may see him face to face as it were in creation, and feel him intuitively, but lucidly, declared in ourselves.' What sublimer ideal than this can we set before ourselves to-day? Servetus approached it in an earnest and Christian spirit. He revealed the light that was within him, that his fellow-men might be helped to higher ideals and purer lives. There is a good deal of transcendentalism and mysticism mixed in with the metaphysical part of the work, but there are clearer insight and purer theology than belong to any other reformer of his day. The dogmatic teaching of Rome and its practice are repudiated *in toto*, and the bigoted doctrines of Lutherans and Calvinists alike swept away.

His Arrest.—A copy was either sent by Servetus or otherwise came into the hands of Calvin, who immediately set about securing his arrest. Servetus was now at Vienne,

Italy, where he had practised medicine for some years. He was arrested on Calvin's information and imprisoned; but during the progress of the trial, through friends, he escaped to France. There, however, he was not safe, and determined to go to Naples. By some strange chance he went first to Geneva, July, 1553, where he was recognized, and immediately imprisoned at the instance of Calvin. The trial was long and tedious, and mixed up at first with a good deal of discussion between Calvin and the council as to Calvin's own powers in the council. But in September Calvin seems to have got control (as usual), and assumed the place of the Attorney-General.[1]

Trial and Sentence.—In the trial the result could be easily anticipated. October 27, 1553, Servetus was condemned by the Lords, Councillors, and Justices of Geneva, with the assent of the General Council of the State, to be bound and fastened to a stake along with his books, and there burned alive by a slow fire until his body was reduced to ashes. And for what offence? For having called the Trinity a monster with three heads; for having declared that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God from all eternity; and for remaining obstinate in these opinions against the *true* Christian religion. Servetus asked to have

[1] Willis's 'Servetus and Calvin,' p. 400.

the sentence commuted for one less painful: he asked to be put to death by the sword, as he feared through excess of suffering, mortal as he was, he might prove faithless to himself and belie the convictions of his life. But Calvin's friend, Farel, Bishop of Neufchâtel, reminded the prisoner that the first step must be his own acknowledgment of error. Servetus would not retract, however. The true nobility of his nature prevailing, he declared that he had done nothing to deserve death, and, kneeling, he prayed God to forgive his enemies and persecutors. Then, rising, he cried aloud, 'O God! save my soul! O Jesus! have compassion upon me!' On the way to the stake, Farel accompanied Servetus as priest, and used every effort to wring from him an avowal of his errors: but Servetus had already done that to which alone his sensitive conscience prompted him. With a humility which we can only regard as expressing the loftiest true nobility, he sent for Calvin, and begged his pardon for such hard names as in the enthusiasm and heat of argument he had used against him. Far from the narrow spirit of Calvin was the thought that he also needed, before God, to ask pardon of the man whom he was now condemning to the fire.

True to the Last.—Servetus, when pressed by Farel to recant, only called in broken

ejaculations on the name of God. Coming near to the fatal pile, he fell upon the ground in prayer; then, rising, advanced to the stake, where he was bound with a rope round the neck and a chain round the body. The manuscript copy of his 'Restoration of Christianity,' which he had years before sent to Calvin for criticism, and which Calvin had unjustifiably kept, refusing to return it, was fastened to the wretched victim's thigh to perish with him. The first rush of flames wrung from the doomed man a terrible cry; but after that he asked pardon for his faults, invoked the blessing of God, but would not acknowledge the 'Son of God save in the man Jesus.' These are the words of Bishop Farel in a letter afterwards written to Ambrose Blaurer: 'The torture of the sufferer was terrible; and bystanders in pity fetched more and drier wood, as the pile had been purposely of green wood.' And 'so died in advance of his age one of the gifted Sons of God.'

Influence of his Life and Martyrdom.—The influence of Servetus's writings, instead of being crushed, was only increased by the publicity and cruelty of his death; and, in secret, the reasonableness of his views, the purity of his faith, and of his life, and his noble spirit of toleration worked upon many minds, in spite of Calvin's declaration that, 'when Servetus and his like presumed

to meddle with the mysteries of religion, it is as if swine came thrusting their snouts into a treasury of sacred things.'

In Italy, especially, the writings of Servetus were read and discussed among thinkers at Vicenza, Siena, Padua, etc. Many writers took up the cause of the dead martyr. Martin Cellarius, who was at Geneva at the time, has the honour of being Calvin's strongest opponent through the trial of Servetus. Minus Celsus, of Siena, declared that the constancy of Servetus in the fire induced many to go over to his opinions. The Dutch Anabaptist, David Joris, said that Servetus was a pious man, and that, if all who differed, as he did (from Calvin) in religious views, were to be put to death, the world would be turned into a sea of blood.

SERVETUS, 1511-1553

Born at Villanueva in the kingdom of Aragon, Spain. Educated at Saragossa University. Studied law at Toulouse, 1528. Appointed secretary to Quintana, confessor to Charles V, 1530. Settled at Lyons as editor of the Trechsel's Press, 1535. Studied medicine in Paris, 1536. Studied law, Hebrew, and theology at Louvain, 1538. Returned to Lyons, 1541. Arrested by inquisitor-general Ory, 1553. Burned at Geneva, 27 October, 1553.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'De Trinitatis Erroribus,' 1532; 'Christianismi Restitutio,' 1553.

IV

FAUSTO SOZZINI

The founder of a new school of religious thinking—How the ideas of Servetus were developed into a system—First use of the name 'Unitarian'—The conflict with Bishop David—A Unitarian Catechism—Weak points in Socinianism.

LELIO SOZZINI was the first to advance the views afterwards known as Socinianism; but his nephew, who succeeded him, laid the real foundation of the system. The uncle Lelio was timid, and inclined to accept dim explanations of dogma for the sake of peace and quiet. Fausto Sozzini was more definite in his views. Lelio submitted to the doctrine of the atonement, but Fausto utterly demolishes any idea of vicarious satisfaction. To him Jesus came to reconcile not God to men, but men to God. Lelio, though denying the Trinity, did so in an equivocal way. But Fausto Sozzini demonstrates plainly that the Trinity is contrary

at once to Scripture and to reason, and in this he follows Servetus. Having the qualities of a statesman and lawyer, and none of the poetical mysticism of Servetus, Sozzini brings his opinions into a practicable system, and so establishes a school of thought, which Servetus could never do; and yet Fausto Sozzini in many points was far less clear-sighted and advanced than the ill-fated Servetus. For instance, he held that the soul was 'mortal in its nature, and only acquires immortality by the power of the Holy Spirit effecting in us through faith a new creature.' He held also to the invocation of Christ with the title of God. In 1574 Fausto Sozzini took up his residence at Basle, where he remained several years in intercourse with the leading advanced thinkers of the day. In 1578 he was called to Transylvania by Biandrata (Georgio Biandrata Saluzze, 1515), to defend the usage of the invocation of Christ in prayer, which was being attacked by Bishop Ferencz David.

First Use of Name 'Unitarian.'—It has been suggested that it was during the discussion that followed between Sozzini and David that the word 'Unitarii' was first used to designate a certain party of the Reformers. Rev. Alexander Gordon, however, points out that in the records of the Consistory at Kolozsvár the word *Unitaria* does not occur till the year

1638.[1] It then became the legal and official designation, and has remained so. The English form of the word, Unitarian, appears in a curious address dated 1682, sent by two anonymous writers to the ambassador from Morocco in London, who claim that they represent 'the sect of Christians that are called Unitarian.'

Conflict with Bishop David. — Sozzini was unsuccessful in his attempts to change the opinions of the Bishop David, who boldly preached from his pulpit at Kolozsvár that there was no more authority for invoking the name of Christ in prayer than for calling upon the virgin mother. The bishop was summoned before a general assembly of the States at Thorda, and after long delays died in prison before final sentence had been pronounced. The churches of Transylvania still retain and honour the memory of Bishop David.

Scholarly Coldness. — Sozzini seems to have aided in this persecution of David, at least by his expressed opinions. He appears to have let fall no word of sympathy or kindness for the aged bishop. His expressions are cold and cautious. There seems to have been nothing of the noble enthusiast about him. Neither, on the other hand, does he ever, like Servetus, use obnoxious language. Admirable as such

[1] 'Heads of English Unitarian History,' by Alexander Gordon, p. 22.

restraint may be, human nature sooner sympathizes with the warm-hearted enthusiast who forgets the etiquette of language than with the careful diplomatist whose sympathies never burst the bounds of dry civility. But Sozzini was needed with his cold judgment to organize the scattered party, and lift it into a position of respectability and credit. He married into one of the highest Polish families, and his position thus helped to draw converts from the more influential class of society. He had the gift of assimilating differences of opinion, and so drew into one party Ebionites, Photinians, Farnoveans, Servetians, under the name of Socinians. Sozzini himself was persecuted towards the end of his career; and finally, finding asylum in the house of Abraham Blouski at Luclawice, he remained in much seclusion till his death, 1604.

A Unitarian Catechism.—His last hours had been occupied in revising or rewriting a catechism of the churches of Poland. After his death Schmalz completed the work, the first edition of which was published in 1605, in Polish language; and this represents Socinianism as its founder left it. A Latin edition was published in 1609, at Racow, Poland, and dedicated to James I of England. From its place of publication it took the name 'Racovian Catechism,' by which it has since

been known. It is interesting, because we learn from it the tenets of original Socinianism, and also because it attracted so much attention at the time that the British Houses of Parliament passed a resolution ordering all copies to be publicly burned. Later, in 1652, another edition appearing, Parliament again ordered it to be burned.[1]

But an English translation of this Racovian Catechism immediately appeared, printed in Amsterdam, thought to have been translated by John Bidle; and it was widely circulated.

Socinianism, as expressed in this Racovian Catechism, expresses belief that right reason is necessary to understand the Scriptures; but that, given right reason, the Scriptures alone are sufficient in themselves without church or tradition to secure salvation; that God is one person only; that Christ was a very man, but rewarded after resurrection with an official *divinity*; that man has free will; and that there is no Scripture authority for the doctrine of original sin. The sacrament is simply a commemoration of the love of Christ, and nothing more.

Weak Points in Socinianism.—In these opinions Socinianism had its force, and in its spirit of toleration which looked towards an eventual Universal Church, embracing all Christians.

[1] Wallace's 'Anti-trinitarian Biog.,' vol. iii. p. 492.

But the weakness of Socinianism and the cause of its final entire disappearance may be found in such tenets as the following, also stated fully in this Racovian Catechism: belief in the salvation of *only* such as have faith in Christ—that is, that the soul is mortal, and only becomes immortal by special grace through faith; in complete immersion in baptism, and in the necessity of baptism, and in the denial of baptism to infants; the belief that no Christian can hold any civil office which involves complicity with bloodshed, nor can appeal to the civil law for redress of private grievance. This last tenet was so impracticable that it prevented to a very large extent the spread of Socinianism.

But the liberal ideas of Socinianism, its belief in man's free will, in the unipersonality of God, in the final authority of right human reason—these ideas were accepted by very many.

FAUSTO SOZZINI, 1539-1604

Born at Siena, Tuscany, 5 December, 1539. Educated at home. Travelled in Europe till 1576, when settled at Basle. Went to Transylvania in 1578. Settled at Cracow, Poland, 1579. Driven by a mob from Cracow, 1598. Died in seclusion at Luclawice, 3 March, 1604.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'De Auctoritate S. Scripturæ.' English translation by Edward Coombe, 1731. 'Racovian Catechism,' translated by Rees, 1818. (Sozzini probably only planned this work, which was finished by Schmalz.) Best edition of Sozzini's miscellaneous writings published by F. Kuyper, Amsterdam, two vols., 1668.

V

THE STRANGERS' CHURCH

The Strangers' Church in London—How it was founded—Its special privileges—A herald of religious liberty—The church scattered and then restored—Similar churches established throughout England.

AT the earliest dawn of the Reformation Wyclif had sown the seed of religious freedom in England, which did not fail to find nurture. Perhaps nothing more practically fostered the growth of liberal religious thought than the establishment in London of the Strangers' Church. It was founded in 1550, under a charter from Edward VI, allowing 'Germans and other strangers' to worship according to their own customs. Here enlightened scholars from all parts of Europe met and discussed the dogmas of the Catholic Church in the light of widening knowledge, keener criticism, and independent reason.

Privileges Granted.—The charter under which

the Strangers' Church was organized provided :—

1. The Society should form a separate corporation in the city of London, they and their successors.

2. The King gave and granted the temple or church lately of the Austin Friars.

3. The King commanded the Mayor, Sheriffs, and Bishop of London and all others that they permit the members of this church freely and quietly to 'exercise their own rites and ceremonies, notwithstanding that these may not agree with the rites and ceremonies practised in our kingdom.'

Herald of Religious Liberty.—This charter was a herald of religious liberty. Here was a church legally established and recognized, which was under the control of no ecclesiastical court, and was free from the restrictions of council and prelates.

The first superintendent of the church was John à Lasco, an exiled Polish nobleman, who sought in London a refuge for Dutch Protestants now in danger of Catholic persecution. Through the high birth and position of à Lasco and his great courtesy, and through the endeavours of Cranmer to bring to England the best Biblical scholars of the Continent, many famous preachers were to be heard discoursing with a freedom never before possible.

Dispersion of the Church.—But the storm of Catholic reaction in England under Mary Tudor closed the little Strangers' Church at Austin Friars and scattered the members into Germany —up and down the Rhine—and into Switzerland.

Church Restored.—Under Elizabeth the church was again opened. The Protestant queen had the same building they had before occupied in Austin Friars cleaned and fitted up at her own expense (1560); and the privileges granted by Edward VI were confirmed.[1] Many connected churches were established by bands of foreign religious refugees, not only in London, but at Canterbury, Colchester, Maidstone, Southampton, Norwich, etc.

In these churches discussions of heretical subjects kept coming up, and the undercurrent of dissent from orthodoxy was strengthened.

[1] Collier's 'Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain,' vol. vi. p. 443.

VI

JOHN BIDLE

Boldness of his Arguments—Imprisonment for heresy—Reason the only authority—In and out of Prison—Ground plan of modern Unitarianism—Men who believed : Cooper, Firmin, Emlyn—Rapid spread of Unitarianism—Milton, Locke, Newton, all Unitarians.

THE first great blows that cleared a place for definite Unitarianism were struck by John Bidle. He compelled recognition for independent religious opinion. He advanced boldly to his work. He stood out in the open when it was the common policy, and very much safer for one's personal interest, to keep under shelter. He did not play hide and seek in the bushes, and simply endeavour to spy out as much of the enemy's action as he safely could ; but he held his Bible in his hand, and strode down upon the enemy's guns, self-regardless. Bidle studied the Scriptures in such a thorough and unprejudiced manner as to come to some original conclusions, which he afterwards found closely

related to the opinions previously held by the Sozzini.

Imprisonment for Heresy. — He was not the man to keep back from his friends the light he had discovered for himself ; and his bold heresies were soon the talk of the town of Gloucester, till the Parliamentary Commissioners coming along, who had the eyes of vultures for all offences against ecclesiastical law, poor Bidle was sent to the common jail.

This was the beginning of a life passed, with a few short intervals of precarious liberty, almost entirely in dungeons. But neither dungeons nor the prospect of torment and death at the stake made him quail. From the depths of his prison-cell he cries out that his persecutors, instead of answering his arguments, muddle themselves and everybody else by vain talk about 'subsistencies,' 'moods,' and 'such like brain-sick notions that have neither sense nor sap in them,' and he gets published his 'Twelve Arguments, drawn from Scripture, wherein the commonly received opinion touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and fully refuted.' Parliament feels itself deliberately insulted, and immediately orders the work to be burned by the hangman, and then passes an ordinance making the denial of the Trinity punishable by *death*.

Reason the only authority.—This might have

crushed a daring impostor; but John Bidle coolly issued two more works, in which he stoutly maintains his Unitarian views, declaring there is no other authorized interpreter of Scripture than *reason*.

In and out of Prison.—Under the clemency of Cromwell, however, the Act of Oblivion was passed (1652); and Bidle, being released from prison, ardently, like a true apostle, entered immediately into active work, making known his views and gaining many disciples. Cromwell was obliged to banish him to appease the clamour of Presbyterian and Independent ministers, but at the same time gave him a pension for his comfortable support, and soon allowed him to return to England. After the Protector's death Bidle was again thrown into prison, and died there from starvation before he had reached the prime of life.

Ground Plan for Unitarianism.—Little as he apparently accomplished, he had really started a liberal and rational movement of the most permanent type. He had mapped out the ground upon which modern Unitarianism was not only to stand, but to grow. Unremittingly, fearlessly, he had insisted upon the dignity of individual reason; and his grand spirit did not depart childless.

Men who believed.—The strength and worth of his work are in no way so well shown as

by the number of devoted and enthusiastic followers who openly declared themselves for a liberal faith. John Knowles and John Cooper, in Gloucester, Thomas Firmin and Thomas Emlyn, in London, did not let the good cause sleep. Knowles and Emlyn followed Bidle through the prisons, while Cooper, succeeding to the mastership of St. Mary's Free School, was ejected by the Act of Uniformity, and established a Unitarian Church at Cheltenham.

The spirit in which these men maintained the great principles they suffered for is well shown in a few words from the diary of Thomas Emlyn: 'I thank God that he did not call me to this lot of suffering till I had arrived at maturity of judgment and firmness of resolution, and that he did not desert me when my friends did. He never let me be so cast down as to renounce the truth or to waver in my faith. I am willing to give up my name to reproach, or to lose it in silent obscurity, if that may be. I have already suffered the loss of many things, but I do not repent.' There was no doubt about his Unitarianism. Of Christ, Emlyn says, 'We may regard with fervent gratitude so great a benefactor; but our esteem and rational love must ascend higher, and not rest till it centre in his God and ours.'

Laymen's example.—Among these immediate followers of Bidle, while some preached the

new theology fearlessly and bore persecution nobly and stood out before the world as prophets lighting the way, others less inspired were working along obscurer paths. Of these, Thomas Firmin, a successful merchant, is a good example. After attending Bidle's services in London, he used his influence and money in spreading liberal religious views throughout the country. He collected and issued at his own expense the first series of the well-known 'Unitarian Tracts,' which formed the nucleus of a constitution, as it were, for a visible Unitarian church.

Rapid Spread of Unitarianism.—So fast did the seed now begin to take root and sprout that the attention of the House of Commons was called to the threatened danger, the Act of Toleration of 1689, having given liberty of religious opinion. The House addressed a petition to the King (William III, February 17, 1698), in which they did 'beseech his majesty to give effectual orders for suppressing all pernicious books containing impious doctrines against the Holy Trinity, and other fundamental articles of our faith'; and an Act was immediately passed 'for the effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness,' which excluded all professing Unitarianism from any office, debarred them from the privileges of citizenship, and made imprisonment the punishment for a second offence.

Milton, Locke, Newton.—The rapid advance of rational thought in regard to the great doctrines of the Church made at this time is evident, when we recall that such men as Milton, Locke, Newton, left records of their final judgment in favour of Unitarianism.

JOHN BIDLE, 1616-1662

Born at Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, England. Appointed principal of the Free School of St. Mary's at Gloucester, 1641. Imprisoned for public expression of heretical views, 1645. Act of Oblivion passed and Bidle liberated, 1652. Again imprisoned, but released by Cromwell, 1655. Imprisoned again, 1662, and died from bad treatment in jail, 22 September, 1662.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'Twelve Arguments,' 1642; 'Confession of Faith with regard to the Holy Trinity,' 1648; Translation of Przykowski's 'Life of Sozzini,' 1653; 'A Twofold Catechism,' 1654.

VII

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY

Objections to the Thirty-nine Articles—Petition to Parliament—Cowardice of the Clergy—One true man, a Unitarian—First Unitarian Church in London.

To understand the work of Theophilus Lindsey in the Unitarian cause, we must consider the peculiar party in the established Church of England to which he belonged. This party, probably to some extent the outcome of the wide circulation of the 'Unitarian Tracts,' objected to the binding regulations enforced upon every clergyman entering the Established Church, especially to the Athanasian Creed and many of the Thirty-nine Articles to which the clergy were compelled to subscribe.

Parliament petitioned for Relief.—The dissatisfaction secretly spreading at last broke out openly in a petition to Parliament signed by two hundred clergy of the Established Church (Feathers' Tavern Petition, 1773), asking for relief from subscription to the articles. The House of Commons refused by a large vote (217 to 17)

even to receive the petition, and has never up to this day made any change in the regulations regarding subscription.

Cowardice of the Clergy.—What, then, became of the two hundred clergy, who, warned by their own reason of the hypocrisy of their position, had signed the subscription relief petition? With the exception of one man, they preferred their well-paid livings, their comfortable parsonages, sleek horses, silver plate, and port wine—to retain these seemed essential, even though it necessitated submission to a creed against which reason rebelled.

One True Man.—What of the one man left? But *one*—may his name ever live in honour—had the courage of a true *man*, Theophilus Lindsey. He was settled at the time at Catterick in Yorkshire, where he had been most happily and prosperously since 1763. When, however, the petition for relief from the terms of subscription to the Established Church was refused, Lindsey felt his own position untenable. His wife's stepfather, Archdeacon Blackburne, sympathized largely, sharing Lindsey's views, and perhaps being to some extent responsible for the liberal attitude Lindsey had already taken, and his wife nobly seconded her husband's courageous determination, saying, when he spoke of the burden upon his conscience of retaining his position, 'Then relinquish it; God will provide.'

He went out 'not knowing whither.' During his Catterick ministry his charities had exhausted his means. He had given all he had to the poor. Among many good deeds it is interesting to know that he founded in 1764 what may possibly have been the first Sunday School in England. He therefore was compelled to sell his library, furniture, etc., and with the proceeds went to London and rented two small rooms on the ground floor of a house in Holborn.

First Unitarian Church.—On Sunday, 17 April, 1774, Lindsey held his first service as an avowed Unitarian minister, thus establishing the first distinctively Unitarian Church in London. The hall engaged for the purpose was an auction room in Essex Street, the site of which is now occupied by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.[1] Among the friends and sympathizers who came to hear and encourage him were Joseph Priestley, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Price, and John Disney, who afterwards succeeded Lindsey as minister to the Essex Street Chapel. The text of Lindsey's first sermon as a Unitarian was 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. iv. 3). He maintained that no attempt to compel intellectual assent to a creed would result in unity and peace, but

[1] Essex Church, Kensington, was erected from the proceeds of the sale of Lindsey's Unitarian Chapel.

that differences of opinion were natural. 'God never designed that Christians should be all of one mind,' but that a friendly, kindly temper such as that taught in the New Testament would alone preserve the peace. The sermon stated clearly why this Unitarian Church was inaugurated: 'The reason for forming a separate congregation distinct from the National Church is, that we may be at liberty to worship God alone after the command and example of our Saviour Christ.'

For twenty years Lindsey conducted services in the Essex Street chapel, and lived to see great changes in the attitude of the public mind towards the liberal religious views for which he fought so bravely.

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 1723-1808

Born at Middlewich, England. Became Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. Travelled through Europe, as tutor to Duke of Northumberland, 1754–56. Vicar of Catterick, Yorkshire, 1763. Organized the first Sunday School, meeting at his own house, 1764. Petitioned Parliament for relief from subscription by the clergy to the Thirty-nine Articles, 1771. Resigned his position on final refusal of Parliament to hear the petition, 1773. Opened Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, London, 1774. Retired from all active work, 1793. He died in 1808.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'An Historical View of the State of Unitarian Doctrine and Worship from the Reformation to our own Times,' 1783. (In this he claims Burnet, Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, and Sir Isaac Newton as Unitarians.)

VIII

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

Preacher, scientist, scholar—How he became a Unitarian—Driven from England to America—Philosophical Influence—A rational theology without mysticism—Public recognition of Unitarians.

CONTEMPORARY with Theophilus Lindsey was Joseph Priestley, the discoverer, scientist, and scholar, who strongly influenced the religious thought of his day. His logical mind in its keen investigations soon reached the liberal views that afterwards became so dear to him. He carried them to their legitimate conclusions in affairs of conduct, as well as in matters of theology, and aroused the bigotry and unreason of the age against himself. His sympathy with the oppressed wage-earners of Paris, who rose at length in the Revolution, caused his house to be sacked, and compelled him to seek safety in America.

He was educated in orthodoxy, but gradually embraced Unitarianism. He became minister, at Leeds, Birmingham, and Hackney, of chapels

where the congregations had drifted into Unitarianism.

Philosophical Influence.—Cold and keen, Dr. Priestley made his protest against the mysticism and unreality of orthodoxy most pronounced, but he carried the analytical method to its extreme extent, stripping away everything that did not seem to him logical. Professor Huxley said of some of his philosophical writings: 'They are among the most powerful and unflinching expositions of materialism and necessarianism which exist in the English language.' Needful as this influence was to make clear the rights of human reason and individual conscience, it was not altogether favourable to the rich *development* of religious *life*. Religion became too negative. God was in danger of being regarded as only a skilful mechanic who had started the mechanism of the external universe and retired, regardless of his work. So powerful and far reaching was the influence of Priestley's necessarian philosophy that it became for a considerable period the dominant type of thought among Unitarians. Even Martineau in his early years accepted Priestley as his master, but later lamented the effect of such teaching upon the theology and general religious spirit of Unitarians. Writing to Channing, he said:

'No one can well owe a deeper debt of

gratitude than I do to the writings of Priestley, to which I attribute not only my first call to the pursuit of religious philosophy, but my first personal struggles after the religious life. . . . Yet do I feel persuaded that his metaphysical system is incapable of continued union with any true and deeply operative sentiments of religion.'[1]

Rational Theology.—Priestley's chief help to the growth of Unitarian principles was in the use of the pruning-knife. He relentlessly trimmed away conventionalities, the poetry of tradition, and the mystery of the orthodox faith, and left only the sturdy stock of rational theology, a strong plant for others to cultivate.

Public Recognition of Unitarians.—From the closing days of the eighteenth century Unitarians made rapid headway, forming many societies on the platform of 'freedom from doctrinal tests in membership.' They gained many strong supporters throughout the country, and in 1813 they were recognized by Parliament through the passing of William Smith's Bill (which removed all penalties for denying the Trinity) as having full civil rights. It was, however, about sixty years ago that Unitarians were allowed by the Dissenters' Chapel Act (1844) legally to hold the old chapels where the congregations had drifted into Unitarianism.

[1] 'James Martineau, a Study of his Life and Thought,' by J. Estlin Carpenter. Philip Green, London, 1905, p. 184.

So modern are our present ideas of religious toleration.

Unity of Spirit, Diversity of Gifts.—Once legally recognized by the State, English Unitarians turned their attention to other difficulties. Relieved from struggling against legal oppression, they championed the rights of human reason and individual conscience in other fields. 'Unity of spirit, diversity of gifts,' became their cry. They were students in the cause of intellectual development. German and French criticism were studied, and the Scriptures freely interpreted in the light of reason.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, 1733-1804

Born at Fieldhead, near Leeds, England. Educated by an aunt in strict Calvinism. Studied at Daventry under Dr. Samuel Clarke. Settled as minister of Needham Market Church, in Suffolk, 1755. Removed to parish at Nantwich, 1758. Went to Warrington, as a teacher, 1761. Appointed minister of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, 1767. Became literary companion to Lord Shelburne, 1773. Settled as minister in Birmingham, 1780. Mob burned his house and destroyed his library and scientific apparatus, 1791. Removed to London, and succeeded Dr. Price as minister at Hackney, 1791. In 1794 emigrated to America, and settled at Northumberland, Pa., where he died, 1804.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion'; 'History of the Corruptions of Christianity'; 'General History of the Christian Church.' His very numerous writings were published in twenty-five volumes, edited by J. T. Rutt, 1832.

IX

BEGINNINGS IN AMERICA

Writers who influenced religious thought in New England—Unacknowledged Unitarians—Use of the word 'Liberal'—Jonathan Mayhew—James Freeman and King's Chapel—The Episcopal liturgy made Unitarian—Out arguing the Trinitarians—Unitarian ordination.

THROUGH the writings of Emlyn, Taylor, and Lindsey, and the personal influence of Priestley, Unitarian thought spread to New England.

Unacknowledged Unitarians.—President John Adams declared that several Boston ministers, to his knowledge, were Unitarians as early as 1755; but there was no public avowal. In the stronghold of New England Calvinism the awful words 'Arminianism' and 'Socinianism' were whispered only with bated breath. The colonists of Massachusetts had by every means provided that Calvinism, and Calvinism *only*, should be the religion of their new home. It was revolutionary, therefore, to speak of 'private inspiration,' to doubt the vicarious atonement

or the divinity of Christ. But shades of varying opinion would creep in. The stiff creeds and sinner-frightening doctrines were at first, while still officially pronounced, slightly tempered in interpretation. Every now and then some deeper thinker spoke words of prophetic liberality, till 'Liberal' began to be used as opposed to 'Evangelical' among the Massachusetts ministers. Jonathan Mayhew was not allowed to join the Association of Ministers on account of his denial of the doctrines of total depravity and of justification by faith; and, when he published some sermons with a foot-note denying the Trinity, a stir was created, and parties began to form, threatening the unity of Congregational Calvinism.

James Freeman.—Following Theophilus Lindsey in England, James Freeman was the first in America to establish an openly acknowledged Unitarian church. Others had been preaching Unitarian doctrine, but he accepted the name and gave it a habitation. Being called to the position of reader in King's Chapel, Boston, the first Episcopal Church of New England, he found the congregation almost unanimous in sympathizing with his own liberal inclinations; and he revised the Episcopal liturgy in use there, to make it agree with Unitarian thought. The first Episcopal church in New England thus became the first Unitarian church.

Out-arguing the Trinitarians.—In 1784 the congregation wished him to become their life pastor, and he asked his bishop to ordain him. The bishop referred the request to the presbyters, who refused it, though declaring themselves perfectly satisfied with Mr. Freeman's moral character. They asked him if he would declare that he could conscientiously read the whole of the Book of Common Prayer, to which he replied that he could *not*, because he did not approve of the prayers to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The council of presbyters replied that such an objection seemed to them very strange, and they could think of no texts which would countenance it. Mr. Freeman quoted, 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.' 'There is but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus.' In many other passages Jesus is definitely distinguished from God, and God declared to be 'one' and 'the Father.' To this the council replied with an 'Oh!' The last argument the council advanced was that it was impossible for the Christian Church for seventeen hundred years to have been idolators, worshipping a God that was not God, as the Unitarian faith would make it appear. To this Mr. Freeman replied that it seemed to him as possible as that the Christian Church should have been Roman Catholic for twelve hundred

years. On the refusal of the council to grant ordination, application was made to Bishop Provost, of New York; but, in spite of Provost's own liberal views, he found it impossible to extend Episcopal ordination to a pronounced Unitarian.

Unitarian Ordination.—In 1787, having failed to find any bishop willing to ordain the bold young reformer, his church took the matter into their own hands, and ordained him themselves. He faithfully served them for nearly forty years, impressing himself on the community and on his age as a pure and inspiring influence.

JAMES FREEMAN, 1759-1835

Born at Charlestown, Mass. Educated at Boston Latin School. Entered Harvard, 1773. Appointed reader at King's Chapel, Boston, 1782. Ordained rector of King's Chapel, Boston, 1787. Harvard conferred the degree of D.D., 1811. Retired from ministerial duties, 1826.

IMPORTANT WORKS: Volume of Sermons. Boston, 1821.

X

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

Unitarian thought checked—William Ellery Channing Passionately religious—Champion of the new faith—Humanity the family of God—Religion a sentiment of the heart—A temple without test of creed—Unitarian Piety.

DURING the closing years of the eighteenth century Unitarian thought had made some headway; but the influence of Priestley's writings, which was strongly felt in America, was not altogether favourable to the development of religious ideas. The philosophy of Priestley inclined to lead Unitarian thought towards a mechanical Deism. Intellectual coldness seems to have checked the growth of positive religion.

Channing.—But the fulness of time brought the prophet with the clearer vision, the 'swift runner swinging the lamp of life' that he had brought replenished from the fountain of all light, the youthful seer—'the light of his great thought dawning on him'—the 'sad-eyed lover of humanity'—his heart big with sympathy and faith—William Ellery Channing.

His Religious Disposition.—Passionately religious, a delicate boy, a deep and lasting impression was made upon his sensitive nature by the death of his father (1793); and a revival of religion in his uncle's church at New London about the same time deepened the serious impressions already beginning. While yet at school, the characteristics that marked his maturer life were noticeable: he was distinguished by delicacy of feeling, conscientiousness, and at the same time an independent spirit of inquiry. At Harvard he was considered one of the most brilliant students of the day. His inclinations were early turned towards the ministry. In his nineteenth year he wrote to his uncle: 'My sentiments have lately changed. I once considered mere moral attainments as the only object I had to pursue. I have now solemnly given myself up to God. Morality seems but a branch from the vigorous root of religion. I strive for purity of heart, that I may become a temple for God's holy spirit to dwell in. . . . Religion is the only treasure worth pursuing.'

His Ministry.—He was ordained and settled as minister of the Federal Street Church, Boston, in 1803. At this time Unitarianism, familiarly known as the Boston 'Religion,' was making rapid headway, but was not separated from the one orthodox church of

New England. In 1815 the Unitarian controversy was publicly begun by the publication in Boston of a chapter from Belsham's Life of Lindsey, then just published in London, entitled 'American Unitarianism.' This showed from letters quoted that many Boston ministers were at heart Unitarians, in the sense in which that name was then used in England. Channing replied that they were. He gloried in it. But he deprecated the idea of making a split in the church on that account. He advocated toleration towards individual belief on the part of the orthodox church.

Unitarian Christianity.—In 1819 Channing preached the famous Baltimore Sermon, the manifesto of 'American Unitarianism,' declaring war against orthodoxy and sectarian intolerance; no shred of Calvinism was left.

Humanity the Family of God.—Channing could not content himself with a mechanical conception of the order of things: to him God was immanent, full of love and mercy, supporting his creation by constant communication of his holy spirit, the spirit of power and of light, an ever-present help at all times and to all men. Christ was the son of God, because his spirit had imbibed so much of the Father's spirit as to be one with him in love and will. Channing says in his sermon, 'The Imitableness of Christ's Character': 'I believe him to be

a more than human being. In truth, all Christians so believe him. . . . They always separate him by broad distinctions from other men. They consider him . . . . as having received gifts . . . . granted to no other.' But 'all minds are of one family'; 'Jesus is still one of us,' 'an illustration of the capacities which we all possess'; 'Jesus respected human nature: he felt it to be his own.' 'He saw in every human being a mind which might wear his own brightest glory.' 'All souls are one in nature: I am not only one of the human race, I am one of the great family of God.'

Religion a Sentiment of the Heart.—Far from being a mere speculation of the intellect, religion to Channing was a sentiment of the heart. Conscience was supreme, and man's moral sense innate and universal. He appealed to it. 'He drew forth the "hidden man of the heart," asserted his nobleness, his worth, his inherent capabilities of good; and, with a prophet's power of making all things new,' he poured into the Unitarian religion his living spirit, saved it from becoming a dead record of a philosophical dispute, brought it back from words and phrases in which it was perishing to become a living factor in the uplifting of humanity and the spreading of God's Kingdom of righteousness. He devoted him-

self to the positive work of religion, building up its institutions, its aspirations, its revelations, its thought, its sentiment, its reason, into a noble temple of worship for all without test of creed.

Unitarian Piety.—In 1826 Channing preached another celebrated sermon that stands as a finger-post on the way Unitarianism has travelled. It was delivered at the dedication of the Second Unitarian Church in New York City; and in it he vindicated the claim that Unitarianism is the form of Christianity most favourable to piety. He struck ringing and masterful blows at all the doctrines most cherished by the orthodox: 'Trinitarianism obscures God's works in nature,' 'obscures the character and work of Christ,' 'obscures the mercy and love of God himself,' 'blights the beauty and freshness of creation, and consumes the very nutriment of piety.'

The prevalent doctrine of the atonement he declared to be an attempt to 'erect a gallows in the centre of the universe.' It was by such sermons as these, and by essays in *The Christian Disciple*, *The Liberal Preacher*, *The Unitarian Advocate*, and other publications, that a clear position for Unitarian thought was mapped out.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, 1780-1842

Born at Newport, R.I. Entered Harvard, 1794. Private tutor to a family in Richmond, Va. Returned to Newport, in poor health, 1800. Moved to Cambridge, and studied theology, 1802. Installed minister of Federal Street Church, Boston, 1803. Addressed a letter to Rev. S. C. Thacher, accepting the name of Unitarian, 1815. Delivered discourse at ordination of Rev. Jared Sparks, of Baltimore, considered the manifesto of Unitarianism, 1819. Harvard conferred degree of D.D., 1820. Visited Europe, 1822. Visited West Indies, 1830. Taken with fever at Bennington, Vt., and died, after three weeks' illness, 1842.

IMPORTANT WORKS: Sermons and Essays. See his Collected Works, one vol., A.U.A.; also 'Select Discourses and Essays,' with an Introduction by W. Copeland Bowie (Essex Hall, London).

XI

EMERSON'S NEW SEED

Emerson, the Sower—Preparing the ground—Self-culture—Nature-teaching—Reality against tradition—The spirit of Truth—The individual soul—Present-day Unitarianism.

PRIESTLEY successfully used knife and shears to promote the growth of Unitarian thought, Channing refreshed and invigorated it with living water of inspiration, Emerson came to sow broadcast the new seed of a liberal religious faith.

Preparing the Ground.—After an education won against a constant struggle with poverty, and after wearisome years of distasteful school-teaching, he was ordained minister to the Second Church in Boston, and immediately prepared the ground to receive what he could sow by declaring that Unitarian preachers were 'holding on to phrases when the lapse of time had already changed their meaning,' that a 'knowledge of God's works in nature

was as necessary as a knowledge of Scripture.' Clerical expressions and ecclesiastical form were to him tares taking away the life of true religion, and not props or poles useful to hold up the growing plant. Self-development, self-responsibility, daily, not deferred judgment, constant, unceasing relation with the Infinite—these ideas he pressed upon his hearers.

Nature, not Scripture.—With absolute sincerity and fearlessness he treated the Scriptures—at that time the basis of almost all pulpit discourses—as an illustration, not foundation, of religious truth. There was a reality and vividness about this method of approaching religion that made people feel that perhaps this new preacher was a real prophet, and not merely a pretentious critic.

Independence.—But, borne on the tide of his own prophetic visions, he was soon beyond popular forbearance, and resigned his pastorate of the Second Church, ostensibly because of his opinions in regard to the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Spirit of Truth.—The perfectly independent position, however, which he occupied for the rest of his life, that of essayist and lecturer, gave him a freedom through which he brought his own original thought to bear upon Unitarianism from the outside. Where Unitarian

thought still grew within the shadow of tradition rather than in the brightness of the living spirit of truth, Emerson poured out fresh seed. Wherever the power that was the basis of Christianity seemed, even in Unitarianism, to be hidden and perhaps lost under fixed forms of Christianity, Emerson hastened to urge the removal of the form, that the real power might be free. In a sermon to the Second Church he says :—

'Christianity is the most emphatic affirmation of spiritual nature. But it would be very inconsistent to set bounds to that illimitable ocean. Jesus never said, "All truth have I revealed." He plainly asserts the contrary : "Greater things than these shall ye do." "I will send you *another* teacher, the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you into all truth." We see with our own eyes the verification of this. Christian associations are relieving the sufferings of vast masses of men. Are they not all the fruit of the life and the teachings of the lowly Nazarene ? '

The Individual Soul.—Emerson felt that there was still danger of real religion being dried up in ceremonial religion, of individual soul becoming stereotyped in visible church. Each soul, he urged, must have a faith satisfactory to its own proper nature, must rely upon its own immediate relation to God, must find within

itself the supreme, calm, immortal mind of which to seek counsel, which is indeed the face which the Creator uncovers to his child, and which shows us how Jesus, in a right and rational way, could say : 'The Father is in me : I am in the Father, yet the Father is greater than I.'

He hoped that the growth of a faith like this would lead to nobler results than any yet attained, and that in the first place it would put an end to all that is technical in preaching and religious teaching. His idea was that we must everywhere replace the traditional name or symbol by the present religious reality.

The majority of Unitarian preachers at that time, however, were not able to rest boldly upon the present religious reality, but claimed for Christianity a supernatural origin, an authority supported by miracles.

Present-day Unitarianism.—Nowadays the views expressed in the 'Divinity School Address' are probably accepted by all Unitarians : 'It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was ; that he speaketh, not spake. . . . . I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty, which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also. . . . . I look for the new Teacher who shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy.'

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 1803-1882

Born in Boston. Attended Boston Latin School. Entered Harvard, 1817. Graduated, and joined his brother in teaching private school, 1821. Attended lectures at Divinity School, Cambridge, 1823. Called to Second Church, Boston, 1829. Resigned, 1832. Travelled in Europe, 1833. Settled at Concord, 1834. Delivered famous address to divinity students at Cambridge, 1838. Travelled in Europe, 1847. Elected to the Board of Overseers of Harvard College, 1867. Delivered University Lectures, 1870. Visited California, 1871. Died at his home in Concord, 1882.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'Nature,' 1836; 'Divinity School Address,' 1838; 'Essays,' 1841; 'Essays,' Second Series, 1844; 'Poems,' 1846; 'Essays on Representative Men,' 1850; 'English Traits,' 1856; 'Conduct of Life,' 1860. Many complete editions of all his works.

XII

THEODORE PARKER

An orator of magnificent affirmations—Popular application of Unitarianism—Three fundamental realities—Religion made universal—Parker's aid to Unitarianism—Joyousness of Religion—The natural genius of mankind.

THAT the quickening heat born in the bosom of Transcendentalism should reach the people, an *orator* was needed. That through all the mysticism its 'heart of truth' should pulse into the veins of common life, an *enthusiast* must appear. That the new vision should impress itself upon the visible world, a bold *reformer* must arise. All these was Theodore Parker. If Emerson had been the philosopher, the seer, the source of the new movement, Parker was its proclaimer, its devotee, its realist. Not a metaphysician, not a profound thinker, but with prodigious memory, enormous mental appetite, inexhaustible energy and fulness of life, he carried to the people not only denunciation of the

dying creeds, but the magnificent affirmations of the purer faith.

Emerson had made revelations: Parker preached them. Emerson had cried, 'Leave behind you all conformity'; and Parker left it behind.

Popular Methods.—He was extravagant, rude, uncompromising, but popular, eloquent, and unfettered. He was not held in check by a scrupulously discriminating or analytic mind, but roughly formulated out of the dawning of a new philosophy a practical 'scheme of faith' which seemed to him to include all that was essential for a rational religion. It was not the great circle of Emerson. It was not all-inclusive. Nor did it run in the direction of the extravagances of Transcendentalism. It was Parkerism: it was the religious consciousness of this particular man formulated into popular speech. It had the advantage of compactness, and gave clear standing ground from which to direct the battery of his rhetoric.

Three Fundamental Realities.—He proclaimed three fundamental religious axioms which are to be accepted as first principles, incapable of discussion. They were '*instinctive intuitions*': first, 'God'; second, 'the moral law'; third, 'man's immortality.' These three universal ideas Parker proclaimed as facts, necessary

realities, and from them expanded his plan of religious thought, entirely independent of any other revelation than such as he himself received; that is to say, cutting adrift from all historical relations.

Religion shown to be Universal.—This was the great point of offence even to the Unitarians of that day. Parker's religion isolated the great principles of religion from Christianity. It was in vain that Unitarians claimed that but for Christianity Parker would never have received the noble, religious instincts that permeated his teaching. He claimed that they were inherent, absolute, and common to all humanity. On the other hand, his absolute appeal to individual conscience, regardless of all authority, powerfully attracted many of all classes who, like himself, were natural nonconformists.

Service to Unitarianism.—Many of the outgrown beliefs still clinging to Unitarian thought, which the philosophy of Emerson had disproved, but not disposed of, the vigorous oratory and fervid enthusiasm shook to the ground. He attacked the lingering belief that the authority for the teaching of Jesus was in miracles rather than in the fact that his teaching was true to our own knowledge of what is right, true to our ideal of absolute religion. To be religious, a man must feel religious: nothing

else will do. Parker declared—no *acceptance*, no conformity, can give him that reality. To accept religion on the authority of miracles would no more make a man religious than 'fragments of sermons and leaves of the Bible would make a lamb religious, when mixed and eaten with its daily food.'

Joyousness of Religion.—He felt a prevalent coldness in the idea of God, and he poured out the fulness of his own God-full heart in a stream of living love, till his hearers knew that God indeed lived now in men, as he had ever done. 'Neither the loveliness of nature,' he cried, 'nor the joy of genius nor the sweet breathing of congenial hearts that make delicious music as they beat, neither one nor all of these can equal the joy of the religious soul that is at one with God.'

He appealed with perfect confidence to the great heart of humanity to be religious on the lines of its own individual inspiration. As J. W. Chadwick wrote, 'To him [Parker] belongs the honour of being the first great *expounder* of the truth that religion can be safely trusted to the natural genius of mankind, unassisted by any supernatural interruption of the eternal laws of matter and spirit.'[1]

We shall see how Unitarian thought, moved

[1] 'Unitarian Review,' vol. xiv. p. 234. Article, 'Theodore Parker.'

by the impulse of Transcendentalism, assimilating the intellectual contributions of Emerson and Parker, grows up into the clearer light of new truth without tearing its roots from their firm hold upon the past.

THEODORE PARKER, 1810-1860

Born at Lexington, Mass. Entered Harvard, 1830. Entered Divinity School, Cambridge, 1834. Ordained pastor of the Unitarian church in Roxbury, Mass., 1837. Preached in Boston the famous sermon on 'The Transient and Permanent in Christianity,' 1841. Travelled in Europe 1844. Resigned Roxbury pastorate, and became minister to the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society of Boston, preaching in the Melodeon, 1845. In ill-health, visited West Indies and then Europe, 1859. Died in Florence, 1860.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'West Roxbury Sermons,' Roberts Brothers, Boston. 'Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion,' Putnams, New York. 'Prayers,' Roberts Brothers, Boston. Complete edition of his works in fourteen volumes, Trübner & Co., London.

XIII

JAMES MARTINEAU

Martineau's uplifting influence—Unitarianism as a Religion—Noble conceptions—A satisfying Faith—A sound Philosophy—Personal relation to God—Faith in divine naturalism.

JAMES MARTINEAU by his exceptional abilities, his profound philosophical research, combined with high imaginative qualities, gave to Unitarian thought a nobility and loftiness never before attained.

Unitarianism as a Religion.—The receding wave of Transcendental fervour being followed by a period of keen scientific criticism, Unitarianism, escaping dissipation in mysticism, was in danger of losing effect in the gulf of materialism. But Martineau preserved Unitarianism as a *religion*, freeing it from materialism, positivism, and scientific agnosticism by meeting the great advocates of these theories on their own ground.[1]

[1] See criticisms of Spencer, Mill, and Comte in Martineau's 'Essays.'

Noble Conceptions.—To him 'free will' and 'moral power' are essential attributes of human nature. Man is the glorious child of the Infinite Father of all things. Religion, founded upon reason, scientific investigation, and human experience, does not end in materialism or determinism, in agnosticism or Calvinism; but, if the divine powers of human reason are given proper play, and not distorted from their harmonious relations with all other faculties, if investigation, however accurately scientific it may be, is true investigation—that is, 'tracking out'—if the experience is wide enough, embracing all phenomena cognizable to human consciousness, religion, thus *naturally developed*, finds only more and more testimony to the presence of God as an ever-ready helper, as an ever-loving, personal power. Martineau affirms that 'every advance of knowledge is a gain to religion,' because he holds that, as in physical science, the '*consensus* of the competent has established certain points of definite knowledge,'[1] so in religion, besides its variable, progressive side, upon which it is always open to revelation by new discoveries of truth, there are also facts, real, permanent, and constant—definite knowledge—for the progressive intellect to hold by.[2] He recognized

[1] F. E. Abbott's 'Scientific Theism.' Introduction.

[2] See Martineau's Essay, 'Theology in its Relation to Progressive Knowledge.'

that changes without end sweep past, leaving only more majestic than ever the irremovable realities of 'God in his perfection, Christ in his filial sanctity, and, for ourselves and all humanity, the eternal law of Duty and Self-sacrifice.'

A Satisfying Faith.—To scholarly attainments and keen insight, Martineau added breadth of vision, and that touch of poetic fervour which enabled him to interpret as well as to study the bare facts. And so he has, with an enthusiasm equal to Channing, filled out his noble thought with a grand inspiration, and justified Unitarianism by showing that its principles lead to a living, stirring, inspiring, satisfying *faith*.

A Sound Philosophy.—He proclaimed the great affirmations of Unitarianism with a strength and beauty unapproached by any other thinker; and he has shown, in his 'Types of Ethical Theory' and 'Study of Religion,' that these affirmations are the outcome of a sound philosophy. And so he carries the standard of Unitarianism high above agnosticism, in an atmosphere of positive thought, and that thought glowing with the passionate emotion of the loftiest religious enthusiasm.

Conscious Relation to God.—To those who would separate our positive thought from our highest religious emotions, and cultivate ethics

alone, Martineau points out that they are excusing themselves from that which is the centre and seat of religious life—conscious relation with the living God. It is in this relation alone, this personal relation between the human and the divine, that ethics can find the touch which makes it start from death to life, 'transfigured with the light flashing from the contact of two worlds.' It is only so that the moral life becomes 'the meeting ground of kindred sympathy between our nature and God's, out of which those spiritual affections are born which flow in streams of boundless love to nourish every human good. By itself the ethical spirit is negative, shrinking from innumerable things, but centring toward nothing. It must be initiated into its divine personal relations: then it breathes another air, and discovers all around new possibilities; discovers, for instance, that the best way to meet an evil is to fling yourself into some purifying good, and find that with an infinite ally the battle of righteousness can never lose hope and heart. It is the supreme personal relation that completes ethics, and in so doing transfigures it throughout.[1]

Naturalism.—In the lines so ably pointed out by Martineau, modern Unitarian thought

[1] 'Relation between Ethics and Religion.' J. Martineau. 'Essays, Reviews, and Addresses', vol. iv. p. 309.

is now taking root for further growth. Its attitude, perhaps, may be most briefly and tersely indicated in the words of Dr. C. C. Everett, as 'embodying the faith in a spiritual and divine *naturalism*.'[1]

As the progress of modern critical research has given to the books of the Bible their rightful and only natural place as human history, discrediting the miraculous, and as the accumulation of scientific data has become sufficient to establish the theory of the natural development of the life of man out of the lower life of the world, destroying the old theories of creation, fall, and redemption, the foundation of modern Unitarian thought upon 'faith in divine naturalism' receives splendid confirmation. But this modern attitude is still one of expectant advance, in accord with the birthright spirit of Unitarianism, which is content with no stationary dogma, and never refuses to receive new truth, but still rises to meet the tests of criticism, 'expanding, without breaking, the continuity of Christian thought.'

As at the time of the Protestant Reformation it was from the impulse of this spirit that Unitarian thought took shape, so now it leads us on to the New Reformation of to-day—to the restoration of a reasonable religious

[1] 'Joseph Priestley: the Old Unitarianism and the New.' C. C. Everett, D.D., in 'Christian Register,' 28 March, 1889.

philosophy, and to the revival of a grand religious enthusiasm, lifting theology from the low level of the artificial and exceptional into the freedom of the natural and progressive, and renewing the divine inspiration of each human soul by bringing home to it the thrilling consciousness that, deep in its own common faculties, in its own reason, hope, and love, is flowing the impulse and spirit of the living God.

JAMES MARTINEAU, 1805-1900

Born in Norwich, 21 April, 1805. Ordained minister of Eustace Street Presbyterian Meeting House in Dublin, 1828. Settled in 1832 as minister of Paradise Street Chapel; afterwards, in 1849, in Hope Street Church, Liverpool. Appointed Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy in Manchester New College, Manchester, 1840. Appointed Lecturer in Mental and Moral Philosophy in Manchester New College, London, 1853. Removed to London, 1857. Became joint pastor with Rev. J. J. Tayler of Little Portland Street Chapel, London, 1859; became sole pastor, 1861. Appointed Principal of Manchester New College, London, 1869. Resigned the ministry of Little Portland Street Chapel, 1872. Resigned the offices of Professor and Principal, 1885. President of Manchester New College, 1886–7. Died 11 January, 1900.

IMPORTANT WORKS: 'Endeavours after the Christian Life,' 'Studies of Christianity,' 'Hours of Thought on Sacred Things,' 'The Seat of Authority in Religion,' 'Essays, Reviews, and Addresses,' all published by Longmans, Green & Co. 'Types of Ethical Theory,' 'A Study of Religion,' Clarendon Press. See 'James Martineau, Theologian and Teacher,' by J. Estlin Carpenter, 1905.

XIV

THE UNITARIAN FAITH

The Unitarian Faith is Simple.—The Unitarian faith is distinctly a simple faith. It must be remembered, however, that this does not mean something less than a complex faith, but something more. The complex is the scattered and confused, the simple is the united and harmonious. The Ptolemaic method of interpreting the external universe was more involved and cumbersome than the Copernican, but it is the latter which gives an indescribably grander, larger conception. In architecture the ornate suggests less than the pure and simple style. No one wants a faith that is simple only by excision, clear only because small, any more than one wants a simple life, meaning a life that has little in it.

The simplicity we desire is that which follows the discovery of an underlying harmony and unity, which brings into recognized relationship the varied parts, which reveals the unwritten plan and purpose of the whole.

It is in this sense that the Unitarian faith is simple. It discovers in the whole realm of religious thinking and being a ceaseless, harmonious, evolving unity. Each thought, each hope, each step in its progressive realization of the truth, is related to every other part in one synthesis of reasonable faith.

A Living and Growing Faith.—It is this quality of reasonableness, harmony, unity, which is essentially characteristic and distinguishing in the Unitarian faith. All that is arbitrary, dogmatic, petrified, and dead, is abandoned and left behind; only the interesting, the vital, the quickening, the things that burn in the heart and brain, the things that live, have place in this harmony of religious aspiration. All artificial special pleading for the support of an established or ancient creed is foreign to the fundamental principles of this faith; for its structure is organic, it feeds upon facts and experience, it lives and therefore grows.

One of the reasons why Unitarianism has as yet been accepted by only a few thoughtful men and women, is because its most important principle is so modern as to seem revolutionary. And it is. Orthodoxy in faith looks for its confirmation to the miraculous, its evidence is specially revealed in the Bible, through

the Church, by the Clergy. Its fundamental authority is tradition. Who would have dared, before the searching thoughts of Goethe and Emerson, to have gone to nature, to the common facts and experiences of human life, for confirmation of religious truth? One has to go back to Jesus to find this daring revolutionary principle assumed; and we are modern in being able to understand him as none of the intervening centuries could.

The Unitarian faith is thus essentially different from all varying forms of so-called evangelical faith, established or dissenting, all orthodoxies, whether Calvinistic, ritualistic, or liberal. Its fundamental principle, its revolutionary method, assumes religion to be natural, native to the human constitution, a ceaselessly growing and living thing, unfolding with the unfolding souls of men, led by reason, confirmed by facts, with truth for its goal.

Sweeping away every artificial hindrance. whether it be a doctrine which to be accepted at all must be received against the natural dictates of reason, or a traditional ceremony or ritual born out of ancient conceptions of heathen sacrifice and idol worship, a new sense of comfort and peace accompanies the seeker who turns to living realities to discover his natural religious home. Within his own heart he learns immediately, directly, and intimately

some important facts. The baleful doctrine taught by traditional Christianity, that man in his natural life is a depraved outcast, suffering the condemnation of a traditional offence against the sovereignty of a revengeful God, finds no place in his thought. Such an idea could never have been held by any civilized modern people had it not been supposed to have been taught by a divine revelation. The old scroll recording the legendary story of the origin of human life, the Garden of Eden and the Fall, was accepted as part of the legal code of the Hebrew people, and so came to be regarded as sacred. That is to say, the poetic vision of a distant barbaric age was included in a record, every word of which was believed to be a divine revelation. The charm of the story may remain as poetic imagery, but its reality as history is absolutely gone. The opposite, the steady rise of man out of primeval conditions, is the only established fact we have, and that fact for ever destroys the dogma of man's fall, and sweeps away the entire theory of man's natural depravity which for generations has perverted the teaching of Christianity.

Human Nature is Divine.—Channing said, 'I am not only a human being, I am of the family of God.' This is the natural conclusion. We are well rid of all artificial and superficial aids to an external religion when we find that we

are thus brought nearer to direct perception of God himself—when we find that it is not on the surface that we are nearest to him, but at the depths of our own hearts.

This is an important discovery. That we are not brought near to God by any external salvation, but that in our real nature we are already his, to be brought nearer and nearer, by maturing, developing, exercising our latent faculties, for we are born of God. We are divine naturally. We know this is so, because we find that it is the noble, the pure, the good, to which human nature instinctively turns. We do not in our hearts admire villains. We do not choose our friends because they delight to cheat and lie and revel in evil. The world does not set up the vile to be honoured as saints. It is the truth-seeking, the honour-loving, the self-forgetting, the heroically good who always command admiration.

At heart we are of God. This does not mean that we are blind to the wrong and evil of the world. There is enough meanness, selfishness, falsehood in life to keep us aware of the disgrace. But an unprejudiced survey convinces us that in the neighbourhood of every wrong is an overwhelming abundance of good. That every villain is surrounded by men of integrity, and though the villain may make himself notorious, the industrious good toil on

in patient quietude. Everywhere there is a great deep silent ocean of latent goodness, in all together as in each separate breast. The grandest virtue often blazes forth from the basest corner. The most wicked have always some inarticulate longings for decency and purity and love.

No one who looks steadily at the true life of his fellow-men, or who listens breathlessly to the still small voice of the living spirit within his own heart, can doubt the native grandeur and sublimity of the human soul. No theological creed however ancient or authoritative, no contact with actual expressions of existing evil, can move the awakened mind to deny the real goodness of our common human nature.

There is hardly anything more depressing and weakening than the old conception, it breeds a sort of pitiful contempt for humanity. There are few things more inspiring than the new thought of man's natural divinity.

How God makes himself known.—This fact of natural human goodness does away with the whole method of 'orthodox' theology, it makes the progress of religion wholly harmonious and progressive. It is an unfolding in human hearts of the living spirit kneaded in there with the clay that formed the first man.

There is therefore a living revelation of God. He cannot be unknowable, we are his. Of

him, he therefore to that extent must be of us. When we learn to understand the noblest impulses of our own hearts, the strength of honour, the tenderness of love, the power of sacrifice, the sweetness of forgiveness, the beauty of the truth, we are learning to know the qualities of the character of God. God is thus making himself known always. In the ideals and aspirations and efforts of his spirit within ourselves we are discovering him.

Knowing God within, we can also follow him without, his works are open to our study throughout the wonderful vistas of his universe. We trace his unalterable laws governing all life, all change, all growth. Such knowledge, as far as we are concerned, is necessarily incomplete, we cannot grasp his infinity; but as far as it goes it is true, we are on the right way, and we know his character though we cannot comprehend his power. We know that he is love.

Slowly through the ages men have been approaching this knowledge, but it has seemed too wonderful, and again and again they have drawn back not daring to accept it. But the time has come when the truth can no longer be resisted. If God were not love, then might the stars shut their eyes in heaven in shame to look upon the earth, for passion and greed would then trample this world in triumph; there would be no pity in the heart of man,

no tenderness of motherhood, no compassion in the strong, no mercy in the conqueror. If God were not love, then might would be right. Selfishness and tyranny would be supreme. Then everlasting sin and everlasting hell would be conceivable. Nothing would be as it is unless God were love. But he is love. He is shining upon and within us in quivering million waves of emotion through our lives, we feel him, we tremble with a new joy, our souls arise, we accept the truth, and we begin a new spiritual existence when we say, 'I know that God is love!' History has a new meaning, the strange sorrows of the blind world touch us with tenderer sympathy, our intercourse with our fellow-beings becomes a divine fellowship.

A certain Irish nobleman rode across his estate to give orders for the eviction of a tenant who owed him many years' rent. When he reached the cottage door he heard the peasant mother singing as she rocked her child:

> Hush thee Mavourneen, the stars shine above,
> And the angels in heaven are telling God's love!

'God's love,' thought the rich man, 'how will that woman feel when the bailiffs turn the family out on the roadside? God's love! By heaven, I cannot do it.'

Man's love is but the witness of God's. To believe this reclaims our lives. God is love;

then no conduct is fit for us anywhere but loving conduct.

Jesus Leads.—It is the discovery of these facts which makes plain the value of the teaching and example of Jesus. In a perfectly natural order of life there is no place for a miraculous mediator. The Unitarian faith finds in Jesus the highest human realization of the truly natural religious life. His faith in God was as that of a child in its father. To him the human race was a family. All religious relations were direct, simple, and natural. He never spoke of a creed, never suggested a catechism, never pointed to an infallible Bible. Of all things he urges, 'Do to others just as you would have them do to you.' So that any man who desires and tries to do right begins at least where Jesus did. The quiet unassuming reasonableness of his conclusions is irresistible. From the beauty of the lilies, the innocency of childhood, the constancy of human affection, he leads our thoughts upwards to the providence of God. If here there are kindness, tenderness, comfort, and loving homes, shall there not be in the Father's house, that house of many mansions, more tenderness and more watchfulness and more love? If goodness in little things is best, if it conquers the trivialities of this life, shall it not be just the same in the highest? Is not this which is goodness in little in us,

the very same thing which is 'infinite in majesty and power' in God? Will not love rising from the human heart find itself joined by streams of the same kind from the heart of the Eternal, and, thus allied, prove itself capable of meeting every imaginable need, till we consent to love our enemies, and bless them that despitefully use us?

Here the height of religious aspiration is reached by following the lines of our natural human reason. Jesus leads. He tried everything. He tested his faith by working it into his life. Nothing in him was more than the multiple of the common gifts of human nature. In no way were his divinest qualities different from the gifts of the spirit within the human heart to-day. His perfected character was formed out of the things which were already sweet, beautiful, and holy in other hearts.

Life is a Triumph.—Secure in the knowledge that religion is a vital, living, unfolding of the divine, natural spirit in man, that God is thus known, and known to be love, able thus to see with Jesus, to understand and be led by him, the Unitarian enters into the joy of his faith by proclaiming that life is a triumph. The woebegone, mournful, cringing, fearing, fretful, remorseful, unhappy state of existence is seen to be degenerate, unnatural. It is fit only to go with the old mistaken thought

of an inharmonious universe, an absent or angry God, an outcast and depraved humanity. Out of the profound deep of being, the Eternal God imparts the divine mystery of life. The quickening spirit fulfils itself by ceaseless, unwavering ascent until it

> 'rides
> Triumphant through mid heaven, into the courts
> And temple of its Father throned on high.'

Where religion is of the letter only, where it is accepted upon authority, made up of ceremonies to be performed, of commandments to be obeyed, it may bring no stirring of the soul. But the Unitarian faith holds to none of these cramping limitations, it thrills with the inflowing of the free spirit, it feels the magnetic intensity of purpose which springs from the knowledge of its splendid inheritance and its magnificent destiny. In such a faith every moment of being is equally sacred, holy, precious; all hours, all days, all occupations, every act and every movement, and every thought, occupy their place and have their effect in the majestic progress of the unfolding universe of divine creation. In such a faith each life becomes intense, charged with power.

The Unitarian Faith may therefore be outlined as follows:—

The Universe is a Unity.—The whole realm of being—each thought, each act, in the progressive realization of the truth, belongs together. There is no place for miracle or supernatural mediator.

Religion is Vital, Living, Growing.—It finds its confirmation not in tradition or ecclesiastical authority, but in the common facts and experiences of human life.

Human Nature is Naturally Divine.—Man is 'of the family' of God. The most wicked have some deep inarticulate longing for purity and love.

God is Ceaselessly Revealed.—By the unfolding of his own living spirit in human lives, God is constantly revealing himself. He cannot be unknown, for as men come to trust the noblest impulses of their own hearts—the power of forgiveness, the tenderness of love, the strength of honour, the beauty of the truth—they are learning to know the character of God.

Jesus as Leader.—The Founder of Christianity represents the highest human realization of the purely natural religious life. In no way were his divinest qualities different in kind from the gifts of the spirit within the human heart to-day. He was the revealer of man's sonship to God.

To Live is to Triumph.—The gift of life means the possession of divine power. To be unhappy is to be degenerate. With his glorious faith, the Unitarian finds life infused with joyous hope.

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