

Beliefs  
of a  
Unitarian

by

ALFRED HALL, M.A., D.D.

# THE BELIEFS OF A UNITARIAN

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Third Edition, with revision by  
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The chief bond of the Churches included in the General Assembly is not doctrinal but devotional. Its first object reads:

“ To promote pure religion and the worship of God in Spirit and in Truth.”

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THREE years after the death of Dr. Alfred Hall a new edition of his excellent *Beliefs of a Unitarian* is called for. When the second edition was printed fifteen years ago, Dr. Hall made certain additions, and now, on being asked as his son-in-law, with whom he lived for the last ten years of his life, to see a new edition through the press, I feel that Dr. Hall would have wished to make further revisions. I therefore approached the Rev. A. B. Downing, who before entering the ministry had grown up under Dr. Hall's influence, for his help in bringing the book up to date, and his work has been invaluable.

As the book is a personal declaration of faith, we have tried to leave it as far as possible in the words of the writer, but in two respects revision seemed desirable. For one thing, many of the quotations from other writers could well be replaced by quotations from more recent theological or scientific writings. And further, Dr. Hall intended to give his readers a fair picture of what Unitarians in general believed, and his book as it stood did not reveal certain important changes in the climate of Unitarian opinion that have developed in recent decades. Either by insertions in the text or in footnotes we have tried to show these changes, while leaving Dr. Hall's personal declaration unaffected. Some of the sections have been re-written to reflect more accurately present trends.

We hope that the revised book will now have another long period of usefulness both to Unitarians who are anxious to study their own religion, and to others who are interested in Unitarian lines of thought.

ARTHUR W. VALLANCE

July, 1962.

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## UNITARIANISM

### I. An Affirmative Faith

UNITARIANISM, having often been in conflict with the prevalent orthodoxy, has been charged with being a *negative* faith. It has thus shared the fate of every progressive movement: it was said of Paul and his companions, 'These that have turned the world upside down have come here also'; and the early Christians were generally known as atheists because, standing in clearer light, they proclaimed that the ancient gods were powerless.

Unitarianism rightly understood is the *Religion of the Larger Affirmation*. For years the writer has felt that he has been kept outside other religious communions, not because he has believed too little, but because he has believed too much. Instead of believing that God spoke to only a few men in days gone past, Unitarians hold that he speaks to all his children, even to the worst. Instead of asserting that only a few will be saved, they teach that no one will be finally lost to God. Instead of perceiving God incarnated in one man only, they reverence the divinity in all. Instead of looking up to Jesus as the only Saviour of the world, they regard him and all good men as saviours. Instead of accepting a few miracles recorded in the Bible, they reverence the great 'miracle' of Creation and of all life. Instead of finding God's presence mysteriously introduced into a sacrament, they find him revealed as a real presence throughout the universe. Instead of saying that the Bible alone contains the word of God, they hold

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that every true and uplifting word is inspired by him.

The objections of Unitarians to 'orthodoxy' are to the limitations it places upon religious truth, which in some cases amount to positive denials. When some of the old doctrines are enlarged and universalized, modern Unitarianism is often the result.

Dr. R. Travers Herford writes that the Unitarian religion 'comprises the essentials of personal religion, the close relation of the human soul to God, the reality of prayer, the consecration of life to the service of God by doing his will and by loving one's fellow men, the restoration of the sinner by repentance and forgiveness, the sense of deep and assured trust in God in all the changing events of life. There is no region of life where this religion could be left out as having nothing to say.'

But above all it must be known and understood that Unitarianism is not a system of creeds or beliefs. It is more than anything else an attitude of mind. It is a fresh way of looking at life and religion. That is why it has met with such powerful opposition. A new method is generally of far more importance than ideas which are discovered along the lines of an old method. The steam engine revolutionized the world, because it was a new method of locomotion: it accomplished something which could never have been achieved by any improvement in the old modes of transport. The theory of evolution caused great disturbance in the nineteenth century, because it was a new method of interpreting life. The main objection to Unitarianism is that it introduces a new method. It lays the stress on the reliability of the human mind to judge for itself and maintains that human experience is a more trustworthy guide than ancient authorities. Its method is that of appeal to reason, conscience and experience generally, and above all to elemental principles

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of truth and right which are implanted in the human heart at its noblest and embedded in the universe. This method has had at best only a partial application, and very little in the realm of theology. When it is fully developed and employed, it will transform the outlook of men in all their relationships, social, industrial, ethical and religious. Its aim is nothing less than the kingdom of God. It is gaining acceptance in many Churches and it is exercising a growing influence in theological thinking.

It is obvious that owing to its method Unitarianism must be a progressive faith. It is an effort to follow truth as God gives us to see truth, wherever it may lead. Its purpose is to preserve all that is good in Christian and all other religious experience in the past, and to discover the spiritual meaning of human experience and thought to-day. Unless the reader grasps this simple fact, he will never understand the Unitarian faith. He must avoid the common error of supposing that such a dictionary definition of a Unitarian as the following is adequate: 'One who affirms the unipersonality of the Godhead, especially as opposed to an orthodox Trinitarian.' Unitarianism is more than a doctrine: it is a gospel.

### 2. Unitarianism, a Way of Life

It is unfortunate that the Unitarian Movement has been generally supposed to be doctrinal in character, for its history reveals that its purpose has been moral and spiritual rather than narrowly intellectual. Its aim has been to promote the good life rather than sound doctrine and to secure freedom in religious research rather than the acceptance of any theological propositions. Always its

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leaders have insisted that Christianity, as they understand it, is 'a way of life.' Its designation 'Unitarian' is a historical accident. The chief bond of the Churches included in the modern General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches is not doctrinal but devotional. In accordance with the spirit of the whole movement its first object is stated to be: 'To promote pure religion and the worship of God in Spirit and in Truth.'

In 1945, the first volume of a reliable historical survey of the Movement, dealing with its beginnings and its development and marked by exceptional scholarship, was published by Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur, under the title, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its Antecedents*. Dr. Wilbur states that his intention is 'to present not so much the history of a particular sect or form of Christian doctrine as to consider the development of a movement fundamentally characterized instead by its steadfast and increasing devotion to these three leading principles: first, complete mental freedom in religion rather than bondage to creeds and confessions; second, the unrestricted use of reason in religion, rather than reliance upon external authority or past tradition; third, generous tolerance of differing religious views and usages rather than insistence upon uniformity in doctrine, worship or policy. Freedom, reason and tolerance: it is these conditions above all others that this movement has from the beginning increasingly sought to promote: while if emphasis upon certain doctrinal elements has often or for long periods seemed to characterize it or even to dictate its name, it has been largely because the insistence upon contrary doctrines seemed to conflict with the enjoyment of the conditions above named. For the movement has throughout its whole course strenuously resisted any attempt at dog-

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matic fixity, has made reason its ultimate court of appeal, and has normally been hospitable to changes and restatements in its forms of thought: being at all times far more concerned with the underlying spirit of Christianity in its applications to the situations of practical life than with intellectual formulations of Christian thought' (p. 5). There was 'a marked tendency during the first forty years or so of the Reformation, towards a more liberal type of Christianity than that which was rapidly becoming fixed among the followers of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. While the leaders of this tendency were in the main men of outstanding ability and ample learning, the rank and file of the whole movement were of the humbler classes in rank, wealth and education. Their primary interest in Christianity was not as a system of belief but as a way of life; and their main emphasis was laid not upon theological doctrines but upon the practical application of Christian principles to personal conduct and character, and to the Christianizing of human relations in organized society.' That tendency has continued from these early days to the present time and still continues.

As an illustration of the loyalty of Unitarians to the principle of toleration to people it may be mentioned that the first law giving tolerance to people of all religious beliefs was passed during the rule of Prince John Sigismund, the only Unitarian in Europe to occupy a throne, at the Diet of Torda in Transylvania in 1568. This law was secured by the eloquence of Francis David, founder of the Unitarian Church, which still continues in that country. Translated it reads: 'His Royal Highness, as in former Diets, so in this now present, confirms that ministers of the Gospel may everywhere preach and explain it, each according to his own understanding; and the community may accept or reject the teaching as it thinks good.'

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No force may be used to compel acceptance or conviction. Congregations are allowed to have each the preacher it wishes. Preachers shall not be molested, nor anyone persecuted, on account of religion; no one is permitted to remove from office, or to imprison anyone, because of his teaching.'

### 3. Origins of the Unitarian Faith

It is sometimes asked, 'What was the origin of the Unitarian Faith?' The question is difficult to answer briefly, because it had several independent origins. Most religions have spread by propaganda, the message being carried from one country to another by missionaries. But men living in different lands, under different conditions, with different experiences, aided only by their own earnest study of the Bible and their spiritual endeavours, arrived at the Unitarian position. Thus it had an independent origin in the minds of various individuals and communities in England, America, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Poland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Russia and other countries in the West. The belief in the Unity of God also claims the allegiance of millions of souls in Eastern lands. The fact of this independent discovery by many thinkers is a powerful argument in favour of Unitarian belief.

During the first three centuries of the Christian era the questions of the nature of Jesus and his relationship to the Godhead were discussed with increasing warmth and bitterness. The interest in theological controversy in the third century was as keen as that shown to-day in a political or economic crisis. Some of the combatants

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were men of exceptional intellectual power. Among them were many leaders in the Church who contended that the Son is subordinate to the Father, but the victory for Trinitarianism was gained at the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325. That did not conclude the controversy and other Councils were found necessary to put an end to the strife. The creeds issued by these Councils became the dominant and authorized faith from the end of the fourth century onwards. Little opportunity for freedom of thought was provided in the centuries which followed, but towards the end of the Middle Ages the revolt from the Trinitarian system of thought became evident and led to cruel and crushing activities on the part of the Inquisition.

'It is certain,' wrote Alexander Gordon, 'that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was attended in every European country by an outbreak more or less serious of anti-Trinitarian opinion.' The views of these anti-Trinitarians were not always the same, but they were based on the study of the Bible. As the late R. V. Holt wrote in *The Story of Unitarianism*, 'The invention of printing made the Bible more accessible, and those who were dissatisfied with the Church went to the Bible to find out what Christianity had been like in the early days. . . . Since they could not find the Trinitarian scheme in the Bible, they rejected the doctrine of the Trinity.'

Men holding unorthodox ideas about the Trinity were cruelly persecuted even under the influence of such reformers as John Calvin. In Geneva in 1553 Michael Servetus was burnt at the stake for his belief in the supremacy of the Father, and for the fearlessness with which he wrote against 'the Errors of the Trinity.' Believing heresy to be worse than murder, Calvin argued that Servetus had to be put to death or else his



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heresy might contaminate all Christendom. Servetus, a Spaniard by birth and a doctor of medicine, is remembered by scientists as the first man to publish in print (in one of his theological works) the statement that the blood in our bodies passes from one side of the heart to the other through the lungs. In this observation he anticipated the more famous Sir William Harvey who published his work on the blood circulation in 1628.

As was well said by Sebastian Castellio, a brave defender of Servetus, it is easier to kill a man than to kill an idea. Heretical ideas about the Trinity could not be suppressed. In Poland, a group of heretics formed themselves into a 'Minor Reformed Church.' They received toleration in 1573, and were joined by Fausto Sozzini (Faustus Socinus), an Italian, in 1579. He and his uncle Lelio (Laelius) were responsible for the beginnings of the religious views known as Socinian. These Churches in Poland were suppressed by the ruthless persecution of a Jesuit King who succeeded to the throne. But the Movement was carried into other countries, to Germany, England, and above all to Holland, then the chief home of religious tolerance.

Another Unitarian Church was founded in Transylvania, in the time of the only Unitarian King in history, John Sigismund, King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania. The founder was Francis David, who held that prayers should not be offered to Jesus. He died in prison in 1579, but his Church survived despite great persecution at different times; it continues to this day.

The last two martyrs to be burnt at the stake in England died for their anti-Trinitarian faith in 1612. In 1662 John Bidle, an Oxford graduate and later a headmaster in Gloucester, languished and died in prison for his Socinian convictions. Three of the foremost thinkers of the

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seventeenth century, John Milton, John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, wrote treatises in which they urged that the Scriptures teach the Supremacy of the Father.

### 4. The Later Development of the Unitarian Faith

THE profession of the Unitarian faith was punishable by law in Britain up to the year 1813, when the Act condemning it was repealed. Open propaganda was, therefore, not easy, but some progress was made.

The main line of Unitarian development in England can be traced through the complicated history of Protestant Dissent. A key date is 1662 when the Act of Uniformity attempted to standardize religious conditions throughout England and Wales by requiring from every minister 'unfeigned assent and consent' to every detail of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and episcopal ordination. University teachers, schoolmasters and private tutors had to 'conform' as well as ministers, or be deprived of their appointments. These and other provisions in the Act were a gross affront to the consciences of many. Over one thousand clergymen, among them the keenest and best educated, refused to conform, and were ejected from their livings. Several hundred Puritan ministers had already been deprived when Charles II was restored in 1660. Many existing Unitarian congregations have a continuous history from this period of the 17th century. In many cities and country districts the oldest Dissenting congregation is often the Unitarian. The ejected ministers of 1662 were not religious liberals. Perhaps only one or two were at all heretical in theology,

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but during the next century, Unitarianism began to develop among many of the congregations they founded. It was in this Dissenting tradition that loyalty to conscience and sensitiveness to the appeal of reason came to be important factors in producing those views now characterized as Unitarian.

But anti-Trinitarian opinions found expression elsewhere. The name Unitarian first appeared in England in 1672, in a pamphlet by Henry Hedworth, a lifelong disciple of John Bidle. The first book to be printed in England having the word 'Unitarian' on its title page was published in 1687. It was *A Brief History of the Unitarians called also Socinians*. The name of its author was not given, but it is known to be the work of Stephen Nye, a Hertfordshire clergyman, who remained in the Church of England. He maintained that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in the New Testament, and that 'Justin, Origen and other principal Fathers (as the Arians afterwards did) taught that *the Father* is indeed before the Son and the Holy Spirit.' In 1712 another scholarly clergyman of the Church of England, Samuel Clarke, D.D., Rector of St. James', Piccadilly, published a volume, which ran through several editions, with the title, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. In it he collected all the texts in the Bible which he thought could throw any light on the doctrine of the Godhead. The conclusion he reached was that the Father only is Supreme God, that the Son is dependent on the Father for whatever divine power he possesses and the Holy Ghost is inferior to both in order and authority. The fact that the modern movement had such a powerful influence in the Church of England must not be overlooked, for it has some relation to the Broad Church Movement. These clergymen hoped that they would be able to reform the

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Church from within, but they were disappointed. Theophilus Lindsey for conscience' sake resigned his position as Vicar of Catterick, and in 1774 he opened a room in Essex Street, London, as a Unitarian Chapel, and 'thus first organized Unitarian Dissent as a working force in the religious life of England.'

The Movement progressed in the following years not only in England, but in Wales and Ireland. Among its most brilliant exponents were Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), who has been termed 'the founder of modern chemistry,' and James Martineau (1805-1900), of whom Gladstone said, 'he is the greatest thinker of my age.'

Towards the end of the eighteenth century a similar development towards the non-credal and progressive attitude of the Unitarian faith took place among the Congregationalists in the United States. The movement became eloquent in the person of Dr. William Ellery Channing, whose spirituality of outlook and clearness of exposition appealed to thousands not only in America but in England. Further development took place in the teaching of Theodore Parker, one of the protagonists in the fight against negro slavery. The influence of Emerson, who in his early manhood was a Unitarian minister, on both American and English Unitarian thought has also been profound, but owing to the indefinable character of his contribution it cannot be calculated. His stirring call, 'Trust your own best self: it is the only way,' and his unwavering confidence in the trustworthiness of the enlightened spirit of man did much to strengthen the Unitarians in their appeal to the authority of conscience, reason and the growing experience of the human soul.

From this short account one fact stands out plainly: the Unitarian faith had its origin within the Christian Church. Its foundation was at first scriptural. Its

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historical connection with Christianity can be neither refuted nor denied.

But the Unitarian Faith has so enlarged its borders and extended its basis that no narrow line of descent can be claimed for it. It has endeavoured to take to itself truth from whatever source it might come. It has been enriched by the advance in science, philosophy and modern thought, by the new method of studying the Bible, by the fresh knowledge which has been shed by a succession of scholars on the religions of the East and by the changes which have taken place in social life. It has found nothing, which might widen the intellectual outlook, cultivate the higher emotional qualities, deepen the moral consciousness, quicken spiritual insight, or awaken aspiration after the highest, alien to itself. Its high hopes have not been achieved, but at least it can claim that its purpose has been to be receptive of the great inspirations of the past and present and to strengthen belief in the divine possibilities of mankind. It was this fact which led one of its historians, W. G. Tarrant, to say that it could not be spoken of as a 'Sect,' or a 'Church,' or a 'School of Thought,' but was best described as a 'Movement.'

### 5. Unitarianism and the Reformation

THE Protestant Reformation was a re-birth. Though the leading reformers made the lamentable mistake of endeavouring to imprison truth in unprogressive creeds and dogmas, the human mind made a great advance towards emancipation in the sixteenth century. The last four hundred years have been distinguished from all that

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went before by the rapid progress which has been made in all departments of life and thought. We see a reformation taking place to-day in industrial, national, scientific, intellectual, moral and religious circles. Evidently one Reformation contains within itself the seeds of another, and a further Reformation is doubtless ahead of us.

IS PAUL MORE THAN JESUS? Judging from their writings, the Protestant Reformers seem to have cared more about Paul than Jesus, and consequently they have more to say concerning Faith than Love. Read the creeds and articles, and you will find many of the clauses are based on interpretations of Pauline theology. Turn to the commentaries of the Reformation period, and you will discover the most important of them deal with the Epistles rather than the Gospels. Every great movement has its watchword, its battle-cry. The great word of the Reformation was *Faith*, which is Pauline in origin. But Paul is not the greatest name in Christianity. Jesus is greater. Faith is not the noblest word in religion. *Love* is nobler—a truth to which Paul himself bore witness.

THE NEW REFORMATION. A higher Reformation awaits us, based not on creed but on character, not on theology but on life. Already we are witnessing its dawn. The humaner qualities are held in greater esteem: love for man is becoming the great ideal. The Reformation of Faith aimed at individual redemption; the Reformation of Love aims at universal redemption: it endeavours to establish the kingdom of God throughout the world, and proclaims that while the first commandment is 'Thou shalt love God,' the second, which is like it, is 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

## 6. Right of Private Judgment

DR. DALE in 1874 asked 'What is the ultimate principle of Protestantism?' He gave three possible answers: (1) The right of Private Judgment; (2) the sole and supreme authority of Holy Scripture as a rule of faith and practice; (3) Justification by Faith. 'Ask the question,' he says, 'of the first half-dozen men you meet, and five out of six will probably reply, "The right of private judgment." The proportion who would give this reply to-day is certainly larger than it was in 1874. The objections of the Passive Resisters in 1901 against a rate for supporting the teaching of Anglican theology in day schools was based not upon the testimony of the Bible, but wholly upon the witness of their individual consciences. This was not the attitude in the past. The Reformers themselves, alarmed at the number of sects which appeared and the variety of opinion which found expression, cast aside the right of private judgment, and opposed to the claims of infallibility made by the Church the doctrine of the 'infallibility of the Bible.' Biblical texts in the centuries which followed were regarded as the strongest evidence for accepting or rejecting any belief or practice or for following or avoiding any line of conduct. 'The phase of the movement which finally prevailed may be called the biblically orthodox,' wrote Charles Beard. Faith in the literal interpretation of the word of the Bible was held to be a surer guide than the light of reason or conscience.

REASON SUPREME. In 1836 James Martineau said in his *Rationale of Religious Enquiry* that all questions of religion must finally be submitted to the judgment of the *reason*, 'to the test of which even scripture must be brought.'

It was a bold assertion for those days, and was condemned by some of his own brother ministers. But for many years past Unitarians have accepted this position without question.

FREEDOM, NOT CAPRICE. Sometimes the charge is brought against Unitarians that they simply 'believe what they please.' Nothing could be more untrue. This is not the meaning of the right of private judgment. It means the right to believe what the voices of reason and conscience proclaim to be true and good; the right to listen to and to trust what God speaks to the mind, heart and soul of man; the right to follow Truth and to accept what is made known to us in our human experience. 'The right to be free,' as Professor Sir Henry Jones said, 'is not the right to be capricious.'

RESULT OF FREEDOM. Dr. Gow in his Presidential Address at the opening of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in 1929 said that 'the belief in free thought as the way to religious truth and as a basis of church membership is a daring and heroic act of faith—a daring and splendid affirmation of belief in God. . . . It is the profound faith that God can and will be found and realized by reverent free thought, by sincere effort, by the heart and mind which seek for him in spirit and in truth.'

## 7. Belief in God \*

UNITARIANS believe first of all and most profoundly in God. They erect their churches for the worship of God.

\* At the present time a certain number of Unitarians in Great Britain, and far more in America, would strongly dissent from the views expressed in this section. They have carried still further the conviction

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The only theological statement made in the majority of their Trust Deeds is that the building shall be used for the worship of God. This is the bond which unites them as a religious community. Beyond this, they formulate no creed, but, while offering what guidance they can, they assert that it is the duty of each man to be diligent in his search for truth and faithful to the light God reveals to *him*. They reverence God so deeply, that they feel they cannot fully describe him. Words which call forth the spirit of reverence *are the truest and best*. 'The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy,' is vague as a definition of God, but by these words the writer now known as Third Isaiah carries us at once into the atmosphere of worship. Compare Wordsworth's

I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts.

**GOD AS POWER.** God manifests himself as Power without us. We are assured by scientists that the sun is a million times larger than the earth and that the brightest star in the heavens, Sirius, far transcends the sun in size and splendour. The earth, only a small planet when measured by the universe, is travelling at the almost unimaginable speed of eighteen miles a second. What would prevent chaos and confusion, if there were no powerful, controlling Intelligence over all? 'No sane man,' wrote the late Rev. R. A. Armstrong in his treatise on *God and the Soul*, 'can steadily contemplate the whole

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stated by Dr. Hall in the words, 'They reverence God so deeply, that they feel they cannot fully describe him,' and, paradoxically as it seems to other Unitarians, they decline to give the name *God* to that which they reverence, and describe themselves as Humanists. They believe in worship, but do not feel that the object of worship is personal. This belief modifies their attitude to prayer, which, for Humanists, becomes an act of meditation and aspiration (personal or corporate). *Ed.*

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course of evolution which has led up to the existence of civilized nations of men, without feeling that this is no chance or accidental result, but reveals steady *purpose* ruling and shaping from the beginning to the end.'

Life could never have appeared on this planet, unless the potentiality of it had been stored in the universe all the time. It is a matter for ever increasing astonishment and constant wonder that in the clouds of cosmic dust, which coursed through space æons ago, there were hidden the glory of the flower, the wing of the bird, and the brain of man. A being gifted with powers of reason, such as man possesses, could never have come into existence, if there had not been Mind in the universe. We can repeat the words of a great scientist, Prof. J. Arthur Thomson, 'In the beginning was Mind, and that same Mind is the light of men.' Whatever else we may doubt, we may be certain that he who meted out the heavens has not less reason and not less purpose than his sentient creatures.

**MAN, THE READER.** We know it requires more genius and intelligence to write a book than to read it. Many people can appreciate Shakespeare, but they would never dream of attempting to rival him in the production of a drama. All that our great scientists accomplish in their discoveries is to read the writing of God on the earth and in the sky. The knowledge we possess to-day, great as it is in comparison with that of our forefathers, is exceedingly small, and every advance we make is only a further understanding of the Deeper Intelligence and Power of the universe, which is God.

**THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.** In saying that God is personal, it must not be understood that God is a Being distinct, as we are, from other beings, for 'in him we live and move and have our being.' He is the Life of all.

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It is because of the danger of regarding God as an object among other objects, that many thoughtful men to-day say they cannot believe in the 'Personality' of God. God, they tell us, is 'higher than personal.' No doubt he is greater than what we understand by human personality. The late Professor C. B. Upton said: 'There appears to be solid ground for believing with Lotze, that we are nearer the truth when we say, not that God is *supra*-personal, but rather that man is *infra*-personal, seeing that in the Infinite Being alone is self-subsistence, and therefore perfect personality.' Man is an imperfect personality, but the more he grows, intellectually, morally and spiritually, the more personal he becomes, because he enters more into the life of God, who is personal. Take, for instance, his intellectual growth. The world is saturated with the divine life, and the more man learns of the world, the greater personality he becomes, for the simple reason that he is partaking more and more of the being of the Supreme Personality, who is behind and in the whole. Thus we have to say not only that God is personal, but that he alone is fully personal.

THE DIVINE SYMPATHY. It would be presumption on our part to suppose that the limits of the human are limits also for the Divine personality; nevertheless, God's personality includes attributes similar to our own, which are perfect in him. His personality must have some kinship with ours; otherwise we could never know him. In our worship we experience such mercy, pity, peace and love, that we naturally associate them with a Person. It was this experience which led Jesus to speak of God as 'Father.' We may, then, with reason think of him as a God who cares. Unless we could thus look up to him, we should be compelled to regard the Intelligence immanent in the universe as heartless, and while he might

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exact our obedience, he could never win our love. Only a Personal God can satisfy the deepest needs of our moral and spiritual life.

### 8. God in Man

UNITARIANS believe that God speaks to man through conscience. What is meant by conscience must be stated in a later section. It may be true that many men are swayed by pleasure, but conscience never ceases to speak to man as an authority higher than himself. Even the worst men are sometimes aware of conflicts within themselves, as it were between two persons, one of whom commands and the other is commanded. These two beings are the self and the greater-than-self—the soul and God.

SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE. In this connection, for the purpose of removing all doubt concerning the existence of an indwelling God, it would be well to ponder upon the late Professor C. B. Upton's illuminating phrase '*spiritual resistance*.' We become aware of the reality of the external world, because we have the feeling of something *resisting* us. In the same manner we become convinced of the reality of God in our souls, because we are conscious of an ideal which sometimes resists our inclinations from within and at other times urges us forward.

THE INCREASING VISION. The best men are governed neither by pleasure nor by the standard of society, as some teachers would have us believe, but by a life within. The higher they rise, the loftier are the ideals which they perceive opening out before them in an endless series. That shows that man is *spiritually* in the making. The more

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men learn about the universe, the more they find there is to learn. That shows man is *intellectually* in the making. And the more carefully and earnestly they search into the nature of man, the more they become convinced of *Some One* above and beyond, whom man is approaching in his best moments.

THE MORAL LIFE. Unitarians insist that morality is closely associated with religion. 'The consciousness of duty,' Dr. Martineau said, 'is an originating condition of religion.' God is realized by the man with character, while he is unknown to one who merely repeats a creed. How shall we learn more concerning him? 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' said Jesus, 'for they shall see God.' Paul said, 'For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God.' We have, then, to seek a spirit like God's, if we would know him. Unitarians believe that true knowledge of God grows out of rectitude of life, and is not dependent upon intellectual assent to the statement 'I believe in God.' Many men believe more in God than they suppose; many others believe less in him than they imagine. A professed atheist who is honourable and loving in his life, may be in reality a truer believer in God and know more of him than many a professed Christian whose religion never gets beyond his creed. In his *Philosophy of Religion* Auguste Sabatier shows that two things are equally impossible; for a man who is false to conscience to have any deep faith in God; and for a good man, whether he speaks of himself as religious or not, to be without a knowledge of God. Often we entertain God unawares; we are uplifted, but do not think of the source of the inspiration. In proportion as each man is true and noble, the larger vision is vouchsafed to him.

## THE UNITY OF GOD

It has been pointed out by Dr. L. P. Jacks that the tendency has been to form 'patchwork conceptions of man;' and this has led to wrong ideas of both education and religion. 'Religion,' he tells us, 'is what a man does with his entire self, the self-dedication of the whole man, body and mind together, to whatever has been revealed to him as highest and most excellent.'

### 9. The Unity of God

UNITARIANS believe that God is One: and they maintain that *this belief is both rational and scriptural*. To-day, however, they are no longer much interested in disputing the orthodox doctrine of the triune nature of the Godhead by reference to the various writings in the New Testament. They generally hold the view that the doctrine of the Trinity is of declining importance, because Christian scholars have provided better insight into its historical origins and the processes, some of them very complicated, which led up to it.

WORSHIP OF GOD. In experience God always reveals himself to us as one and the same Person. In our aspirations and worship we feel we are approaching the same Being. One difficulty about the doctrine of the Trinity to Unitarians is that it confuses worship. To whom shall we pray? Shall we plead with the Father to have mercy on us? Or shall we beseech the Son to intercede for us? Or shall we pray the Holy Ghost to keep us within the Divine influence? We should be at a loss what to do.

THE TRINITY REINTERPRETED. The more advanced thinkers in orthodox churches see that the old interpretations of the Trinity were mistaken, though some of them

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are still honestly and piously held by many sincere Christians. Some modern orthodox scholars have gone so far as to state that the doctrine is not essential to the Christian faith (e.g. A. C. McGiffert and D. C. Macintosh). Dr. F. R. Tennant even believed that the classical formulation was irrational and religiously valueless, since it inevitably led to some form of belief in three separate gods. The famous Protestant scholar, Dr. Emil Brunner, believed that the doctrine was strictly a 'protective one,' helping to safeguard the truths about Jesus Christ. Even so, Unitarians are ready to accept, with Dr. James Drummond, that the belief in the Trinity 'has been tenaciously held by some of the master spirits of our race' and they would agree with him when he wrote (*Studies in Christian Doctrine*, p. 143) that 'the history of the doctrine . . . becomes a record of one of the sublimest efforts of the human mind to turn faith into knowledge and to give definite intellectual guidance to the vague anticipations of religion.'

In the twentieth century many attempts have been made to re-interpret the doctrine of the Trinity in modern terms, but scholars have not found it easy to accomplish this. This is hardly surprising when we remember, in the words of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (published in 1958), that the doctrine 'is held to be a mystery in the strict sense, in that it can neither be known by unaided reason apart from revelation, nor cogently demonstrated by reason after it has been revealed.'

As in the past, modern scholars have tried to make sense of the doctrine by using the method of analogy. Comparisons are drawn, for example, between the nature of God and the nature of the human self. Just as there are three activities of thinking, feeling and willing in

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human beings, so there are three roughly similar activities in the being of God, which the doctrine of the Trinity is really an attempt to describe (cf. Canon L. Hodgson in *The Doctrine of the Trinity*). Others hold that, while the doctrine is not essential, it is useful for religious people because it helps to assert 'the Christlikeness of God' and therefore has a practical symbolic value both for religious worship and human conduct.

Another Anglican theologian who is also a scientist, Canon C. E. Raven, likewise tries to explain the Trinity by the method of comparison. As a biologist he sees evidence for continuity, creativity and design in Nature and he argues from this to a similar trinitarian pattern in the Godhead. But he also frankly admits that the doctrine is difficult and will perhaps only be understood 'in the fulness of time' (his *Gifford Lectures*, Vol. II, p. 61). Another theologian, Dr. D. M. Baillie, believes that since any human notion of God must be full of paradox because of the limitation of our minds, then the supreme paradox of God can easily lead to the supreme paradox of the Incarnation of God in Jesus.

None of these attempts by twentieth-century scholars to explain the Trinity is really satisfactory. Unitarians hold it to be wrong for the churches to require Christian faith to be based exclusively on trinitarian conceptions of God. These ideas have a very interesting history and some may be useful in helping us to grasp a little more clearly the mysterious relationship between human and divine nature, but they will always remain conceptions which were formulated long ago against a background of experience and of ideas very remote from our life in the twentieth century. Unitarians believe that our human conceptions of God can continue to develop in the future as they have undoubtedly developed in the past. To-day



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it is more helpful spiritually, and more honest intellectually, to cease to require Trinitarian views of God, and instead to use less dogmatic language, so that men and women may be helped to arrive at their own rich conceptions of Deity.

### 10. Unity of God in the Bible

It may be helpful to many to see how belief in the essential unity of God is supported by the biblical writings, since of course the Bible is still widely regarded as the chief source of information about 'the ways of God to men.' The Jews at the time of Jesus, it is admitted by all, were *monotheists*, and so are their descendants to-day. The Old Testament, in the clearest way, teaches that God is One, not three. So far as the New Testament is concerned, the questions we have to answer are, *Was Jesus God?* and *Did he consider himself God?*

**JESUS MAN, NOT GOD.** A young man came running to him one day and asked, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said, 'Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God.' This was equivalent to denying his Godhead. But we are told he was speaking as man and not as God.

There is no passage in which he says, 'This I speak as man.' or 'This I speak as God.' Was he speaking as God or man when he cried out on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is said that here he was speaking as man; this was his human voice. But the whole efficacy of the Atonement surely depends on the notion that it was not as man but as God that Jesus died on the cross.

## UNITY OF GOD IN THE BIBLE

**GOSPEL TEACHINGS.** Jesus says: 'I can of *my own self do nothing*: as I hear I judge: and my judgment is true, because I seek *not my own will*, but the will of him that sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.'

In the Garden of Gethsemane he prays: 'Not my will but thine be done,' 'Father, save me from this hour.' *Would God pray thus?*

He bids us pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven.' No mention is made of the other persons of the Trinity. And what shall we say of his prayers? What took place when Jesus prayed? Was the man in him praying to the God in him? Was the second person of the Trinity praying to the first?

The words, 'I and the Father are one,' are sometimes quoted in support of the Trinitarian view. Study the context in which these words occur. Note that Jesus says in it concerning his disciples: 'that they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they may also be in us.'

**JESUS DIVINE.** It should be remembered that while denying the Deity or Godhead of Jesus, Unitarians believe in the divineness or divinity of Jesus. All men have divine potentialities, and the difference between Jesus and other pure and holy men is one of *degree*, not of kind. He is the ideal man, whose life bears witness to the loftiness of human nature, and whose achievements assure us of the advance towards Godlikeness the race will gradually make.

11. The Trinity and the  
New Testament

IN the Authorized Version of the Bible, there is one Trinitarian text: 'There are three in heaven that bear record, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one' (1 *John* v, 7).

This text was at one time regarded as a scriptural refutation of Unitarianism, but it has been proved that it was introduced by a later hand. It does not occur in the earliest manuscripts, and out of simple honesty it had to be omitted from the Revised Version of the New Testament, as also from almost all subsequent translations, including the *New English Bible* (1961).

BAPTISMAL FORMULA. Refuge is now often taken in *Matthew* xxviii, 19: 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

(1) It should be remembered that this is a resurrection saying: there is no record that Jesus used this formula during his life. (2) It does not assert that these three are one. (3) It is acknowledged by many scholars that this baptismal formula is late in origin. An injunction of this nature would have been known throughout the Church, whereas there is no other mention of it in Apostolic times. (4) The ancient Church historian, Eusebius (died 340), several times quotes the text in the following form, 'Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name, teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you.' (5) But a still more serious objection is to be found in the New Testament itself, which finally disposes of it. *Either the Apostles knew nothing at all of this command, or they wilfully disobeyed it.* They did not baptize in this formula,

but 'in the name of Jesus.' This was natural, seeing that he was the founder of the movement.

Here are the proofs: And Peter said, 'Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ' (*Acts* ii, 38). 'Only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus' (*Acts* viii, 16). 'And he (Peter) commanded them (the household of Cornelius) to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ' (*Acts* x, 48). 'And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus' (*Acts* xix, 5). 'Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?' (*Romans* vi, 3). 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ' (*Galatians* iii, 27).

There are few scholars of repute belonging to any branch of the Christian Church in the present day who would contend that the New Testament contains any clear or explicit statement of the doctrine of the Trinity. Over three hundred years ago Hooker wrote, 'Our belief in the Trinity is in scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention, only deduced it is out of scripture by collection.' The essential unity of God was the chief and most sacred doctrine of the Jewish people, and there is not a sign that it was ever denied or doubted or challenged by any Christian preacher or writer in New Testament times. Such a challenge would have roused the rabbis, priests and scribes to far more violent opposition than any claim that Jesus was the expected Messiah.

Thus we are compelled to believe that the Scripture doctrine is that expressed by the Apostle Paul that there is 'one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.'

It must be remembered that the question at issue has not been whether Jesus was human. From the time of

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the condemnation of Apollinarius in the fourth century, the Church has taught the full humanity of Jesus, that he is Very Man of Very Man. The question has been whether man is divine as Jesus was divine. Are we to accept in its fulness the teaching of Jesus that man is the child of God? Has the ordinary man any right to look up to God and to pray to him as Father? It is difficult to understand how Jesus was really human, if he were divine in the sense that the creeds teach. The three chief creeds of the Church make him appear too remote to be placed in the category of man.

THE TWO NATURES. The Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325 decided by a majority vote, following on an injunction from the Emperor Constantine, that Jesus was the Second Person of the Trinity, 'very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.' No sooner was this accepted than all sorts of questions arose, which have never received satisfactory answers. Did the Son possess a human soul or did the Logos or Word take to himself a human body and an animal soul? Was it possible that God and man could have co-existed in one person in any real sense? Did the two natures exist side by side or did they blend? Did each of the two natures, the human and the divine, retain its own attributes? Did the Son cease to be God while he was on earth? Had he two wills, a divine and a human, or only one will? Did he possess the *same* nature as the Father or was his nature only *similar* to that of the Father? Was he equal with or subordinate to the Father? Did Mary actually bear God or did the Son after his birth assume the divine nature? Was it after all the Father God who was incarnated and suffered? A host of questions were later asked concerning the relation of the Holy Ghost to the First and Second Persons, the chief being whether the

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Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son, or from the Father only. This was the theological rock on which the split was made between the Eastern and the Western Churches. All these questions may seem like so much theological hair-splitting of a past age, but they were the result of some hard thinking, and they are still vital difficulties to be met by anyone who accepts the doctrine of the Trinity as a living creed. They are not questions that need trouble Unitarians.

### 12. The Holy Spirit and the New Testament

No doctrine is more elusive than that of the Third Person of the Trinity. So far it has evaded definition. To this day not only the ordinary laymen but the leading Trinitarian theologians have been unable to give any clear conception of the Holy Ghost. The main reason for this is that the New Testament does not provide any foundation for the doctrine. The general position is summed up frankly by Dr. W. R. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, 'The New Testament evidence for a personal conception of the Holy Spirit is mixed, and I cannot resist the conclusion that, in many cases, the Holy Spirit is thought of as a power, influence or presence of God in Christ.' Owing to the admittedly vague and unsatisfactory condition of the doctrine, many books have in recent years been published on the subject, but they have not thrown any light upon the distinctive being and work of the Third Person of the Trinity. Yet the references to the work of the Spirit in the New Testament are abundant and varied. The Spirit of God is stated to

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operate in many ways in and on the lives of the believers, inspiring, guiding, sustaining, restraining, transforming and redeeming them, quickening their natural capacities, bestowing on them wisdom and power, and uniting them in fellowship though possessed of differing gifts. But not one of these references definitely suggests that any writer thought that this was the work of the Third Person of the Trinity. Throughout the Old and the New Testaments the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God are terms which are used to describe the activity of the Living God in the world, in the spirits of men and in the fellowship which unites men together.

**GOD IS SPIRIT.** It was a supreme moment in the history of religion, when Jesus declared that God is Spirit, whose presence does not depend upon the existence of any particular temple and who can be worshipped anywhere in spirit and in truth. So to the Unitarian the Holy Spirit is the ever-present Living God himself, who sustains the universe and dwells in the inmost spirit of man, and not a separate person or activity of the Godhead. This is the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus said that the Heavenly Father is willing 'to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him' (*Luke xi, 13*). The Apostle Paul wrote, 'Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you' (*1 Corinthians iii, 16*), and he describes the Christian virtues as the fruit of the spirit (*Galatians v, 22*). John wrote, 'Hereby we know that we abide in him, and he in us because he has given us of his spirit' (*1 John iv, 13*). God is not a distant, mysterious being, as the doctrine of the Trinity suggests, for in him we live and move and have our being. The inspiration of his Holy Spirit is always available for the children of men. He pours out his spirit on all flesh. Pentecost is not an isolated event in

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history, for there is a Pentecost, whenever the spirit of man responds to the divine urge, and he

Slides down by thrills, through all things made,  
Through sight and sound of every place.

### 13. The Love of God

**UNITARIANS** believe in the Infinite Love of God. They believe that to God the soul of every human being is of immeasurable worth, and that though everyone must suffer the penalty for wrong-doing, no soul will be ultimately lost to God. Unitarians look up to God as Father, and delight to believe with Jesus that he cares for the wayside flower, feeds the raven, and gives heed to the sparrow's fall. The parables of the Father's welcome home to the prodigal son, of the shepherd seeking his lost sheep, *until he find it*, suggest the wonder and depth of the Divine Love.

**HELL.** Holding these beliefs, Unitarians were among the first to renounce the doctrine of an eternal hell. This dreadful doctrine, which still troubles some earnest people, is unscriptural. Four words are translated 'hell' in the Bible: (1) *Sheōl*, which means the underworld, to which both good and bad were supposed to go immediately after death, and from which the good hoped to be liberated; (2) *Hades*, which is the Greek equivalent of *Sheōl*; (3) *Tartarus*, used only once (*2 Peter ii, 4*), an intermediate state, and never means 'hell' as we understand that word; (4) *Gebenna*, a rubbish heap outside Jerusalem, on which it was customary to cast the corpses of criminals and which was occasionally set on fire for sanitary reasons.

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DEVIL. The Hebrew word 'Satan' meant adversary, and the adversary was sometimes the messenger of God to men, standing between them and the evil they would do. Thus the angel of the Lord who appeared unto Balaam is termed a 'Satan.' Evidently this word had not the evil signification to the Hebrews of old that it has for us. The modern idea of the devil grew out of the superstitions of the Middle Ages, when he was a subject of absorbing interest. There are indications in the New Testament that Jesus believed in the existence of a personal devil and regarded disease as due to possession by evil spirits, but they do not prove that he had the awful conception of the devil's personality and power which was held in later centuries. On the one hand, it is difficult to suppose that a man of his intellectual discernment could entertain such a conception and at the same time have such penetrating insight into the Divine providence and love. On the other, it is possible, as many scholars have recently affirmed, that he accepted the current opinion about the devil and his angels. If that was so, the Unitarian states with candour that he is compelled to reject that aspect of his teaching.

THE DEVIL AND TEMPTATION. The doctrine of a satanic agency denies the Divine Omnipotence, and hands more souls over to the sovereign power of evil than are reserved for God. 'It is very significant,' wrote Dr. Drummond, 'that, though the devil is represented as the tempter in the account of Christ's temptation, he is nevertheless ignored when a doctrine of temptation and sin is formally expounded, as in the Epistle to the Romans or the first chapter of the Epistle of James.' It is of the utmost importance for religious and moral welfare that we should rid ourselves not only of the belief in the devil, but also of the supposition that temptation is purely

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external. The human factor is greatest in temptation. Tow burns because it is inflammable: man sins because he is susceptible to some forms of evil. It is sometimes a sin to be tempted. If a man is even tempted to steal, he is on so low a moral level that some guilt must be imputed. 'Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.'

ETERNAL. The word translated 'eternal' is *aiōnios*, from which we obtain our word 'æon.' It does not mean 'eternal'; it signifies 'of long duration.' While there is ample testimony in the New Testament that sin is punished, it is nowhere stated that the punishment will endure for ever.

The word translated 'damn' (*krinein*) occurs about two hundred times in the New Testament, and only in fifteen cases, where it suited the old theology, has it been rendered 'damn.' In all the other passages it is translated 'condemn.'

It was not the New Testament writers, but later theologians, who formulated the doctrine of everlasting torments, which has made many souls regard God as a tyrant to be dreaded instead of a Father to be loved.

### 14. The Word of God

UNITARIANS believe in the 'Word' of God. They do not, however, limit that word to the Bible or to any collection of books, but maintain that God is speaking to-day in England, just as he spoke in Palestine long ago. Unitarians have been unjustly charged with having a different Bible from that used by other Churches. Their ministers, however, generally use the Revised Version

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along with still more recent translations. In 1934, to encourage the reading of the Bible, Dr. Mortimer Rowe, then Secretary of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, published a valuable selection of the noblest passages it contains, under the title *A Golden Treasury of the Bible*. This is not a different Bible, but a selection of its most uplifting messages and incidents. Owing to their broad views of inspiration many Unitarian ministers in recent years have adopted the practice of reading during public worship non-Biblical lessons chosen from ancient scriptures, especially the Sacred Books of the East, and from modern writings.

**MANY WORDS OF GOD.** We limit not God's truth: the loftiest thought and experience of man and the universe itself are revelations of God. We see the writing of God everywhere in the heavens above and the earth beneath. If we read any inspiring utterance of poet or prophet, we regard it as a word of God. The proof that a word is God's word is not that it is found in the Bible; it might occur in another Sacred Book or in some modern writer. When we read in Paul's Epistle to the Romans: 'Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good,' and then find in the Buddha's Dhammapada: 'Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good,' it is impossible to say the former is God's word while the latter is not.

**TEST OF GOD'S WORD.** The test we apply is this. Does this word appeal to the mind as true? Does it purify and uplift the affections? Does it ennoble our thought and life? If it does any of these things, then it is a word of God to us.

**DIVINE INFLUENCE.** The friendly handshake, the kind look, the generous thought are as much under the in-

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spiration of God as anything that is written. When an old man lays his hand on some rash young fellow's shoulder and by his helpful advice persuades him to abandon his evil ways, he is speaking the divine word. The word of God is not confined to spoken language. Many of the holiest messages never shape themselves into speech, but well up from within as life-giving impulses.

**ALL NOBLE WORK DIVINE.** Unitarians regard the Bible with the highest reverence; but they do not confine inspiration to its pages or consider all its words divine. They hold that the work of all faithful workmen, artists, architects, sculptors, engineers, musicians, poets and others, which makes for the progress of the race, is under divine inspiration. God is an ever-living presence in nature and in humanity. He has still more light and truth to make known to his children, and future generations will possess fuller knowledge of him and the world.

### 15. Revelation and Inspiration

**UNITARIANS** believe that revelation comes in a progressive order. As man develops intellectually, morally and spiritually, so are the truths of God's wonderful words made known.

**PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.** The discovery of truth in every sphere of human activity has been gradual, and religion forms no exception to this rule. In the Bible itself can be traced the development of the idea of God from a being made in human form and possessed of human weaknesses to the conception that he is Spirit and

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the Heavenly Father who is perfect. Every idea must bide its time. The power and use of steam could not have been discovered until some man had attained a certain stage of intellectual development. The Sermon on the Mount could not be preached until a human being had reached the moral and spiritual stature of Jesus. Electricity was made known after a long series of experiments by scientists, and nuclear fission was made possible only after prolonged research. Christianity came after a long succession of Hebrew prophets. The gospel was not dropped from the skies ready written. It was wrought out of the life and thought and aspirations of the man Jesus. As man ascends Godward, God reveals truth to him.

INSPIRATION UNIVERSAL. Unitarians believe that not only religion, but all that is true and noble in life is inspired of God. The thoughts of the philosopher, the creation of the artist, the discoveries of scientists are all quickened by divine inspiration. The inspiration of a man like Sir Isaac Newton was different in kind from the inspiration that filled the mind of Jesus; yet both were in a true sense divine. George Dawson, speaking on 'The Inspiration of Shakespeare,' said: 'If the fire of genius points to God, if its apex be upward, then it has borrowed its flame from the Great Spirit of the Universe.' Our own generation has its tribute of truth and beauty to bring to the treasury of revelation, which increases as years pass.

## THE BIBLE

### 16. The Bible

UNITARIANS acknowledge with gratitude the debt that Western civilization owes to the Bible and welcome the many efforts that have been made to give its message new life and meaning by careful re-translation and illuminating commentary.

THE GREATEST BOOK. If men would only study it in the light of the knowledge which has been shed upon its pages by reverent research, they would receive more good from it than their fathers and grandfathers did. Its message was never so distinct and articulate as it is today. If by its words foul outrages have been justified, and slavery and war and polygamy defended, it must never be forgotten that it has nourished the best devotional life of Europe. It has fostered the purest religion, the noblest piety and the highest morality. There is nothing in literature to equal the Sermon on the Mount, and no life so beautiful as that of the Master. Its best spirit is indeed the Spirit of God.

A HUMAN BOOK. Not only does it contain most valuable truth, it is also an intensely human book. Man is pictured as he is, with his divine possibilities and his manifold shortcomings, with his aspirations towards God and his inclinations towards evil. As a study of human nature it is unexcelled.

NOT ALL OF EQUAL VALUE. But it is not all of equal importance or value. Even our forefathers, who maintained that every chapter and verse was the very word of God, found more help in some passages than in others. Turn to their Bibles and you will find how they thumbed the pages on which the noblest Psalms and the Gospel story of Jesus were written. Modern students are now

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agreed that 'The Bible contains the word of God, but it is not all the word of God.' Jesus asserted the superiority of his own teaching to the Law, when he said 'Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.' Thus Jesus himself proclaiming a new and higher message openly denied the verbal infallibility of the Bible.

### 17. The Bible not Infallible

THE early English Unitarians based their faith on the Bible. They were Unitarians, because they found Unitarian, not Trinitarian, doctrine in its pages. Their scholars strove by diligent research to discover the original text, and then to produce correct translations, paraphrases and interpretations of its words.. As Dr. McLachlan has written, 'In the fields of Textual Criticism, Translation, and Higher Criticism, from the sixteenth century onwards, Unitarians, using the term in its broad historical sense, have been amongst the most distinguished pioneers.'

Unitarians were among the first, however, to acknowledge that not every word in the Bible could be accepted as true. The controversy is almost dead, but it may be well to recall a few facts which bear on the subject. The Bible is very unequal in value. What a difference there is between the representation of God as worshipped by the patriarchs, and the heavenly Father whom Jesus sought in prayer. What a distance separates the moral standard of the story of Rahab's treachery and deceit from that of the Good Samaritan.

## THE BIBLE NOT INFALLIBLE

AN INSPIRED TRANSLATION? Strange to say, not only the original Hebrew and Greek texts, but also the English translation was supposed to be infallible. The deathblow was given to this theory by the publication of the Revised Version. The Revisers made 36,191 alterations in the text, translation and punctuation of the New Testament alone. In the text, 5,788 changes were introduced, though only a quarter of these were regarded as affecting subject matter. It must be remembered the Revised Version was only a revision and not a new translation, and that no alteration was made in the Authorized Version unless there was a majority of two Revisers to one in its favour. The publication in 1946 of the American Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, followed in 1952 by the same version of the whole Bible, and the appearance in 1961 of the New English Bible (New Testament) have continued the process. The last mentioned, far from being a revision of earlier versions, is an altogether fresh translation 'made in the language of the present day.'

EARLY OPINIONS. Except for some tiny fragments, the earliest existing New Testament manuscripts were written not earlier than 200 A.D. Other important manuscripts were written between the fifth and the ninth centuries. As printing had not been invented, and each fresh copy had to be made by hand, the difficulty of preserving verbal accuracy will be apparent at once. Jesus had been dead little more than a hundred years, when Marcion rejected all books except the Gospel according to Luke and ten letters of Paul, 'erasing by his heretical industry' what did not suit his ideas. His expurgated collection was accepted very widely by the early Church. Before his day, one of the earliest Fathers, Papias, said that he preferred to trust the word of those who had listened to the



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Apostles, believing that 'the information he could draw from books was not so profitable as that preserved in the living tradition.' This statement is of great significance, because Papias knew of the existence of the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark.

### 18. The Higher Criticism

UNITARIANS accept the assured results of what is called the Higher Criticism of the Bible. There are two kinds of criticism—the Lower and the Higher. The Lower Criticism deals with the text and its grammar; it aims at securing the original form of the documents. To take an instance: on examining the earliest manuscripts, it was found that the verse in the Authorized Version, 1 *John* v, 7, did not appear at all. The Revisers therefore left it out. That was Lower Criticism.

MEANING OF THE TERM. The Higher Criticism tries to discover the date and the authorship, the character and the tendency of a book or passage, and the circumstances which caused it to be written. Take an example. We speak to-day of First Isaiah and Second Isaiah, because we know the book was not written by one man. Isaiah says, 'In the year that Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.' Uzziah died in 740 B.C. Chapters xl–lv deal with the exile, and as the date of the first captivity is 597 B.C., one hundred and forty-three years later, it is obvious that the same man could not have written the whole book. The circumstances in the reign of King Ahaz, 733–721 B.C., called forth one part, and the circumstances of the captivity, 597–538 B.C., called forth another.

A MODERN EXAMPLE. Suppose a book professing to

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be by Shakespeare (born 1564) were discovered, and we found in it an account of the Act of Union of Scotland with England, which was passed 143 years later, should we not unhesitatingly say that Shakespeare could not have written the passage which contained it? That would be passing judgment in the spirit of the Higher Criticism.

### 19. Prophets and Prophecy

UNITARIANS believe that God has never left himself without a witness, but has sent to every age and every nation his spokesmen, to direct the people to nobler ways of life. Among the greatest of these witnesses were the prophets of Israel, who spoke with such moral persuasiveness and power that their words still appeal to the hearts of men.

WHAT IS A PROPHET? Until modern scholars devoted themselves to a careful study of the Bible, it was generally supposed that a prophet was one who predicted future events; and it was taught that the two Greek words (*pro* and *phēmi*) from which the word is derived, supported this view. Now we know the Greeks termed the foreteller of events *mantis*, and by the word *prophētes* they meant one who spoke on behalf of another. Thus, if we adhere to the original meaning of the word, the prophet is the spokesman of God, the proclaimer of his message. The Hebrews spoke of him as *nabi* and although the dispute is not finally settled, yet among scholars there is an overwhelming weight of opinion in favour of the view that the original meaning of this word also was 'spokesman.'

PROPHETS MORAL TEACHERS. Unitarians believe,

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with most scholars to-day, that the prophets were men who felt God moving in their hearts, and delivered to the people messages which had an intimate relation to the passing events of their time. Though some of them looked forward, as earnest souls in other nations have done, to the coming of a leader, who should deliver the people from their iniquities and distresses, they were not concerned about events which were likely to happen hundreds of years after their time. They were far-sighted religious men who dealt with the problems pressing upon their nation, and whatever *foresight* they had was the result of their *insight* into the meaning of the immediate present. They were social reformers and statesmen rather than diviners and clairvoyants. In early Israel men sought to discover the will of God by the casting of lots, by consulting sacred stones, by communicating with seers, and by listening to the ravings of der-vishes; but the later prophets, such as Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, did not profess to use these magical arts. They were men aflame with moral zeal and religious enthusiasm of the highest order; and they were possessed of wonderful sanity of judgment and intellectual force. They justified the saying of Locke: 'When God makes a prophet, he does not unmake a man.' They became God's spokesmen, as the true prophets do to-day, because by uprightness of life and earnestness of spirit they made themselves worthy to receive and deliver his message. They taught the people that above all the God of Israel was a righteous God, and that all the disaster which befell the nation was due to their refusal to obey his will.

MISINTERPRETATIONS OF PROPHECY. The words of the prophets were primarily intended for the people living in their time, but through a misguided desire to centralize the whole force of their message upon Jesus,

## JESUS AND HIS AGE

passages in their writings have been said to refer to him. This method of procedure was unfortunately adopted by the writer of the Gospel according to Matthew, who was anxious to convince the Jewish people that Jesus was their long-expected Messiah. Let anyone read the passages quoted, without prejudice, and he must agree with Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter's statement in *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century* that this mode of interpretation—the isolation of a verse from its context—is justly discredited to-day. 'The study of *Isaiah* vii, 15, 16, shows that the Evangelist's connexion of the promised child in 14 with the birth of Jesus could not have been in the prophet's mind. He is to be born during the invasion by the allied kings of Ephraim and Syria from which Judah was then suffering. . . . But before he reaches years of discretion, the territories of the invading kings will have been devastated in their turn. . . . Was the young child taken with his mother to Egypt (*Matt.* ii, 15), "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son"? Hosea was looking backwards, not forwards, "when Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt"; and the proof of the divine affection lay in the Exodus.'

### 20. Jesus and His Age

AN important question for Christians of this century is: *What was the relation of Jesus to his age?* How was he influenced by his surroundings and by the religious forces which his country and people had inherited from the past?

GREATEST OF THE HEBREWS. Jesus was the greatest

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of the Hebrew prophets, their culmination and their glory. He stands in direct historical connection with Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. He was deeply influenced by the religion and life of his own people. Before his time, God's witnesses had already spoken of the Fatherhood of God, had conceived the idea of all men worshipping together, and had had foregleams of the kingdom of heaven. To these conceptions Jesus gave a new and deeper significance. Are not the words of Micah truly Christian in spirit? 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?' Empty ceremonialism as a substitute for morality, against which Jesus raised his protest in righteous indignation, is unreservedly condemned by Micah.

**NEW INTERPRETATIONS.** The two great commandments of Jesus, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' were taken from the ancient Jewish law. Jesus infused them with new vitality, read a deeper meaning into them, and gave them a wider application. He rose above nationality, and took a broad, loving outlook upon humanity.

**CHILD OF HIS NATION.** Jesus was the child of his own land and people. Not Greece, not Rome, not any other country could have given birth to such a man. He could only have proceeded from the Hebrew nation with its unparalleled genius for religion, with its stirring appeal to conscience and the soul, and with its tradition of high-minded patriarchs and prophets. Jesus spoke to that moral and religious spirit in man which is the exclusive possession of no special age or clime or race. Into this spirit the prophets of Israel had deep insight; and knowledge and experience of Judaism formed a necessary preliminary to the word and work of Jesus.

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**CAN WE ACCOUNT FOR JESUS?** It is sometimes asserted as an argument against Unitarianism that it cannot account for Jesus by reference to his age or his nation. No one pretends that Jesus can be accounted for by dwelling exclusively on his ancestry and environment. Carlyle was right when he maintained that we can account for no great man. There is something in him which is above his time, or he certainly could not become a leader of men. In every great man there is an indefinable and inscrutable force which we call his individuality or personality, and it cannot be accounted for by environment and heredity.

**NOT SEPARATED FROM HUMANITY.** But of this we are certain, that towering above their fellows as our greatest men do, they are rooted in our common humanity, from which they can never be separated. As we look from certain points of view at the peak of a giant mountain like the Matterhorn, it seems almost a thing apart, as though it were swinging in mid-air; but when we get a full view of it we see it is broad-based in the earth. Shakespeare stands apart; but he was none the less a child of his time. In any age he might have been great, but living in the time when the genius of English dramatic art flowered, he wrote great plays. In the time of Jesus the common people were looking to the future with confidence, assured that God was about to send a deliverer, a Messiah, a Christ. The age was marked by religious enthusiasm. Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus says: 'What went ye out to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. . . . Among them that are born of women, there is none greater than John.' The age never creates the genius of any man, but it often gives direction to it.

**JESUS AND HISTORY.** Jesus stands in the line of

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history, just as other great thinkers and workers have done. He was indebted to the past; he rose out of the past; and whatever new truth he proclaimed came from a human mind, inspired by the God of truth, his Father and our Father. He had in an unusual degree the power of perceiving and assimilating the best that the great prophets and rabbis had taught, and expressing it with new and living force.

### 21. Jesus the Son of Joseph

UNITARIANS believe that Jesus was born in Galilee, the son of Joseph, by tradition a carpenter, and of Mary, his wife. They hold that these are among the reliable facts found in the New Testament. They believe that Jesus was human, born as other children, and that his coming into the world was not a 'supernatural' event.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH. The miracle of the Virgin birth is rejected on the following grounds: (1) We have the testimony of his mother Mary; we are told in *Luke* ii, 48 that she said, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.' If the Scriptures never err, then there can be no doubt that Joseph was the father of Jesus. (2) John would most surely have heard of the 'miracle,' for after the death of Jesus he took Mary under his care, but the Fourth Gospel refers definitely to Jesus as the son of Joseph. (3) Paul, who is the earliest writer in the New Testament, says Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh. (4) The birth-story occurs in *Matthew* and *Luke*, but both Gospels, in their genealogies, trace the descent of Jesus from *David through Joseph*. It is hardly possible that

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the birth-stories and the genealogies can have been written by the same hand. (5) *Mark* was the earliest Gospel to be written, and it makes no reference to the Virgin birth, despite the writer's evident love of the miraculous. He records that Mary and her other children sought to restrain Jesus, believing him to be mad. Would she have been surprised at anything he said or did, if the story of the 'Annunciation' were true?

Similar stories are told of the Virgin birth of other heroes and kings in ancient times. The Gospel story of the miraculous birth of Jesus is largely due to a misunderstanding of *Isaiah* vii, 14, 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son.' The Hebrew word ('almah') used here, can be translated 'a young married woman.' In any case, this verse cannot possibly refer to Jesus. See page 49.

### 22. Jesus the Man

UNITARIANS believe that in regarding *Jesus as a man*, they pay him the loftiest tribute possible. If he had been God, there would have been nothing to wonder at either in his life or his words, for all things are possible with God. But when we say he met temptation to evil and conquered it with the strength of a *man*; when we say that, by the diligence of his search and the purity of his heart, he discovered truth which has helped millions of his fellows, we render him the highest praise.

HIS LIFE. Jesus began life, as we all begin it, as a helpless babe, and he grew in stature and in favour with God and man. He probably had to be a bread-winner in the family at an early age. His affection for his mother

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was most tender. We are told that while he was expiring on the cross he committed her to the care of his beloved disciple. He belonged to a brave and spirited race, but in his time they were not a free, but a subject people. Despite many difficulties, he grew to be the noblest, truest and best of the sons of God—a man who saw God, with unclouded vision, revealed as the Universal Father. Because Jesus was a man, we love humanity the more, and have faith in its possibilities. He was a brother man; he mingled with the degraded, and perceived dignity beneath their degradation. It is easy to recognize divinity in a saint or hero; it was the practice to deify the Roman Emperor; but only a man with a large soul can see God in a slave. 'Friend of publicans and sinners'—the ancient reproach has become the modern eulogy.

EXAMPLE OF JESUS. Born of the human race, he is our great example. How could he ever be our example if he possessed a nature wholly different from that of a man? But when we say that he is our example, we do not mean that any one of us can become as good as he was. We mean that we have similar capacities for progress in all that is good, though we may not attain his spiritual stature on earth. Jesus has shown what spiritual heights are possible to man when he is faithful to the noblest ideals. Strive as he might, no ordinary man would gain Shakespeare's mastery over words; and strive as he might, he would have equal difficulty in attaining the nobility of Jesus. But to what level the human race will finally rise, who shall predict? A great hope seems to have possessed Paul when he wrote, 'till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

## THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS

WAS JESUS SINLESS? Much depends upon what is meant by the word 'sin.' That Jesus never violated any great moral principle we can believe; but that any man should be unconscious of weakness, we cannot believe. Jesus was evidently aware that he needed sustaining in hours of moral conflict, and therefore sought God frequently in prayer. He refused also to be called 'good.' We have only brief records of a short period of his life. It has been calculated that not more than thirty-five days of his life are mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels; yet the spirit he manifested on those days was such that we are justified in holding that he was the greatest and noblest of the sons of God. 'Endeavour so to live that Jesus would approve your life' (J. S. Mill).

### 23. The Leadership of Jesus

It may be asked why we should choose Jesus from among all the religious and moral teachers of the world and regard him as the great Leader and Master. There are many reasons, but the following may be specially mentioned.

(1) He has taught us, as no other thinker and teacher has done, to have confidence in the world in which we find ourselves and to feel at home in this mighty universe. He has stressed the fact that we may have perfect trust in God and rely upon his love, which is like that of a father but infinitely deeper. When we turn to Buddhism, which is generally acknowledged to approach nearer in worth to the teaching of Jesus than any other great religion, we discover that grand and noble and helpful as Buddha and his teaching are, it is just this element of

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confidence in the world about us which is lacking. This existence in changeful time is a misfortune, and escape from it is to be sought eagerly. We have also derived inspiration from the life of Marcus Aurelius, who was certainly one of the noblest men of the West, but when we read his *Thoughts to Himself*, we find that he urges resignation, as though life here is a heavy task which must be faced with courage and equanimity. But in the teaching of Jesus there is a note of joy, the belief that life is good and the provision which God has made for it generous, if men would use it aright, and the definite, ringing message that God cares for every human being, and loves each one with a love that will never let him go. No message is higher than that. We need it especially to-day, when we are apt to be appalled and terrified by the truth unfolded by astronomers concerning 'the mysterious universe' about us. It comes to us, assuring us that vast as the universe is, each of us is eternally included in the mighty scheme of things and in the love of God.

(2) He has also taught us that the basis of human society must be that of generous good-will. He emphasized this so strongly that he urged men to love their enemies. In other words, he declared that each individual is to have the highest motives in his dealings with his fellow-men, and every group in its relationships with other groups must be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. That is the message mankind needs most to-day. He was confident that men had been given the means and the power to establish an ideal state or the kingdom of God.

(3) Further, there is the influence of his spirit revealed in the Gospels and repeated in the lives of those who have followed him. It has been the good fortune of the men

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of the West to be acquainted with the story of his life and to be taught his words. His spirit has come down to us in no small degree, though we wish it had been with greater power, through the ages, and we cannot cut ourselves adrift from our history. We stand in the line of his successors. Our faith is an inheritance from him and our noblest beliefs are the direct outcome of his teaching. Because of the greatness of his life and spirit, which makes him the most beloved of our race, we repeat the words with which Renan closed his *Life of Jesus*, 'all the ages will proclaim that among the sons of men, there is none born who is greater than Jesus.'

But this does not mean that the full blaze of the glory of God has been centred in and confined to one personality. The contribution of every soul, including the lowliest, is necessary to the full revelation of God. God has sent other witnesses to his truth. As Justin Martyr said, 'Whatever has been rightly said among men is the property of us Christians.' And Jesus urged us to 'judge of ourselves what is right,' thus bearing testimony to the inward guidance given us directly by God.

The surest way to become his followers is not to accept or to study what has been said *about* Jesus, but to read what he himself said, to think over it, and, to the utmost of our power, to partake of his spirit and express it in the common way of life.

### 24. Limitations of Jesus

THIS title would not have been used, had not theologians in the past ascribed to Jesus powers which Unitarians believe belong to God alone. Jesus was lacking in at least

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three attributes of Deity; omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence.\*

OMNIPRESENCE. Of the first it is not necessary to speak, for omnipresence is not claimed for Jesus during his earthly life by any theologian. All agree that while he lived among men his presence was necessarily limited.

OMNISCIENCE. The New Testament teaches that the knowledge of Jesus was imperfect. 'Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only' (*Matt.* xxiv, 36). We cannot suppose that Jesus knew of the wonderful facts of the universe, as modern science has revealed them; or that he was aware of the discoveries of modern geography, for example, of the existence of America. Dr. Hastings Rashdall, in his sermon on 'The Limitations of Knowledge in Christ,' said: 'Upon reflection I suppose every one will admit that it would have been impossible that Jesus, as he wandered in solitary communion with his heavenly Father over the hillsides of Galilee, as he stood teaching those poor simple fishermen on the border of the Lake, as he drank the cup of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, should have all the time had his brain full of the scientific truths which ages of patient labour have revealed to a wondering world.'

OMNIPOTENCE. Jesus was not omnipotent. 'The Spirit *driveth* him into the wilderness' (*Mark* i, 12). 'He could do there no mighty work' (*Mark* vi, 5). 'I can of myself do nothing' (*John* v, 50).

MANHOOD. These limitations emphasize the kinship

\* Several writers since Dr. Hall wrote the above section, and not Unitarians only, have questioned the validity of the conception of 'omnipotence' as an attribute of God. It is a complicated and abstract question in philosophical theology which must be studied in relevant books and articles. It is sufficient here to point out that Unitarians increasingly drop the use of the word 'almighty' when addressing God in prayer. *Ed.*

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of Jesus to ourselves. Our reverence for him increases, when we realize that he had to meet difficulties similar to our own with such strength as a man may possess, and that he triumphed through the exercise of powers of like nature to our own.

KENOSIS. In order to meet these obvious difficulties the doctrine known as *Kenōsis* (emptying) has been widely proclaimed in recent times. It is based on *Philippians* ii, 7. From this text it has been argued that when Jesus, who is God, came to earth, he put aside all his divine attributes and became man. One serious objection is that the text itself is in dispute, and has probably been mistranslated in the Revised and Authorized Versions. The New English Bible translates 'made himself nothing' instead of 'emptied himself.' But, apart from this, there are serious difficulties. Dr. Drummond in his *Studies in Christian Doctrine* says: 'This doctrine, which has been invented to save a tottering orthodoxy, is rank heresy; for the Council of Chalcedon pronounced Christ to be perfect, or complete, in his Deity, which he certainly was not if the second person of the Trinity made himself imperfect when he became incarnate. . . . We must add that a God who has laid aside his divine attributes has ceased to be a God, so that the doctrine amounts to no more than this, that there was in Christ a special, though imperfect, manifestation of the Divine.'

### 25. Miracles

UNITARIANS believe that *order prevails in the realm of Nature*. They are ready to accept the truths which science has discovered, and to adapt their theological

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conceptions to ascertained facts. They are convinced that however strange and disquieting truth may appear at first, eventually it is found to promote the good of mankind. They have always believed that there cannot be any conflict between the truth in religion and the truth in science.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE? In opposition to the view that Nature observes an ordered routine stands the belief in miracle. It should be understood that scientifically speaking 'a law of Nature' is nothing more than a docket into which are collected 'phenomena which have something in common.' By a miracle is meant 'an event lying outside the laws of Nature.' This definition is given in an admirable essay by Dr. James Drummond on 'The Miraculous in Christianity,' to which the reader is referred for further information. It is similar to one given in an able study of the subject by Dr. F. R. Tennant: 'Whatever else a miracle must be, it is a happening not reducible to law.' It is obvious that if this definition is accepted, no one can state with certainty whether a miracle has or has not taken place. So long as the constitution or the laws of Nature are not exhaustively known 'it is not possible to assert that any marvel is beyond the powers of Nature.'

GOD AS MIRACLE-WORKER. No one disputes that an omnipotent God *could* work by miracle. The question is, '*Does he so work?*' Scientists believe that he *does not*. When a man of science comes across anything which defies explanation, he does not say, 'here is a miracle,' but he sets to work, and by observation and experiment endeavours to discover the cause.

WHY WE DISBELIEVE IN MIRACLES. It is impossible either to prove or disprove a miracle said to have been performed a thousand or even a hundred years ago. We

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cannot summon the witnesses and subject them to examination in the light of what we know to be evidence. Why then are we inclined to reject miracles? Because our conception of the order of Nature is quite different from that of the men of old. *The reputed 'miracles' will not fit into our knowledge and experience of the universe.* We may not be able to *disprove witchcraft or sorcery*, in which our forefathers believed: we reject both, because they are contrary to what we know to be invariably true of the world of nature and humanity in modern times. For similar reasons we cannot now believe that an axe head, made of solid steel, ever floated; that a dead man, whose body was in a state of decay, came to life; that an ass spoke like a human being; or that the sun occupied for one hour the same position with regard to the earth. There are many mysteries and unexplained things about us, concerning which we have at present to keep *an open mind*; but these are not miracles.

Dr. Mellone has pointed out that, 'setting science on one side altogether, we know that there is an ordered Nature in the sense of a customary routine or way in which things happen.' He states that we must be cautious in our judgment in these matters: 'but we may abide securely by our principle: if you require me to believe an extraordinary thing, then you must produce evidence as strong as the thing is strange.' In these matters the dictum of Bishop Butler holds good, 'Probability is the guide of life,' and probability appears to discredit the idea of a miracle. It may be that, as Spinoza argued, 'miracle' is only an expression for our ignorance. In that case it is too slender a foundation on which to base divine claims. If we need evidence of the presence of God, it is surely best found in the world we know. As the Apostle Paul said to the people of Lystra, 'God never



left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.'

## 26. New Testament Miracles

A FEW years ago the miracles recorded in the Gospels were brought forward as the unmistakable *proofs* of the supernatural origin of the teaching of Jesus. Now men are asked to accept the miracles because they are interwoven with the record of his life. They are frankly regarded as among the 'difficulties' of faith.

ANCIENT OUTLOOK ON THE WORLD. Ancient records are full of miracles. There is only one Jewish historical book, 1 Maccabees, which does not contain any. In the time of Jesus men had no knowledge of law and order in nature, such as we possess. They looked for miracles everywhere. The history of their own country as they had learnt it from childhood, was steeped in miracle; and they were expecting a stupendous 'miracle' which should break the power of the Roman empire and set them free.

PARABOLIC EXPLANATION. Some of the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus may be explained naturally; but that he raised Lazarus from the dead, changed water into wine, killed a fig-tree by a word, and walked upon the sea, are such obvious impossibilities that they cannot be accepted. These stories may have some religious interpretation, and may prove helpful if treated as parables illustrating the power of a beautiful life over men.

MIRACLES OF HEALING. The miracles of healing

stand apart from manifest violations of the laws of nature. It may be that men of unique spiritual power can arouse in others strength of will and mind to overcome certain diseases, especially nervous complaints. Whatever the power of 'casting out devils' was, Jesus apparently believed that it was possessed by some of his contemporaries. 'The fact is notorious that *the confident anticipation* of a cure is in many cases sufficient of itself to bring it about.' Jesus worked largely by *suggestion*. He often asked those who came to him to be cured, 'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' And when the sufferers expressed their confidence, he said, 'According to your faith be it done unto you.' We are told that at Nazareth 'he could do no great work there' and he 'marvelled because of their unbelief.' Evidently his power, whatever its nature, depended largely upon the sympathy of the patient.

AUTHENTICATED MIRACLES. There are better authenticated miracles on record than those in the New Testament, and for some of these the reader is referred to Dr. Drummond's pamphlet. Dr. Percy Gardner points out that 'two of the best attested miracles in the life of our Lord, using the word miracle strictly, are the drowning of the Gadarene swine and the destruction of the barren fig-tree. These are found in all the Synoptic Gospels. But these miracles are destructive, not beneficent.' Is not the rejection of such 'miracles' more in accord with the spirit of Christianity than the acceptance of them? Jesus renounces miracle-working in *Mark* viii, 12: 'There shall no sign be given to this generation.'

27. The Resurrection of Jesus

UNITARIANS believe that *life is continuous*,\* that the soul never dies, and that consequently there can be no resurrection in the ordinary sense. Death is an experience in the process of eternal life. *Unitarians do not believe in the resurrection of the body.*

(1) THE GOSPEL RECORDS. It is extremely difficult not only to discover the truth contained in the records of the resurrection, but even to find out the beliefs of the early disciples of Jesus concerning it. In the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Professor Schmiedel considers the contradictions in the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul under twenty-two separate heads, and these contradictions are of a most serious character. According to *John*, the physical body was raised from the dead, and the doubt of Thomas was removed with the words 'Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands.' In the same Gospel we are told that the body entered a room, when the doors were closed. According to *Luke*, Jesus ate fish after his death, and in the same narrative it is stated that his appearance was so changed that two disciples, on their way to Emmaus did not recognize him. According to *Matthew* and *Mark* the revelations were made in Galilee, whereas *Luke* records that the disciples tarried in Jerusalem. Dr. Drummond calls attention to some important omissions from the narrative of Paul, who was the first writer on the subject: 'Paul says nothing of the empty grave; nothing of an appearance to the women; nothing of the old wounded body; nothing of eating and drinking; nothing of intercourse and conversation with the apostles;

\* Unitarians are not unanimous in this belief and in this doctrine of the soul. *Ed.*

nothing of a bodily ascension.' But Paul says, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God'. Evidently *the legendary element in the Gospels grew as time proceeded.*

(2) DIFFERENT THEORIES. There is one point in which the narratives do agree, and that is that *Jesus was seen*. What took place? Various theories have been put forth, some of which we may now consider.

(a) *That the body revived.* One explanation is that the body revived while in the tomb. This is unsatisfactory, because the disciples based much of their teaching on the belief that Jesus did actually die on the cross, and their enemies often taunted them with this fact.

(b) *That the body was stolen.* The idea that the disciples stole the body, and then spread reports concerning the resurrection, must be rejected. They were not the class of men to stoop to a deception of this character. The statement in *Matthew* that the Pharisees bribed the guard to say that while they slumbered the disciples came and stole the body, cannot be accepted. It was the last confession a Roman soldier would make: death was the penalty for being asleep on duty.

(c) *Disciples victims of hallucination.* Explanations, such as that the appearance was entirely subjective and the disciples were the victims of hallucination, create more difficulties than they remove. One great obstacle, however, in the way of accepting a bodily resurrection is that the appearances were to the immediate friends of Jesus, and, except in the case of Paul, not to his enemies, who would surely have been convinced, had the crucified Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst and rebuked them again for their errors.

(d) *An unscriptural doctrine.* John Locke, being accused

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of heresy, owing to his denial of the resurrection of the body, made an exhaustive study of the New Testament teaching on the subject. He found that while mention was made of 'the resurrection of the dead,' no reference was made to the 'resurrection of the same body.' If that is so, it cannot be accepted as scriptural doctrine. But it early became a doctrine of the Church, which was engaged in attacking the Docetic heresy that the body of Jesus was only a semblance of a body and that a spirit so pure could not have had contact with so base a thing as matter. In its reaction against this teaching, the Church went to extremes and asserted not only the reality of the body of Jesus, but the endurance and resurrection of the bodies of all men.

(e) *An unscientific doctrine.* The doctrine of bodily resurrection is rejected to-day because of the teaching of medical science that the particles which compose the human body are completely changed in the course of a few years. As Dr. Harvey Goodwin, a former Bishop of Carlisle, said, 'The notion of particle being joined to particle so as to re-form a certain body, involves an impossibility, because the same particle may have belonged to a thousand different bodies and may be as rightly claimed by one as the other.'

(f) *An open mind as to what happened.* Many Unitarians keep an open mind and hold that psychical research or the science of psychology may finally explain the difficulties which surround the records of the resurrection. The narratives seem to indicate that something of surpassing importance did occur after the death of Jesus, and it may be that in these accounts we have a confused statement of a natural phenomenon. Already we are beginning to think, as Professor Lake says, that 'it is by no means certain that even our present life is always and absolutely

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circumscribed by space and time. On one side of our nature it is; but is there not also a side which is already at times in conscious communion with something which transcends those limits?' We feel that the deepest communion between the living is not by the way of speech. May it not be that the souls of those who reach the heights of love are joined by invisible bonds, and that neither time nor space nor death can absolutely separate them?

### 28. Incarnation

UNITARIANS believe that God is incarnate in humanity, that within every human being is a hidden Christ.

THE MESSIAH. It should always be remembered that the chief aim of the apostles in their preaching, especially at first, was to convince their hearers that Jesus was the Messiah. Various views were held in the early Church concerning the date of his Messiah-ship and his *Sonship to God*, and traces of these are to be found in the New Testament itself.

(1) Paul held that his sonship dated from the resurrection: 'declared [the Greek word means 'appointed'] to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*'—*Romans i, 4*.

(2) The second view was that Jesus became 'Son of God' at *his baptism* by John, for it was then that the Spirit of God descended upon him. Professor Schmidt in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* tells us that 'it is possible that one of the earliest manuscripts and a large number of patristic quotations have preserved a more original reading of *Luke iii, 22*, namely, "Thou art my beloved son,

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*to-day I have begotten thee.*" The generation of the Son is in this case accomplished by the entrance of the Holy Spirit as a dove.'

(3) A third belief, found only in the Gospels according to *Matthew* and *Luke*, was that Jesus was *born* 'Son of God,' being conceived of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost.

(4) A fourth view was that Jesus was *pre-existent* as Son of God. Dr. Harnack points out that the miraculous genesis of Christ in the Virgin by the Holy Spirit and the real pre-existence are of course mutually exclusive. At a later period, it is true, it became necessary to unite them in thought.

(5) An indication of a fifth view is to be found in the story of the Transfiguration. A voice from heaven declares 'This is my beloved son, hear ye him.' The purpose of the story is evidently to show that Jesus is greater than the leaders of the past and that he is to be heard above the law, represented by Moses, and prophecy, represented by Elijah.

SON OF GOD. It is worth noticing that though the term 'Son of God' is applied by others to Jesus, according to the Synoptic Gospels he never uses it himself. He speaks of himself as the 'Son of Man.' And seeing that this term is applied to the prophet Ezekiel, it has not necessarily a superhuman signification. In the Aramaic dialect, which Jesus spoke, the same word is used for 'Son of Man' and 'Man,' so that in some passages in the Gospels, in which we have been accustomed to think Jesus was referring to himself, he was really referring to man in general. For instance, in *Mark* ii, 28, the rendering 'So that man is lord even of the Sabbath,' agrees better with the trend of the passage.

UNIVERSALITY OF INCARNATION. The doctrine of the

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Incarnation is of great importance in the history of religious thought. We find in the Old Testament that God was regarded as separated from man by his holiness, and issued his commands like a distant sovereign. It was a distinct step in the right direction when the human and divine were believed to blend in Jesus. It was inevitable, however, that men should pass from this to the larger idea that the Spirit of God is in every human soul, 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Dr. Martineau expressed it thus: '*The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of man universally and God everlastingly.* He bends into the human, to dwell there; and humanity is the susceptible organ of the divine. And the spiritual light in us which forms our higher life is "of one substance" (*homoousion*) with his own Righteousness—its manifestation, with unaltered essence and authority, on the theatre of our nature.' This view runs through the Fourth Gospel and breaks into such emphatic statements as 'that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us,' and 'is it not written in your law, ye are gods?' Pauls says, 'know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth [literally, 'houses'] in you?' and again, 'know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you?'

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. We can only know God by means of our human faculties. Doubtless, he has attributes of which we have no conception; but as Humanity is found in him, so Divineness is to be found in all of us, varying in degree according to our individualities and seen pre-eminently in Jesus. The Unitarian view of Incarnation, then, differs from the popular one, seeing that it 'does not unite the qualities of God and

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man in *one* case only and centre the blended glory in a single incarnation,' but finds that the living God tabernacles with man and makes his abode in each soul.

### 29. Belief in Man

AFTER the period of general optimism in the early years of this century as to the steady and continuous moral progress of mankind, orthodox Christian theology swung back to a strong emphasis on human depravity and the doctrine of the Fall. Unitarians, compelled by the brutality, stupidity and wickedness revealed among human beings in two catastrophic world wars to recognize the psychological truth underlying the idea of 'original sin,' have nevertheless stressed the importance of recognizing the positive potentialities of mankind. Human nature is indeed prone to corruption, but Unitarians teach that man is constantly being called to respond to those divine influences making for beauty, truth and goodness in his character. Fundamentally, man is a creature who 'lives and moves and has his being in God,' and who finds his highest purpose in seeking to express his spiritual nature.

TRANSCENDENCE. The old idea was that God was entirely transcendent, existing quite apart from man. Holding this belief, it was only natural for men to suppose that God was like a distant king, who sent his prophets and angels to the alien race of man, imposed his laws and delivered his word from a distant heaven. With this conception of God as transcendent and wholly apart was associated the belief that man was a contempt-

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ible creature and a miserable sinner. The idea that God is unapproachably holy, entirely separate from man, is linked with the idea that man is lost in iniquity. A mean idea of God generally begets a mean idea of man.

IMMANENCE. Unitarians believe that man is divine, and that God is not only distant from but near to man, 'nearer than hands and feet.' Our deepest life cannot be separated from God. On the loftiest and purest heights the human will blends with the divine in a perfect communion. All this is summed up in the word '*immanent*.' There is a divine element in every man, and could he only be brought to believe in its power, what aspirations he would have and what a noble life he would attain! 'Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be.' Our nature is richly endowed. God has put such inspiration into the soul that if we will only exercise it, evil will become powerless to overcome us. This belief in man should be brought to the test: in it there is power beyond our imagination. It is this faith which many a morally weak man needs to make him strong.

### 30. The Majesty of God

GREAT stress has been laid in recent times on the majesty of God. We have been taught by Rudolf Otto that man has a 'numinous sense,' which informs him that behind the whole universe is a 'tremendous mystery,' before whom he must bow down. Karl Barth reminds us that there is a being who is 'Wholly Other' than ourselves. Unitarians can understand this tendency to think of God as the High and Lofty One, for they also have a

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mystic consciousness which informs them of the Un-speakable, the Ineffable, the Indefinable, the Mysterious, before whom they must needs bend in reverence and awe. They too are aware, as they look on the universe without and into the depths within, that Someone is there. They have this direct intuition of the Divine Presence and know that they cannot comprehend their Maker. Yet this experience, with all its wonder, increasing within him his belief in the transcendence of God, does not prevent any Unitarian from believing that the universe is an ordered system. He cannot think that it is, as Karl Barth suggests, by a crisis that denies all human thought that the awareness of God will come. On the contrary he holds that he will gain a fuller vision of God through the increased activity of his thought. He finds that this overwhelming sense of God takes hold of him, because he has exercised his mind. It comes to him as he ponders over facts such as those which modern astronomy has revealed about the wonder and magnitude of the cosmos. He holds that though he is doomed never to understand, he should try to understand; though the full vision of truth may never be vouchsafed to him, he should seek after it; though God will be for ever beyond him, he should draw as nigh to him as possible; and though the mystery will always baffle him and cause him to halt, he should wrestle with it until it bless him. Further, too much stress is being laid upon the horror and dread which this consciousness of 'Someone there' is said to awaken. Ofttimes this sense of the mysterious fills the Unitarian not with fear but with joy; it comes to him in the bright experiences, in the thrill of gladness he knows on a spring day and in his confidence in the Eternal Love which surrounds him. Always the Unitarian comes back to the simple faith, whatever the

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Mystery may be that meets him, that its final aim is to be trusted and that 'it means intensely, and means good.' Unitarian Humanists, however, declare their belief that the 'meaning' in human life and experience starts with the evolution of the human mind and emerges from it, and deny that the meaning in the universe is 'from everlasting to everlasting.'

### 31. The 'Fall' or the Ascent of Man

THE old theology taught men to believe in the total depravity of man and in his fall from an original perfection. Unitarians affirm the gradual ascent of man from the level of pre-human ancestors.

ORIGINAL SIN. There is a striking contrast between the teaching of John Calvin about essential human nature, and that of Jesus. Calvin wrote: 'Though newly born infants have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, they have still the seed enclosed in them.' Jesus said: 'Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'

Calvin looked backwards on the undoubted fact that children are born with all sorts of propensities to go wrong, but Jesus looked forward with the realization that children have a spark of the divine nature in them which can be kindled into a flame of noble human character.

It is true that the physical effects of the sins of parents are often visited upon children to the third and fourth generation, though we realize too that nature is active in eliminating inherited diseases. But it is realized to-day that both in physical and psychological endowment,

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strictly hereditary equipment factors do not work out to inevitable disaster or achievement. Nurture and environment are tremendously important factors in making or marring a human character.

The old theological teaching about the fallen nature of man reduced his freedom of will almost to vanishing point, taking away his sense of responsibility and guilt. The doctrine of original sin involved the idea that God's purpose in creation was frustrated by the sin of one man, Adam, and the world that had been created good became essentially evil. By one sin a new order of nature was produced, involving mankind in 'the wages of sin' which was death. But we realize to-day that death is, and always has been, part of the process of nature. Some sins may lead to death, but death as a process is not a consequence of sin. And since Adam is no longer regarded as a historical character, and no such person ever possessed the supernatural graces or 'added gifts' or 'original righteousness' with which he has been credited, the idea of the fall of man has to be reconsidered.

**INHERITED GUILT.** Though the propensity to do wrong is certainly inherited along with the propensity to try and develop our talents for good, the old idea of inherited guilt cannot be accepted. The guilt of an evil action can fall only on the person who by an act of will commits it or intends and plans it. The idea of inherited guilt places on the newly born infant the burden of a sin committed before he was born and in which he had no part. No one would think of charging a child with the guilt of a wrong done by an ancestor centuries ago, yet every human being was charged with the guilt of the sin of Adam, and in consequence incurred the wrath of God. This teaching is in marked contrast to that of Jesus, for as Dr. James Drummond wrote: 'In Christ's

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own teaching nothing is more remarkable than his large and generous confidence in human nature and his expectant appeal to its finer and its native moral judgments.' The same conclusion was reached by the Socinians and was expressed in the Racovian Catechism of 1609.

**ESSENTIAL HUMAN NATURE.** Theologians in this century have appealed to human experience as proof of the fall of man. You have only to look at the actions of man to-day, they declare, to see that he is a depraved creature. They point to the cruelty and bestiality of which modern man has shown himself capable, the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, the policy of indiscriminate bombing of inhabited cities, and all manner of indescribable atrocities. Psychology has led many people to believe that there is something essentially awry with human nature, and poets have expressed this view in pessimistic outpourings. Experience must be taken into account. No one appeals to it more than the Unitarian. It is true that man comes into the world dragging the weight of inheritance from his animal and human ancestry. He is born with instincts, propensities and impulses which may cause him to fall. When vile and brutal passions take possession of him, he reverts to the primitive type and becomes a beast again. But that is not the whole story. He is not *bound* to become a beast again. In fact, 'trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home.' The world is a place of growth and soul-making, and we are here to form the personalities which will bring us nearer to God and join our purposes with his. Even the raw material out of which evil is manufactured is also the substance out of which the saintly life can be fashioned. The very passions which cause us to abhor some men are transfigured into divine attributes by others. We are not

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bound to give in to evil impulses. We learn that they can be sublimated and turned towards harmless and constructive ends.

HUMAN PROGRESS. The doctrine expressed in the Westminster Confession that through original corruption 'we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to evil,' reduces to an absurdity the saying of Jesus, 'Ye shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Theologians dwell on the statement of Paul that there is 'a law of sin' in our members, and overlook the fact that he taught, perhaps inconsistently, that we may 'all attain to the full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' That should be our aim, as it is our destiny.

It is not very profitable to ask whether human nature is actually 'perfectible' on earth, for the idea of *perfection*, when we examine it closely, is seen to be full of complications and pitfalls. But there is no doubt that human nature can be indefinitely improved and developed for good. The spirit in man has grown until it has become conscious of God as Father and Helper; and it will continue to grow as man responds to the call, eternally repeated, to 'come up higher.'

### 32. The Doctrine of Grace

GRACE, rightly understood, is an expression of God's unchangeable Love. But in the theology of the West grace has been taught to be limited in operation, being dependent chiefly upon the arbitrariness of the will of God, who chooses some souls and rejects others, and also upon partaking of certain sacraments, which have

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been looked upon as the chief means of grace. Much of the doctrine and philosophy of grace has been derived from the writings of St. Augustine. One of the major catastrophes in Christian theology in the West was due to the suddenness of the conversion of Augustine from his disreputable life. Its unexpectedness led him to believe that it was a special intervention of God, and that only by a similar act of supernatural grace can any man be saved. He maintained that prior to the fall of Adam it was possible for man not to sin or die, but that after that fall, man having lost the help of 'assisting grace' and all the 'gifts superadded' to his human nature, it was impossible for him to avoid sin and death. Whatever he did after the fall was due to his pride and desire (*concupiscentia*). So utterly corrupt had he become that his best thoughts and actions were inspired by selfishness and though they were good to all appearance they were really evil. But most disastrous of all, man lost his freewill by the 'fall,' and however much he may want to choose good, he is quite unable to choose it. Not by his own effort, therefore, but only by this intervening grace, which is precarious, can any man be saved. Even when a man has received this priceless gift, he is still liable to sin: he cannot do good in his own strength, so inherently sinful is his nature: he can be kept in the way of salvation only through irresistible grace, which is manifest in the perseverance of the saints. This doctrine, which denies the reality of moral experience, has had a powerful influence in the West, though it has not been prominent in the Eastern Church, for the influence of Augustine has been limited to the West. It has taken different forms, and is prominent in the teaching of Karl Barth. According to Barth, man's salvation is entirely due to the grace of God, and is not dependent upon the



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exercise of any man's will, however active in good he may be. A vast distance separates the human from the divine, God is in heaven and man is on earth and the only way of approach between the two is from God to man. He even uses the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' which have made men conscious of the nearness of God as the proof that Jesus taught the remoteness of God. According to Barth it means that God is in heaven and man is afar off from him on earth. God can, if he will, descend to man, but man is so helpless that he cannot by any effort ascend to God. Communion is thus a one-way traffic, and at every approach to the divine, man is faced with the notice 'no entry.' Some of those who have been associated with Barth have not taken so rigid a view. For instance, Emil Brunner apparently thinks that man possesses a spark of the divine and may be able to do something to lift himself above himself. The Unitarian, on the other hand, who believes that the grace of God encircles all, nevertheless states that in the moral world, man has to do something to lift himself, even if it is only to accept the proffered grace of God. He is in the position of the Apostle Paul, who believed that the grace of God was sufficient for him, but felt the need and value of stretching forward to the things that are before.

### 33. Conscience

UNITARIANS believe that the impelling power of Conscience is divine in origin. There are objections raised to this view which require consideration.

HAPPINESS THE INCENTIVE. It is said by some that the

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greatest incentive to do right is the desire for happiness—in its highest form, the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

*Objections to this view.* (a) No one misses happiness so much as he who seeks after it. The pleasure-seeker in any realm of life is doomed to failure. Happiness is never the end of action: it is the feeling we experience while engaged in certain pursuits. (b) Some of the martyrs who have willingly died, have seen no good that could come by their death; but in obedience to what they considered right, they have laid down their lives. Conscience is a driving power, a dynamic, which in our moral conflicts does not allow us to consider merely what is pleasant.

THE VOICE OF SOCIETY. It is sometimes said that conscience is the voice of society speaking in us. Hence it varies from country to country, and from age to age. *Objection:* The men of conscience have suffered because they refused to accept the standards of the men around men. They faced death because they listened to the voice within when it opposed the voice of society.

UNIVERSAL LAW OF RIGHT. The correct explanation seems to be this. At the heart of the universe there is a *law of right*. What is anywhere right is everywhere right, whatever men may say about conscience varying in different countries and ages. The truths of morals are not less fixed than those of mathematics. To both the savage and the scholar, two and two make four. The difference between them is, that the scholar knows more than the savage about the laws of number, but as the savage grows in intellect, he does not discover a law of number which contradicts that of the scholar. Similarly, as he grows in moral knowledge, he does not discover a new law of right.

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**NATIVE SENSE OF RIGHT.** Certain moral truths are at the heart of the world. To no sane human being could hate appear to be better than love, or falsehood better than truth. We do not know what absolute good is; we only know *right* because we are conscious of *wrong*, and *evil* because conscious of *good*. We cannot become aware of evil until we are alive to virtue. Those who affirm that conscience is the voice of God mean that whenever, for example, love and hate are seen in conflict, it is within the knowledge of everyone that love is the higher. When the lower races once see two added to two they perceive they make four. When they see evil opposed to good, they know which is the higher of the two. They respect a man whose life is seen by them to be characterized by mercy and love.

**SAINT AND SAVAGE.** What then is the difference between the saint and the savage? Just as the mathematician knows more of the laws of number, so the saint knows more than the savage of the virtues which are high in the scale that reaches to perfection. To prove that conscience varies with time and place, it must be shown that men can believe that cowardice is better than courage, meanness than generosity, hate than love. While customs vary and the manners of ages and countries differ, in any serious moral issue the right motive always appears higher than the wrong one, and when a clear issue confronts any human being, he intuitively discerns which way he should take. When any doubt occurs, the cause is that the conflicting motives are of similar worth, and the choice is not a simple one between right and wrong. The mistake we make as we watch the actions of some men, is in supposing that there are present to them, the virtues which would certainly be present to us, in a particular crisis. The savage has no

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more knowledge of the higher virtues than he has of the decimal system. They are beyond his moral range of vision, but when he comes to see them, he recognizes their superiority.

**CONSCIENCE INDICATES THE MOTIVE.** Conscience enlightens man respecting the motive on which he ought to act. It does not state exactly *how* he is to act: he must exercise his intellect to discover that; but it unmistakably reveals the spirit that should guide him. There are diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh all things in all. The pursuits men follow, the lives they lead, may and do differ widely, but the controlling moves may in each case be in accord with the voice of conscience.

### 34. Sin

Most Unitarians would accept Dr. Martineau's definition of right and wrong: 'Every action is *right*, which, in the presence of a lower principle, follows a higher; every action is *wrong*, which, in the presence of a higher principle, follows a lower.' This is in remarkable harmony with Sir Oliver Lodge's definition: 'Sin is the deliberate and wilful act of a free agent, who sees the better and chooses the worse, and thereby acts injuriously to himself and others.'

**MISTAKEN VIEW OF SIN.** This view is different from that held by some recent teachers, with whom on some points Unitarians have great sympathy of theological belief. Most Unitarians cannot say that when a man does wrong he is seeking after good but has only mistaken the way. There are many instances of men deliberately

and knowingly taking the path which is wrong. These instances indeed occur every day.

CONFLICT OF MOTIVES. The view here presented is in accord with what has been said already about *conscience*. Before wrong arises, two motives must be present and in conflict. Conscience would never condemn a man if something nobler had not been possible to him. We are judged by an *internal standard*, and 'the day of judgment' is always present. The question is asked: '*Is your actual life the highest possible to you?*' You may do good, and yet be guilty of wrong-doing. It is right and good to walk through the green fields and study Nature; but if you are meanwhile neglecting some duty which you owe to a fellow man, you are doing wrong. Within us there exists an ethical principle, which is not fully developed, but it tells us which is the better of two ways, and we can never escape from responsibility in the choice we make.

AN ARTIFICIAL SENSE OF SIN. Theologians have spoken much about the *sense of sin*, but it is not a distinct sense. They have been inclined to regard sin as though it were something in human nature which is quite different from definite acts of wrong-doing. They have been able to develop an artificial sense of sin: and when they have developed it, they have introduced an artificial method of atonement and redemption to cope with it. Such obvious wrongs as cruelty, indifference to suffering, unjust exactions and hypocrisy were condemned by Jesus, but he laid the stress upon the good in man and not upon any sense of sin. He extolled right and urged men to show that they were the children of their Father in heaven. This has been also the method of the Unitarian, who, regarding man as the child of God, has dwelt on his potentiality for nobleness of life. The late Dr. Percy

Dearmer pointed out that 'the noun "Sin" occurs some thirty-eight separate times in the writings of St. Paul (not counting repetitions of the word in the same verse), and sixty-three times in all the Epistles together. In the three Synoptic Gospels, where we are nearest to the sayings of Christ in his own characteristic language, the word is stated to have been uttered by Jesus once only.' He goes on to maintain that even that once, the reference being to the sin against the Holy Spirit, does not hold good. He quotes other figures which emphasize the contrast between the attitude of Jesus and the writers of the Epistles. Then he comments, 'it is Sin as an abstract noun that is of crucial importance—Sin, as we may say, with a capital letter, Sin as a mysterious entity, which needs "an adequate and infinite sacrifice," and in this sense the word does not occur at all among the sentences attributed to Christ in the Synoptic writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.' Dr. Dearmer shows how near to the teaching of Jesus Unitarians have been in their doctrines concerning sin and salvation.

THE REVELATION OF MAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOOD. *In reality we can only know of wrong, because we have within us an ideal of the good, the beautiful and the true.* The '*consciousness of sin*' if we possess it, should not therefore produce in us an unhealthy, morbid brooding over wrong, of which we may or may not be guilty, but should help us to contemplate with more earnestness the divine possibilities which are immanent within us and to which the consciousness of sin itself is bearing witness. It was the experience of 'the Christ' in his soul which made the Apostle Paul exclaim, 'The good which I would I do not.'

## CONVERSION

### 35. Conversion

UNITARIANS believe in conversion, but they regard it as a *life process* rather than the work of a moment. 'Have you ever been converted?' Dr. Channing was once asked, and he replied, 'I should say not, unless my whole life may be regarded as a process of conversion.'

SUDDEN CONVERSIONS EXPLAINED. We hear of *sudden conversions*. The evidence seems so overwhelmingly in their favour, that most men are inclined to believe they take place. But when we come to examine the evidence closely, we find these conversions are most diverse in character. There are records of sudden conversions not only to Evangelical belief, but to Roman Catholicism; to patriotism, especially under the influence of Garibaldi; and even, as in the case of the French philosopher Jouffroy, to scepticism. The late Professor William James, after careful inquiry and examination, assured us that these sudden conversions are due to influences which have been silently and secretly working in the man's deeper life, in what is now generally called his subconsciousness. For everything there is a preparation. And the outward event—the word of an emotional speaker, for instance—only helps to further and make manifest the process of inner development.

SHIFTING CENTRES OF INTEREST. In every man there are many possibilities. The centre of his interest may shift from time to time. Indeed, our interest may change many times in the course of a day. And when the main interest of a man's life is suddenly altered, the cause is not to be found in a miraculous intervention of grace, but in the conclusion of a process which may have been long in operation.

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PERSEVERANCE IN GOODNESS. There are souls, no less earnest and no less progressive than those who experience violent revolutions of character and belief, who gradually *upbuild* their higher life. They may have no depressing conviction of sin, yet they are unquestionably good. They *grow* in nobility and strength and purity of character, though a 'revivalist' would never move them. Francis Newman spoke of these as the *once-born*: they are the saints who persevere. 'They see God, not as a strict judge: but as the animating Spirit of a beautiful harmonious world, Beneficent and Kind, Merciful as well as Pure.' Their development in religious faith is a happy experience for them, free from fear. This type has been common among Unitarians.

### 36. Vicarious Sacrifice

UNITARIANS maintain that the *theory of satisfaction*, which makes necessary the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as an expiation of the sins of the world, is contrary to the teaching of Jesus concerning the love and forgiveness of God. The basic idea of the doctrine of the Atonement is that an infinite sin or a sin against an infinite being demands an infinite sacrifice which only an infinite being can supply. There was no other way 'to pay the price of sin.' This may appear sound logic, but the argument is vitiated by the simple fact that *a finite being cannot commit an infinite sin*. Further, to inflict on the innocent punishment due to the guilty does not satisfy any principle of justice with which we are acquainted. The injustice of the orthodox theory will be seen, if it is considered in relation to the following occurrence, the account of which Dr.

## VICARIOUS SACRIFICE

Martineau extracted from *The Times* of October 20th, 1864.

GENERAL MCNEIL. 'The cause occurred some time ago at Palmyra where General McNeil had his headquarters. A Unionist, for whom the General had some regard, was reported to have been shot by guerrillas. McNeil forthwith ordered ten suspected inhabitants of the town, reported rightfully or wrongfully to be in league with the guerrillas, to be publicly shot in retaliation. One of them was an elderly man, with a devotedly attached wife and a large family of young children, the youngest but three years old. A youthful unmarried man named Sydnor, a resident of Palmyra, was struck with sudden sympathy for the fate of the husband and father, and in a fit of generous impulse, which had it been recorded in the page of ancient history would have rendered his name immortal, offered his life to General McNeil as a substitute for that of his old fellow countryman. McNeil, without a spark of manly or Christian feeling in his heart, had the ineffable brutality to accept the offer. The old man was released, protesting against the bargain, and the young man was atrociously murdered in his stead.'

THE OLD ORTHODOXY. 'Yet there are people, we suppose, who accept their "salvation" on similar terms, without "protesting against the bargain," and have no objection to live in a universe governed by an Almighty McNeil'—(Dr. Martineau's *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 493-4).

REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD. In ordinary life we have many illustrations of the manner in which men and women are called upon to suffer vicariously. Regarded from one point of view every effort to counteract evil or to uplift society is an act of substitutionary redemption. Great sacrifices have been made on behalf of others. The

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progress of mankind has been due to the efforts of myriads of good men and women, whose reward has often been ignominy. The Unitarian, in consequence, speaks not of one 'Saviour' only but of many 'saviours,' and he regards redemption as a continued process and not as a solitary event. The suffering and death of the noble he considers incidental. For instance, the wound a man receives in his endeavour to save a comrade is incidental: it contributes nothing to his aim: it may delay his achievement or cause him to fail in his object. The saving power is in the effort made and in the spirit of the man which moves him to the effort. This is overlooked. The nobleness of the story of the cross is consequently missed by those who stress the actual death of Jesus at the expense of the spirit he manifested in his last hours. The agony in Gethsemane bears witness to his regret that the way he must take would lead to the cross; he did not think of it as a necessary part in a scheme for universal salvation. His service to humanity is manifest *in his life* rather than in his death. That was the teaching of the author of the Fourth Gospel, who wrote, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Few words have been more perverted in their quotation than these. They have been used to express the greatness of the sacrifice made upon the cross. Spoken, as they are said to have been, at the beginning of his ministry, they have reference to his being 'sent into the world,' as the next verse states, and not to his violent departure from it.

## SALVATION

### 37. Salvation

UNITARIANS believe that salvation is to be found in growth of character towards perfection. They regard heaven primarily as a state or condition of the soul. Their idea of salvation is thus spiritual: it consists not in what we have or where we are, but *in what we are and in what we may become*. Seeing that no man is perfect here, they do not speak of any man as 'saved.'

NEW TESTAMENT AND SALVATION. Many views of the 'means' of salvation have been held. 'Christ died for us,' it is said. The phrase comes from the New Testament. But Dr. Dearmer states "Christ died for our sins"—even this simple statement was not in the original gospel; the idea is entirely absent from that primitive exposition, the Speech of St. Stephen (as it is from the other early speeches in the *Acts*): it must have grown up during the few years after the first preaching of Christianity, for St. Paul speaks of it as something which he had "received" (1 *Cor.* xv, 3) doubtless from Christian disciples, after his conversion' (*The Sin-Obsession*, p. 14). It should also be known that the Greek word used is *hyper*, which means 'on behalf of,' a very different thing from saying Christ died *instead* of us. In *Philippians* i, 29 we read: 'To you it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf.' In *Colossians* i, 24: 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.' The sacrifice on the cross was not complete; we are all called upon in our measure and according to our opportunity to take part in the redemption of the world.

THE DEATH OF JESUS. It is said by 'orthodox'

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teachers that Jesus knew the reason for his death and willingly made the sacrifice for the sins of the world. But Jesus ascribed his death to his persecutors, when he said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The Gospels teach that his death was due to the bigotry, iniquity and weakness of men, and they do not suggest that it was necessary for the furtherance of a scheme of salvation devised by God. If it were all preordained or prearranged, then should we not say, Blessed are you, Judas and Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas, for you were divinely chosen instruments by which God wrought the redemption of the world?

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION. Unitarians believe that salvation depends not on the intellectual acceptance of any dogma, but on living a true and noble life. *Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that God needs reconciling to man; we are told that man needs reconciling to God.* Man is to be saved *not from* God but *for* God. It was the purpose of Jesus to bring about a change of heart in man as the necessary preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God. He began his ministry with that message, 'Change your heart.' The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.' As John Hamilton Thom said, 'The working *in us* is God's part; the working *out* in word, act, thought and character is ours.' Working out our own salvation is not the self-sufficient undertaking it has sometimes been represented to be. It is our response to the call of God to labour together with him. Every movement we make towards the higher life is due to the operation of the Spirit of God within us, and every aspiration is the sign of the working of his grace. Our recoil from evil has its origin in his

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activity within our souls and our highest spiritual achievement is made possible by his sustaining power. When we say that we believe in '*Salvation by Character*,' we affirm a truth of spiritual experience: we assert that salvation does not depend upon any external scheme, such as that of vicarious suffering, but on the moral co-operation of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit. This doctrine of '*Salvation by Character*' is the old doctrine of *co-operative grace*. It is the assertion that the means of grace are always present, if man will make use of them. It is a declaration that every noble aspiration, thought, wish, word and act assist in upbuilding the spirit: and it is a call to perseverance in the ways of truth and righteousness with the help and by the grace of God.

### 38. Message to a Dying Sinner

It is sometimes asked '*What message has a Unitarian to carry to a dying sinner?*' Personal testimony is the best reply to a question of this character.

A Unitarian minister was once sitting in a room, talking with two other Nonconformist ministers, when he was summoned to the bedside of a man who had led a notoriously bad life. The question was at once asked, '*What can you have to say to him?*' He replied, '*I will tell you what I have said, when I return.*'

On his return he told how the dying man was full of alarm and dread, which the old orthodoxy had aroused in him. In order to calm the man's mind, the Unitarian minister read the parable of the prodigal son. He pointed out how gladly and freely the father had welcomed his wayward lad home, and he sought to make the man

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feel that *he* need not be afraid to meet his God, who was a heavenly Father. The minister also pointed out that the prodigal son had missed the opportunity which had been given to him, and being without substance, he would have to make a greater effort in the future. He must make a fresh start; and no man need doubt that God would give him another chance, if he turned to him with a repentant, trustful spirit.

In that faith the dying man was urged to face death with courage, and to believe that the future life was not without opportunity for the redemption and ennobling of the human soul.

This is a manly and reasonable religious faith to present to anyone. In actual experience it has been found not only strengthening, but consoling to the sinner in his dying moments.

### 39. The Forgiveness of Sins

No doctrine in the Creeds has remained so undeveloped as that of '*the Forgiveness of Sins*.' The result has been that after events like the Great Wars people have remained without guidance and have made no effort at reconciliation until forced to it by dire necessity. The reason for this neglect of a central message of the Gospel of Jesus is clear. The Roman Catholic with his theories of Absolution and Penance has had no need of the doctrine, and the Protestant with his theories of Atonement and Plenary Satisfaction has had no place for it. But the messages that God forgives freely and that man must forgive his brother loom large in the teaching of Jesus. His doctrine stands opposed to the Buddhist idea of Karma,

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the Mohammedan idea of retributive justice, and all the later creeds of Christendom which declare that the forgiveness of God was bought. No small preparation was made for the reception of the Christian message of forgiveness. The prophets of Israel had made known that God is willing to forgive his people as soon as they return to him and amend their ways. Jesus gave new life to this declaration. It is the lesson of the parable of the prodigal son. More definite still is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, for the Pharisee, who made reparations, did not go down to his house so justified as the publican, who apparently made no reparations. Study of the New Testament reveals that Jesus had many messages on this subject. (1) The being who has been wronged must be ready for reconciliation and must generally make the first movement towards it. In the prophets God's appeal to his people comes first: Jesus says to his disciples, 'If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone.' (2) The person wronged must be ready to sustain greater loss. That may not seem just at first sight and it is not the principle of 'an eye for an eye,' but it is the teaching of Jesus. There can be no forgiveness unless the person who forgives shoulders the burden or a great part of it gladly. He must not require satisfaction. He must see the justice of mercy. The 'unforgiving servant' was condemned, because he refused to forego his legitimate claim. The one who is forgiven does not entirely escape. The prodigal lost, because he had wasted, his substance. One sign of repentance is that every effort is put forth to make amends.

The problem to-day is complicated by the widespread belief that 'Nature never forgives.' But as soon as a man turns from his wrong-doing, the processes of healing

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become operative and Nature works to repair the damage. Evidence of this has been given by a medical man, Dr. Bishop Harman, who wrote: 'The possibility of forgiveness has been denied by some. They have asserted that there is no forgiveness in nature; what is done, is done, and there is no remission. . . . For myself, I am convinced that this is not true. There may be many appearances which on a first and limited view appear to support it; but there are other facts amply supported by experience, which lead to an entirely different view.' Thus the message of Jesus is sustained by scientific evidence, for he did not say that the effects of wrong-doing disappear at the moment of repentance. They have to be worked out, and both reconciler and reconciled must share the task.

### 40. Prayer

THE problem of prayer still presents difficulties to many earnest men. On the one hand, they see, as they survey the history of mankind, that multitudes of saintly souls have been sustained by communion with God. On the other hand, they suppose that science has proved that the universe is governed by an order which admits of no alteration. Which shall they follow, the testimony of history or the teaching of science? But we are not faced with exclusive alternatives, when this question is asked. The range of physical science is very limited, and there is a life of the spirit which is as assured as any law of Nature. All that science has done is to help to purify prayer. Our prayers are wiser than those of our fathers; they are less material and more deeply spiritual.



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THE DIVINE WILL PERFECT. Unitarians perceive the unwisdom of asking God to gratify passing desires or even needs. In him is 'no variableness neither shadow that is cast by turning.' God being perfect, any change in him could only be from perfection to imperfection. *Who would pray for that?* The words of the ancient prophet are a grave reproof to all presumptuous prayers: 'Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him the path of judgment and shewed him the way of understanding?'

PETITION FOR APPARENT TRIFLES. We recognize more and more the lack of reverence involved in asking God to set aside the order by which the universe is controlled. To pray that rain should fall out of its due course, is to request that the law of gravitation should be suspended. As Dr. Minot Savage wrote, 'To add or to take away by one tiniest particle of moisture would be as much a miracle as though I expected by prayer to hurl the Catskills into the Atlantic Ocean.'

TRUE PRAYER. Most of our doubts arise from our misconceptions of the nature of prayer. The highest prayer does not begin and end in petition. It is not a request that some material gift shall be bestowed in a miraculous way. Jesus urged men not merely to ask but to seek, and to seek with importunity. The highest prayer is an effort to learn God's will and to gain strength to do it. Its object is not to effect a change in God but in ourselves, to find that attitude in which we can receive the good things he is willing to bestow. That prayer fails which does not lift the spirit nearer to God. That prayer which does not in some way cleanse our desires and ennoble our affections, is of little avail. When we pray with sincerity we often discover that some things for

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which we most fervently long ought not to be desired by us. One purpose of prayer is thus to work a change in our aims and dispositions, and so to purify and strengthen our wills.

Prayer is the response of the soul to the call of God; it is our answer to God's movement towards us and within us. We seek him, because he has first sought us. We aspire, because he has inspired us to seek something better. 'No prayer is unanswered,' said the late Auguste Sabatier, 'because God to whom it is addressed is the One who has inspired it.' Whenever a worthy impulse moves us to action, it is the spirit within us responding to the urge of God. Though man on one side lives and moves and has his being in time, on another side he is eternal and lives and moves and has his being in God. If we knew more about our inner life, how the spirit within us is awakened by the Divine Life and how sometimes the human spirit blends with that Life, prayer would have a simple explanation. We should see how natural it is for the soul to turn to its Author.

### 41. Use of Prayer

WHAT is the use of prayer? We might as well ask the artist the use of the sense of beauty, or the poet the use of inspiration, or the philosopher the use of thought. For just as the artist's sense of beauty gives him the vision of the picture he would paint, so the good man by prayer perceives *the life he should lead*. He has the vision divine and gains strength to live divinely.

GOOD MEN HAVE PRAYED. Prayer has a refining and purifying effect upon the soul. It was said by a saint of

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old 'that there is no time when a man is more incapable of sin than when the palms of his hands are warm from recent devotion.'

In the great crises of his career Jesus sought the guidance which comes from prayer and meditation in communion with God. For instance, when he discovered that the Pharisees and scribes were not prepared to accept his message and were actively opposed to him, he was faced with the question whether he should make his mission distinct. We are told that 'he went out into the mountain to pray: and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose from them the twelve, whom also he named apostles.' From that moment his course was clear: he went about openly with his group of followers, and never doubted that it was his Father's will. If he felt the need of guidance, what about you and me? If his life was ennobled by prayer, will not ours be elevated?

REVELATION THROUGH PRAYER. Prayer also enlightens us. Many men have not seen the wrongfulness and selfishness of their desires and plans until they have meditated upon them in the spirit of prayer. How different our lives seem when we come into touch with the Eternal Truth and Love, as we do in prayer! We realize more fully that our Father has a purpose in each of our lives, that there is an Ideal for each to follow. Prayer is one of God's highways to Truth and Love.

DOES PRAYER FOR OTHERS AVAIL. If my friend be sick, will prayer have any power to restore him? Whatever my opinions might be, I am sure I should pray for him, for I could not help praying. Prayer for others has its place and power. Every action has its effect. The earnest strength of my soul passes silently into the soul of my friend and gives him courage and hope. We are

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bound together by what Canon Streeter has termed 'unseen telepathic ties.' In secret, unknown ways our prayers encourage those who are dear to us. 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.'

### 42. Answered Prayer

DOES God answer prayer? Yes; but how strange this seems! The answer seldom comes directly, and sometimes God seems unresponsive. Never prayer more fervent floated on the air than that which broke the silence of Gethsemane: 'Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me.' Surely that prayer should have received the Divine answer. But the Gospel records bear testimony that no direct answer was given, and Jesus was left to drink the bitter cup. The Gospel according to *Luke*, however, in beautiful imagery, says: 'There appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him'; and Jesus calmly and fearlessly faced death.

GOD'S WAY. There are two ways in which God can answer the prayer that our burdens should be removed. Either he can lift them from off our shoulders, or he can strengthen our shoulders to enable us to bear them. He generally helps us in the latter way. He gives us the power and will to do our duty, whenever we ask him; he does not do our duty for us. It would not be good for us if he were to make all aspiration and effort on our own part unnecessary.

RIGHT PRAYER ANSWERED. 'Ask and it shall be given you.' Is this an exaggeration? No; God answers every true prayer, but the prayer must be the right one. If I desire knowledge, the prayer I must offer is devotion to

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study. If I long for health, the prayer I must offer is obedience to the physical laws of the universe. If I want a good crop of wheat, the prayer I must offer is the careful and industrious tilling of the ground. And if I want spiritual insight or nobility of character, or a deep and abiding peace, the prayer I must offer is to draw near to God in a spirit of trust and filial love. We are bidden to seek as well as to ask.

Our *living prayers*, that is the prayers to which we devote our lives, *are* generally answered.

GOD'S MERCY IN NOT ANSWERING. Prayer has a reflex action. In seeking God we win blessings for ourselves. In pouring out our hearts to him, we learn our own true wants, and we understand that for our good God pays no heed to many of our petitions. Monica, the mother of Augustine, prayed that her son might be prevented from going to Rome, because of the temptations to which he would be exposed; but he went, and while there found the nobler path of life. No one can advance far in life before he realizes his deep cause for gratitude that God did not grant some of the deepest desires of his heart.

PURPOSE OF PRAYER. Unitarians have ceased to believe that by prayer they can alter the Divine Will, but they pray no less earnestly than their fathers: they have had experience that prayer helps to bring them into right relations with God, and enables them better to partake of those blessings which are bestowed in largest measure upon those who devoutly seek them.

## IMMORTALITY

### 43. Immortality

IN earlier editions of this book it was stated that Unitarians believe in the survival of human personality after death, but now it must be said that Unitarians are far from unanimous in their views about life after death. The general attitude of Unitarians might be expressed in saying that they believe in 'one life at a time,' and that it is more important to concentrate on living the good life on earth than in speculating about the hereafter. Some believe that life hereafter is conditional upon our using rightly the opportunities for spiritual development given to us in this life. Some believe that, while this world is, as Keats described it, a 'vale of soul-making,' our souls are not completed in this short phase of existence, and that future life or lives, possibly in some other conditions in other spheres of existence, will continue and complete the 'making' of the soul. Some believe that the souls of men will ultimately be absorbed into the infinite being of God. Some Unitarians, notably the Humanist Unitarians, but others as well, believe that human life is limited by the duration of the human body, and that mystical experiences suggesting the existence of a spiritual realm extending beyond this world in which man may have his part, are of no value as evidence for future life. But a very large number of Unitarians would agree with the late Dr. Alfred Hall in earlier editions of this book that there are rational grounds for believing in the survival of human personality, and his views are set out in the two following paragraphs and in Sections 44 and 45.

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY. The physiologist, who says that 'Thought is the function of the brain,' some-

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times supposes that thought is produced by the brain just as steam is produced by a kettle; and when the brain ceases to act, there is an end of thought and of all consciousness whatever. But science speaks not only of 'production' but of 'transmission.' For instance, a piece of coloured glass has a transmissive function: it does not create the light, it simply colours it as it passes through. And from a scientific point of view we may thus believe that thought passes through the brain of man, and is affected by his individuality in its passage. The scientist only reads the truths which are already written in nature. The truth is already there; it is not created, it is only discovered. Religious truth likewise is not invented but brought to light by prophets and seers. Preachers are sometimes conscious that the word they utter comes *through* them rather than *from* them, and is a message to themselves as well as to their congregations. The prophet Amos asserted that the Lord took him from following the flock and said unto him, 'Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.' Jesus, according to the Fourth Gospel, said 'the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.'

THE BROKEN INSTRUMENT. How shall we explain the gradual decay of intellectual power, as old age advances; or what shall we think of the souls of the mentally deranged? These questions were answered by Plato over two thousand years ago. A musical instrument has a transmissive function. The organ only lets the air through the pipes; the musician turns it into music as it passes. You may have as perfect a musician as Paderewski, but if the instrument on which he has to play be broken the quality of his music will be affected. Neither can the soul be effective or expressive when its instrument, the body, is broken or deranged. There have been

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men whose souls have been brightest when their bodies were feeblest; 'though our outward man perishes, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.' The spirit is distinct from the body; it is its companion and not its product. It is *I* who cause my body to move; my spirit is the source of my activity. *I am a spirit and have a body: the latter I shall one day relinquish.*

### 44. Reasons for Immortality

THE following reasons form together a body of truth, which put the writer's belief in the immortality of the soul beyond doubt.

THE INFINITE IN MAN. We have in our human nature more powers than we require for mere physical existence. We have aspirations and longings which can never be satisfied on earth, and which demand a higher life. 'Try a shoeblick,' said Carlyle, 'with half the universe, and he is still discontented. It is because there is an Infinite within him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite.' We are all conscious of unexpressed thoughts, affections and ideals within ourselves. No one has ever fully revealed himself to another, and no one has ever been fully aware of his own possibilities. Great men die, feeling that they have not achieved the highest possible to them, and convinced they have not revealed their best. There is an eternal in them, which struggles to cast itself forth into time and never completely succeeds. If men were mortal, this sense of the Infinite would be a misfortune, and those qualities and powers which have no relation to their mortal life would be superfluous.

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DO ANIMALS SURVIVE? It may be asked whether animals have a future life. To this question no definite answer can be given. But there is one great difference between an animal and a man. Whatever reason an animal may have is subservient to its physical life. With man, however, the physical is subservient to his other powers, to his intellectual, moral and spiritual nature. Dr. Martineau wrote: 'While what we call the inward life of the animal is for the outward life, with man it is the reverse; the outward is for the inward.'

TIMELESSNESS OF MAN'S SPIRIT. Another reason for believing in man's immortality is the timelessness of his spirit. The only connection animals have with their ancestors and the past of their race is physical. With man the connection is spiritual. Men often feel that they are more in touch with the teachers and thinkers of the past than with their own ancestors. Our spirits have little knowledge of time: they live and move and have their being in eternal thought. The teaching of Jesus is as fresh and living to them as though it were spoken yesterday. So with regard to the friend we have lost. We feel he has not altogether gone from us, that his life has passed into our spirits, and its presence there will help us to recognize him again. Our relationship with some men in the past is as close and as real as our relationship to the physical world of the present. The soul overleaps time, and claims the eternal present as its sphere.

THE DEATH OF THE NOBLEST. Another intimation is that we cannot imagine the death of the noblest. Who can believe as he looks on the silent form of his departed friend that all he loved is there? Who can suppose that the spirits of Dante, and Milton, and Beethoven, are no more? Who can believe that the spirit of Jesus passed

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into nothingness on the cross at Calvary? God is God not of the dead, but of the living. If any human being survives then all survive, for they are all akin by nature.

ARGUMENT FROM JUSTICE. Another reason is the demand for justice and retribution, which is native to the human soul. (1) We cannot believe that justice is more deeply rooted in us than it is in the universe. On earth justice is not done. A young man's career may be blighted by one mistaken act, whereas the practised sinner may go on his way prospering. It cannot be maintained that conscience regulates the balance. Conscience troubles the saint far more than the criminal. According to our ideas of justice, the first offence should be treated with leniency, and every repetition be punished with increasing severity. But conscience always visits the first offence with the severest penalty, and with every succeeding fall the soul responds less and less to the pangs conscience would inflict. (2) Another form the argument from justice may take is that put forward by Dr. Benjamin Jowett, a former Master of Balliol College, Oxford, who said, 'We are more certain of our ideas of truth and right than we are of the existence of God, and are led on in the order of thought from one to the other. We are more certain of the existence of God than we are of the immortality of the soul, and are led on in the order of thought from one to the other.'

A RATIONAL UNIVERSE. All men agree that there is an intelligent purpose in the world. Is not our own intelligence largely the result of our understanding of the processes at work in nature? There are those who say that we should work for future generations without any thought of another life. The idea seems very beautiful until we examine it. We are assured by scientists that this

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planet will one day become so cold that it will not be able to support human life. Think of what this involves. After centuries of struggle and labour, men will have gradually increased in knowledge of truth and in beauty of character, and then a glacial period will arrive and the race will cease to exist. All the efforts, endeavours, aspirations, agonies and tears will have been in vain. All the sacrifices made, all the work done by man, will reach their result in zero. Who can believe that this will be the end? Who can contemplate such a result with equanimity? As an old man who had been a scientist all his life once said to the writer: 'If that is going to be the end, then the universe is not intelligent, and the belief in which the scientist works is a baseless assumption.' There must be a conservation of values somewhere, and where can it be, if not in the souls of men?

EVOLUTION AND IMMORTALITY. When biological evolution demonstrated that man was descended from lower forms of life, it seemed at first that his origin made the glorious end, which prophets and preachers had declared, a vain dream. Later John Fiske, a man respected among evolutionists, demonstrated that the logical outcome of the evolutionary theory was the belief in immortality. 'Speaking for myself,' he wrote, 'I can see no insuperable difficulty in the notion that at some period in the evolution of Humanity the divine spark may have acquired sufficient concentration and steadiness to survive the wreck of nature and endure for ever. Such a crowning wonder seems to me no more than a fit climax to a creative work that has been ineffably beautiful and marvellous in all its myriad stages.'

THE DEEPER CONSCIOUSNESS. Emerson wrote: 'I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers in immortality than we can give grounds for.' To the

## HEAVEN IN THE SOUL

meanest man that lives there comes in no uncertain way the call to order his life in the light of the highest that he knows, to work for more than the satisfaction of bodily wants.

### 45. Heaven in the Soul

WE cannot describe with any certainty what the future world will be like, and we cannot tell where our next world will be. But we are convinced from what we know of the love of God that *there is no hell*. If there were, then every Christian, as some one has said, should be there, doing what he can to alleviate the pains of the damned.

GROWTH OF HEAVEN IN THE SOUL. An old Indian proverb says, 'Man is born into the world he has made.' If that be so, there can be no sudden change. We shall take with us into the life to come the treasures of character we have laid up here. We shall start the next life just where we leave off in this. This is the general belief of Unitarians, and they consider it their duty to prepare for *a higher life of service*, which will open out before them, when this world becomes for them a land of memory.

GROWTH, A LAW OF LIFE. In this world growth is a law of life, and it may be inferred that the next life also will be one of growth and progress. Heaven is the continuance and development of all that is highest and best in our life. Heaven will deepen the consciousness of beauty in the artist, sweeten music in the musician, increase love in the trustful, and develop goodness in the noble. We shall carry with us the moral and spiritual characters we have developed here. The evil in us will have to be worked out by painful processes similar to

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those which we have experienced on earth. The good will find a fresh and we trust a wider opportunity. As Immanuel Kant said, 'The death of the body may indeed be the end of the sensational use of our mind, but only the beginning of its intellectual use.'

MEMORY IN ANOTHER WORLD. We shall be able to recognize those souls with whom we have been in real sympathy. Even here we forget many people we meet: but some friends we never can forget. Their spirits have been blended with ours; their life has passed into ours, and our life into theirs. By the natural force of spiritual attraction the souls of those who have been in sympathy will be drawn towards each other again.

UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION. We need not be troubled about losing our souls hereafter. What we need to be concerned about is degrading our souls here, missing those opportunities which God abundantly provides for building up true and noble lives. That God will absolutely cut off any human soul from his mercy and love, we cannot believe.

WHAT HEAVEN IS. Heaven to the Unitarian means opportunity for gaining greater beauty of character, a nearer approach to God, the pure heart, the consecrated will, the reverent soul. Into such a heaven we can all in some measure begin to enter here and now.

### 46. The Problem of Evil

WHAT is known as the problem of evil has been *a source of great unrest* to earnest souls, sometimes making them doubt the Infinite Goodness and Love of God. It is one that every teacher of religion must face. There

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are difficulties in the world of sorrow and suffering for which we have no explanation to offer, but it does not follow that there is no explanation. It may be that transient evil enfolds within itself an everlasting good. And there are some indications which suggest to a Unitarian that this is actually so.

(1) DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PAIN. Experience has taught us that many of the powers in the world, which our fathers thought were destructive and the work of an evil principle in nature, are truly beneficial. History also shows that the race has moved upward through the sufferings of noble men and women. The old saying, 'It must needs be that the Christ must suffer,' will bear universal application. Out of the heroisms of the great and good most of our human attainments have come. *All noblest things are born in pain.* In our own daily experience we find that after strain comes strength. God has been working the salvation of the world out of the sufferings of the righteous. In this belief again, be it noted, Unitarianism is the religion of the Larger Affirmation. The truth which underlies the doctrine of the Atonement is of wider importance than our fathers supposed. For our sakes all good men have, in varying degrees, lived and suffered and died.

(2) OUR STANDARD OF GOOD. All that we mean or can mean when we say a thing is evil, is that it falls below our standard or idea of good. (a) As Dr. Martineau pointed out, we *assume* a thing should be for a certain purpose, and then because it does not serve that purpose, or works against it, we speak of it as *unmeaning, useless or harmful*, and complain of flaws and blemishes in the universe. For instance, we assume that the earth was made for our enjoyment; and then because we have unpleasant experiences, we complain of evil. We assume

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the earth was intended for cultivation, and then grumble at the Sahara. What right have we to complain that the world does not tally with our own presuppositions of what it should be? In early days when the uses of fire were unknown, one can see that it might have been regarded as a terrible evil, instead of one of the greatest blessings of mankind. *If we could get rid of our presuppositions, the problem of evil would dwindle into smaller proportions.* If men were in a higher state of development and based their lives on love, there would be little real evil in the world. It is interesting to know that Schopenhauer, who regarded life as evil and existence as vanity, wrote: 'There is nothing more certain than the general truth that it is the grievous sin of the world which has produced the grievous suffering of the world.' (b) There is another way of regarding this problem which may reveal the presence of God within us. We must face the questions which Emerson raised. 'We grant that human life is mean; but how did we find out that it is mean? What is the ground of this uneasiness of ours? Of this old discontent? What is the universal sense of want and ignorance, but the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim?' Our answer leads us to reflect that unless we had the vision of truth and right in our inmost selves, we should not know that error and wrong exist. Unless we were conscious of a Moral Power who makes clear *what ought to be*, we should not know that there is anything amiss with *what is*. We cannot accept ignorance or pain or evil as the normal condition of the world, because we have had revealed to us, whether through our experience of the world or through intuition matters not, that there ought to be something better. Because God is Light in us, we are aware of shadows in the world. Because he is Truth in

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us, we are conscious of error. Because he has vouchsafed a vision of the Good, we see evil in the world without.

(3) EXAGGERATION OF SUFFERING. We should not overlook the fact pointed out by Dr. Drummond in his *Studies in Christian Doctrine*, that we are inclined to exaggerate the amount and degree of suffering in the world, owing to our own shrinking from it, and that pain serves as a warning that there is something wrong in the system and rouses the animal to defensive and remedial measures. A medical man has written, 'The fact is that pain is one of the most important elements in the beneficent scheme. It is Nature's indication that we have made a mistake, and that we had better take more heed in future.' These truths, however, do not entirely solve the problem.

### 47. Science and Evil

IN connection with the problem of evil the statements of modern men of science should be carefully studied.

(1) EVIL INVOLVES HIGHER LIFE. Sir Oliver Lodge wrote: 'Evil only begins when existence takes a higher turn. For instance, we feel pain because God has blessed us with a marvellous nervous system, which is the source of our enjoyment of this wonderful world.' Again he wrote, 'The term evil is relative; dirt, for instance, is well known to be only matter out of place; weeds are plants flourishing where they are not wanted; there are no weeds in botany; there are weeds in gardening. Even disease is only one organism growing at the expense of another; ugliness is non-existent save to creatures



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with a sense of beauty, and is due to unsuitable grouping. Analysed into its elements, every particle of matter must be a marvel of law and order, and in that sense of beauty.'

(2) EVIL POSITIVE, NOT MERELY NEGATIVE. Some writers have urged that evil is only negative, the absence of good. The present writer agrees with those who hold that evil is as positive as good; the forces of the world being such that man can use them either for evil or good. Pain is a reality, being something more than the absence of pleasure.

(3) EVOLUTION IMPLIES IMPERFECTION. It is strange that men in considering this problem overlook the fact that an evolving world, as this is, cannot possibly be a completed or perfect world. If evolution is true, then there must be imperfections out of which we must develop, and some greater good towards which we must grow. It is written not only in the nature of man but on every particle of matter, that the lower has gradually been giving way to the higher. The last words that Darwin wrote in his *Origin of Species* support this view: 'Thus from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.' If we can only grasp this truth, if we can only understand that God did not create the world long ago, but is still creating it, continually drawing forth from it, through struggle and pain, still grander forms of life, the difficulty which surrounds this problem of evil will be still

## CREATION AND EVOLUTION

further removed. This will help us to believe that 'somehow good will be the final goal of ill.'

In this upward process we are called to be the fellow-labourers with God. The Creator has graciously bestowed on us the privilege of taking part in the creation of the world, and permitted us to share in his glorious work of shaping it towards beauty, order and perfection.

(4) EVIL AND MORALITY. John Fiske, another evolutionist, truly says: 'In a happy world there must be sorrow and pain, and in a moral world the knowledge of evil is necessary. The stern necessity for this has been proved to inhere in the innermost constitution of the human soul. It is part and parcel of the universe.' We are aware of the light, because we know of the dark; we are conscious of good, because we see the possibility of evil. But let no one say, 'Therefore let the evil continue.' We are better and happier for working out the evil. We have been blessed by the struggles of our forefathers against disease and evil and wrong. Those who come after us will be blessed by our earnest upward efforts. God might indeed have created a world mechanically perfect, but how poor it would seem compared with this world in which we grow, in which we may achieve, and may see the vision divine unfold before us in ever-increasing beauty.

### 48. Creation and Evolution

UNITARIANS acknowledge that the accounts of the Creation and of the origin of man, in the Book of *Genesis*, were reverent and sincere attempts to explain how the world came into existence; but they accept,

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as being nearer the truth, the explanations of modern science. These explanations are not mere guesses, but conclusions based upon the careful study of evidence provided by astro-physicists and radio-astronomers who use delicate and brilliantly constructed instruments like the giant radio telescope at Jodrell Bank. Often their theories of the cosmos have to be changed and sometimes abandoned altogether, when new evidence becomes available as a result of their researches.

**ORIGIN OF THE STELLAR SYSTEMS.** The origin of our own solar family of which the Earth is a member and of which the sun is the chief unit, has inspired many theories, all of which have been found to be more or less inadequate. It is generally accepted, however, that owing to its extreme isolation from other stars, the solar system 'is no fortuitous assembly of matter but had some common origin' (*Astronomy for Everyman*, 1954). Again, as Sir Harold Spencer Jones has written (*The New Outline of Modern Knowledge*, 1956), 'the solar system shows so many regularities that it cannot have been formed by mere chance.'

Our solar system is now known to be itself part of the stupendous galaxy known as the Milky Way, the whole of which is rotating in space. The 100-inch telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory enabled scientists to confirm that there were other galaxies in space outside the Milky Way. Spiral nebulae were detected which were themselves 'island universes' in space. Our galaxy is among the larger of the systems, but it is not the largest, the Great Nebula in Andromeda, for example, exceeds our own Milky Way in size.

We are now not only able to probe the immense distances of cosmic space by means of such great instruments as the Mount Wilson 100-inch and the Mount

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Palomar 200-inch telescopes, it is also possible to explore even greater distances with radio-telescopes. The late astronomer royal, Sir Harold Spencer Jones, pointed out that light photographed by the 200-inch telescope from the farthest distance it could reach had been travelling on and on through space for some 2,000 million years—more than half the life-time of the earth—before it reached Mount Palomar. Life itself did not appear on the Earth until the light from that faint galaxy had completed three-quarters of its long journey.

All these bewildering and awe-inspiring facts have naturally led scientists, and not scientists only, to ask how the whole vast cosmos originated. Two main theories have been advocated, but the advancing tide of new knowledge is continually making fresh assessments necessary. One theory supposes that the whole of the matter in the universe initially formed one great primeval atom, which was unstable and disintegrated. This implies that the universe is not only finite in extent, but was initially created at a finite epoch in the past. This theory is often held to support the notion of a Divine Creator, though it does not of course actually prove the existence of God.

An alternative theory supposes that the universe is infinite in extent and that it has existed for an infinite time in the past. The composition of the universe is roughly the same at any one time and this presupposes that there is a continuous creation of matter.

To quote Sir Harold Spencer Jones again, 'observation does not at present enable us to decide between these two alternatives, though it is not impossible that it may eventually succeed in doing so.' Indeed, in 1961 Professor Martin Ryle of Cambridge thought that he had been able to make observations which supported the

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first of the above theories, but later it was claimed that the second theory could be accommodated to these fresh observations. It is in these ways that the exciting quest for certainty about the origin of the cosmos will continue in the years ahead. Unitarians believe that intellectual and scientific curiosity must be pursued to its limits, but they recognize that new knowledge often imposes new responsibilities and sometimes requires new attitudes which may conflict with inherited viewpoints.

**THE AGE OF THE EARTH.** According to the Biblical chronology the earth has been in existence about 6,000 years. Sir Charles Lyell said that according to geology the Earth has been in existence 200 million years; and Lord Kelvin, judging the question by the emission of heat from the sun, wrote: 'The sun may have already illuminated the Earth for as many as 100 million years, but it is almost certain that it has not illuminated the earth for 500 millions of years.' These are enormous stretches of time, which it is difficult to grasp, and perhaps it is more interesting to know that from the strata of the rocks it can be proved that the earth is many millions of years old.

More recent methods of calculation give substantially larger figures for the age of the Earth than either Kelvin or Lyell arrived at. Dead organic matter, for example, can now be fairly precisely dated by means of the radio-carbon C.14 test. By a study of the many isotopes of lead and other elements, various scientists have been able to estimate that the Earth's crust is about 5.3 thousand million years old. In any case it seems fairly certain that our earth has existed as a planet for at least several thousand million years. Life on it, however, seems to have started only about 2,000 million years ago. Five hundred million years ago life was concentrated almost

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exclusively in seas and oceans and 35 million years have passed since the origin of animals and birds. Modern human beings are separated from their remotest ancestor by one million years. This time scale was reported in August 1961 by the *New Scientist* in an article by 'the world's leading authority on the subject' (Academician A. I. Oparin of Moscow), as the one 'now generally accepted among scientists.'

Approaching much later times, Sir Mortimer Wheeler has reported that by means of the carbon 14 dating test the oldest man-made objects discovered in America were found to go back to about 7,000 B.C. Similar C.14 determinations are reported to confirm the beginning of the first dynasty in Egypt at about 3,000 B.C. Writing in 1956 in *The New Outline of Modern Knowledge* Sir Mortimer Wheeler reported that by the fluorine test the oldest human skull in Europe was that found at Swanscombe in 1935-6. The Swanscombe man 'may be claimed as a veritable ancestor of modern man although he lived perhaps a quarter of a million years ago.'

**THE EVOLUTION OF MAN.** It was natural for men in pre-scientific days to suppose that God had created men and all other living beings as distinct species in the beginning. Now, however, all serious students accept that animals have evolved by gradual changes from pre-existing forms over a huge length of time. It is generally held that this evolution takes place by means of the natural selection of hereditary variations. There are little variations in living creatures, which are almost unnoticeable from generation to generation, but in the course of many centuries they constitute vast differences.

Roman Catholics among Christians find it hardest to reconcile the facts of human and animal evolution with

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the dogmas of theology. The doctrine of the Fall (see Section 31) requires that all present human beings should be descended from a single man Adam, who committed an actual sin, and from a single woman, Eve, whose body was in some sense derived from Adam's. This leads Roman Catholic biologists like P. G. Fothergill to speculate that Eve may have been Adam's daughter as well as his wife. This shows the absurd and even degrading effects which religious dogma can have on the human intellect.

In broad outline the evolutionist has been able to trace the development of man from the lowest forms. Unitarians accept the evidence for this evolution and most of them in Great Britain, if not in America, believe that it was Divine Power which gave the original impetus to this amazing and wonderful process. They believe that evolution proceeds by natural laws, though most of them would agree that science itself cannot provide any information as to whether natural laws are or are not divinely instituted. Science cannot answer the question whether evolution was divinely planned, but it can reinforce religious convictions that it was.

### 49. Authority in Religion

UNITARIANS believe that the ultimate seat of authority in religion is in the spirit of man. This authority is not external; nor is it human in origin. It is divine; for whenever any noble truth is spoken, we accept it, not because we merely wish to do so, but *because we must*. *We inwardly recognize that it has a claim over us, which we cannot repudiate.* Men may, however, refuse to trust the

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divine element in their souls, and prefer an artificial to this natural authority implanted by God.

FAITH. We are told that 'faith'—which sometimes means surrender of reason and conscience—is necessary to salvation, and the true sign of the religious man. Let us examine the various claimants to this 'faith' of man bearing in mind Matthew Arnold's statement, 'If authority be necessary to faith, then an impossible authority makes faith impossible.'

PAPAL AUTHORITY. The claim of the infallible authority of the Pope is the most tremendous ever made in history. This being the case, it should rest on a basis so secure that no reasonable man could dispute it. Instead of that, it is founded on a disputed interpretation of a text (*Matt. xvi, 18*), on the assumption that the Bishops of Rome are the successors of Peter, and on a tradition which is historically most questionable. It was not a dogma of the Roman Church until 1870.

CREEDS. Sometimes appeal is made to the great Creeds of the Church as the rule of faith. They come to us with doubtful authority. The origins of the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed are unknown. The manner in which a majority was secured for the Nicene Creed is not in accord with our conception of divine inspiration, and it led to bitter disputes in the years following its promulgation. After alluding to 'the long series of unauthorized innovations' to which the Nicene Creed had been subjected, Dean Stanley wrote: 'Every time the Creed is recited, with its additions and omissions, it conveys to us the wholesome warning, that our faith is not of necessity bound up with the literal text of Creeds, or with the formal decrees of Councils. It existed before the Creed was drawn up: it is larger than any Creed could circumscribe. . . . Common sense, after all, is the

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supreme arbiter and corrective even of Oecumenical Councils.'

In their titles the three great Creeds of the Church claim support which has no foundation in history. The Apostles did not formulate the *Apostles' Creed*: it was written long after all of them had passed away. The *Nicene Creed* was not issued in its present form by the Council of Nicæa; it includes important additions made by the Council of Constantinople, especially concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and should be known as the Constantinopolitan Creed. The *Athanasian Creed* was not the work of *Athanasius*; its actual origin is still a matter of dispute among historians.

THE BIBLE. The doctrine of Biblical Infallibility not only involves the difficulties incidental to all theories of infallibility; it is also useless. What is the good of an infallible book, when the light in each man's soul is supposed to be his guide in interpreting its words? The Roman Catholic doctrine is more logical, because the claim here is not only to reveal the infallible truth, but also to give an infallible interpretation. Reflection will show that the freedom of the individual to interpret is inconsistent with any theory of infallibility. As might be expected from a dogma of this character, it is the sad testimony of history that the sects have claimed not only infallibility for the Bible, but authority for the tenets they have deduced from it and read into it. Instead of making the Bible a source of inspiration, they have often turned it into an instrument to support the dogmas they themselves have developed.

THE INWARD LIGHT. Unitarians believe that 'all men from the least of them unto the greatest of them' have powers which will enable them, if they are faithful, to know God. Religion is so closely associated with life

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that it is available for all who earnestly seek for it. Yet we are so deeply in need of each other, that for the development of our highest life we must all be learners. In the lives and thoughts of the great and good we must seek inspiration, as well as in our own souls. But, if the teaching of any writer, Biblical or otherwise, or of any speaker, is to help us, it must be 'proved' by our own conscience and reason, and if it harmonizes with these, then it must be 'held fast' as good. In saying this, neither the Infallibility of Reason nor of Conscience is affirmed; all that is asserted is that it must be right to believe what we know is right, and it must be wrong even to endeavour to believe what we know is wrong. We all accept much in daily life on authority, but we all, nevertheless, reserve the right to seek for ourselves. If a man announces that he has been to the North Pole, where we have not been, we have to rely upon him for our information. At the same time, we have a perfect right to examine his credentials, and if we find them at fault, to refuse to listen to him. We hold that his information must conform to what we know to be true. It is thus also in religion. We have to keep an open mind on many things *beyond* our reason, but it is wrong to accept any dogma or doctrine which is *contrary* to reason. Often as it may be denied, we all rely ultimately upon our reason. *Even the believer in Papal Infallibility accepts that doctrine by an act of his own reason, which is said to be fallible.* If reason can be trusted in a decision of such importance, why should it not be trusted throughout?

## THE CHURCH

### 50. The Church

THE word translated 'Church' in the New Testament, *ecclesia*, simply means 'an assembly'; even the mob which gathered round Demetrius at Ephesus to oppose Paul is spoken of as an 'ecclesia.' No evidence exists that Jesus intended to found a Church as that term is commonly understood; but only a few weeks elapsed before his followers banded themselves together as a brotherhood, which was destined to grow into the Christian Church. The bond of union was found in devotion to him and belief in his mission. All other conditions of membership were of later development, and all exclusive tests of entrance into the Church were contrary to the original foundation of the Christian community. He himself was willing to acknowledge as his followers all those who had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, shown hospitality to strangers or visited the sick and imprisoned, though they confessed that they had not seen him. His kingdom was wide and open to all aspiring and generous souls.

RELIGION AND THE CHURCH. Unitarians believe that the Church is the chief, though not the only, agency among Christians for the promotion of Religion. *The Church exists for Religion, not Religion for the Church.* To express this more clearly, it must be emphasized that *the Church owes its existence to Religion.* In the order of time and of importance Religion stands first. We can imagine Religion without a Church, but we cannot imagine a Church without Religion. The Church is therefore dependent upon Religion in a way that Religion is not dependent on the Church. Religion would become enfeebled if it were not for the communion of men in

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worship and prayer; yet if there were no Church, men would still feel God moving in their hearts and would reverence him.

ORDERS. The distinction made above is of the utmost importance. The Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches uphold what is called *apostolical succession*, and would have us believe that those in 'Orders' have received in a special way the truth from the apostles, and possess powers which are withheld from their brother men. It is even taught that but for the ordained priest, true religion could not be communicated to men. Unitarians believe that an earnest, God-loving layman may be as truly a prophet of religion as an ordained official. Ecclesiastical polity possesses no intrinsic value to Unitarians. In Hungary their churches are Episcopalian, in Ireland Presbyterian, and in England Congregational in government. They appoint ministers because they consider that men fitted by character and scholarship should be enabled to devote their lives entirely and with perfect freedom to religious work. The foundation of the Church is to be sought in our common need of fellowship and the universal need of communion with God.

AN ANGLICAN VIEW. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century there was a movement in the Anglican Church, fathered by Pusey, Newman and Keble, which claimed that the Church is a supernatural authority. It asserted that God publishes his messages only through his ordained priests, whose word the people must accept. Alas! how diverse and confusing are the voices of the men who have received the same necessary ordination. Compared with these the testimony of the Liberal Christian fraternity, with all its freedom of thought, is harmony indeed. But beneath

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every doctrine that God communicates his truth and blessing only through the acknowledged officials of the Church, is a serious indictment of the Divine Love. It not only separates the heavenly Father from his children, it proclaims in plain terms, which Newman did not hesitate to use, that the nature of man is essentially godless. It rejects the teaching of Jesus that the kingdom of God is within us, and denies that God has implanted the seeds of highest truth in the human soul. If man cannot come to the knowledge of God without the assistance of the ordained priest, then it follows that by nature he is an atheist. It is strange that anyone can overlook the plain teaching of Jesus that 'the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' At least of divine truth it can be said, 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

### 51. Public Worship

To foster a noble religion in solitude is almost an impossibility. Men attain a deeper consciousness of God through associating with one another in their best moments. It has sometimes been supposed that God can be worshipped in the fields as devoutly as in the church, and that the reading of a good book is as helpful as joining with others in common worship.

PLACE FOR WORSHIP. When men are frank, they confess that in the fields their minds soon wander away from subjects of high importance to the trivialities and troubles of life; whereas in church, aided as they are by others, they are able to fix their attention on things divine for long periods. It is questionable whether even

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good men would know the blessedness of the Sunday peace during their quiet rambles, if they were not inwardly aware that faithful souls were worshipping in the churches of our land. The spirit of worship is more abroad on the Sunday than on any other day of the week.

SUNDAY REST. In these days of nervous tension, the restfulness of the English Sunday is one of the greatest assets of our national life, and if people generally were to give themselves up to pleasure on this day, as some people now do, we should experience a great calamity. Men have a citizen duty here, which only few now acknowledge. If any man can worship God in the fields as sincerely as in the church, his nature is so spiritual that he above all men should be found in the place of worship, helping his less fortunate brethren upward and setting them an example. Good men now outside the churches would probably be better men if they were within; and the churches would be better for their presence.

THE LIVING CHURCH. Unitarians recognize that there are those outside the churches to whom the Master would say: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, . . . for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.' They believe that the community of good men, who earnestly seek the Unseen and the Higher, whether assembled in church or chapel, or in neither of these, is the True, the Invisible Church, the Living Church of the Living God.

But there is far too much cant and self-righteousness among those outside the churches. They are not slow to assert that they are as good as the people inside the churches and pride themselves that they are living straight lives, yet they are often completely unaware of the special efforts that church members are regularly making in service and generosity which very many people altogether outside the churches never even

## THE SACRAMENTS

attempt. While there is much fine social service contributed by non-church-people, church association is a constant reminder of the needs of society, and Unitarians believe strongly in the importance of giving service.

A MORAL SAFEGUARD. Unitarians place the cultivation of the religious spirit above assent to all dogmas, which divide or separate men. They believe that a spiritual bond unites the faithful souls of all churches, however diverse their creeds. They rejoice to join others in helpful work. When away from home, they are often found worshipping with men of opposite beliefs to their own. If any of the young people of his church go to reside in a town where there is no kindred congregation, they are urged by the writer to join those with whom they can best worship. It is their duty to keep within the circle of the noblest influences. Nothing so surely shields the moral life of a young man or woman as a church. Grown men have also many temptations to face, and they need, no less than the young, to be regularly reminded of the divine purpose of life and to have noble ideals placed before them. The church sheds a refining influence over womanhood and makes home-life sweeter and healthier; and little children are there taught reverence and love for all that is good.

### 52. The Sacraments

IF by the word 'sacrament' be meant an outward and visible sign of an inward and real presence, then Unitarians may be said to believe in sacraments.

THE UNIVERSE A SACRAMENT. The visible world is the garment of an Invisible Reality. The sacraments as

## THE SACRAMENTS

generally understood, are confined to a few ecclesiastical ceremonies, but Unitarians believe that we are always in the presence of the Divine, that in God we live and move and have our being. Because they thus believe in the sanctity of all things, they find no special or miraculous efficacy in sacraments as usually understood. The sacredness of anything depends upon the spirit in which we approach it and upon the emotions which our thought over it awakens in us. We may have in our possession something, say a Bible given to us years ago, which moves the deeps of our religious life more powerfully than an ecclesiastical ceremony could.

SACRAMENTUM. The Latin word '*sacramentum*' once signified the oath of allegiance which a soldier took when he entered the service of his country: and Unitarians who have their children baptized or who take part in the Lord's Supper, regard both Baptism and the Communion as sacraments in this sense.

BAPTISM. The baptism of adults is very rare in Unitarian congregations, but the baptism of infants is the rule. Some ministers do not use water, but hold a service of dedication. All agree that there is no special or magical efficacy in the water. They do not regard the rite as necessary to salvation, or as the appointed means by which the taint of original sin or of actual sin is removed, or as the medium by which a human being, infant or adult, is made into a child of God. They recognize with Jesus that all noble souls, distinguished or lowly, outside the Christian fold and the range of its influence, are acceptable to God. Jesus declared that those who had clothed the naked and fed the hungry, though they had never heard his name, were 'the blessed of the Father,' and that many would come from the East and the West, and sit down in the kingdom of heaven



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with the patriarchs of old. Those patriarchs and the prophets who had been the divine messengers to old Israel, had not themselves been baptized. Consequently, Unitarians do not believe that unbaptized children run any more risks than those who have been baptized, and they reject the notion that they are doomed to perdition or to that vague region on the edge or confines of hell, which has been designated 'the limbo of infants.'

The service is conducted as a help to the parents rather than to the child.

(1) *It is a service of thanksgiving.* The most precious of all God's gifts to man is the little child, and it is fitting to offer thanks to him for a treasure so priceless. It may help the child later in life to remember that his parents welcomed him into the world as a sacred charge; it also becomes the first link of association with the church of his father and mother.

(2) *It is a service of devotion.* By taking part in the baptismal service the parents signify that it is their solemn intention to bring up their child in the ways of religion and godly living, and for the child's sake to walk in their homes in uprightness and with loving hearts. This is their oath of allegiance—or *sacramentum*.

### 53. The Communion Service

IN many Unitarian churches, though not in all, the Communion Service is held at stated intervals. Unitarians who do not take part in it abstain because of its orthodox associations, or because they believe, with the Quakers, that rites and ceremonies are hindrances rather than helps to spiritual religion. The form of the service varies in different churches.

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HISTORY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT. In the early days of the Church it was a simple meal, of which the disciples partook together, rich and poor bringing what they could to the table. Paul had to rebuke some of those who shared this common meal for drunkenness and gluttony. Under a priesthood, seeking power, it gradually became a magical and miraculous ceremony, though the Roman Catholic doctrine is not so crude as is often supposed.

Jesus meant one of two things when he said to his disciples on the occasion of the Last Supper, 'This do in remembrance of me' Either he desired the apostles present (1) to think of him whenever they took part in the yearly observance of the Passover, or (2) to call him to mind whenever they sat down together to eat food.

MEMORIAL AND COMMUNION SERVICE. For Unitarians the service is one of memorial and communion. They call to memory the life and words of Jesus, reflect on his suffering and sacrifice for the truth, and endeavour in the moments of quiet meditation to gain a spirit akin to his. They strive also to come into communion with the Spirit which has animated and guided noble men of all ages—with the soul of goodness and love, which should be the purpose of every Church to foster.

THE BREAD AND WINE. The service has been held in some Unitarian churches without the use of bread and wine. But these external aids may assist in carrying us in spirit into the presence of the Master on the last and most significant night of his earthly life. After Dr. Channing's death there was discovered among his manuscripts a faded slip of paper, in which, as a young man, he had written the words, 'I have now solemnly given myself up to God.' That slip of paper was the outward sign of his inward grace, and no doubt every time he handled it, his soul would be stirred in holy remembrance of his vow.

## OTHER RELIGIONS

Most of us possess treasures, of no worldly value, but we should feel it was impiety to part with them, because whenever we see or touch them, they remind us of incidents in our own lives or in the lives of those dear to us. In like manner the bread and wine may be of assistance in stimulating our remembrance, as we ponder upon the spirit in which Jesus calmly resolved, in the night in which he was betrayed, to face death. The service is a *sacramentum*, because in it we renew our resolves and pledge our allegiance to the ideal of the Master's life.

### 54. Other Religions

UNITARIANS believe that God has inspired the saints and prophets of religions other than Christianity, especially the great religious teachers of the East. The sacred writings of non-Christian religions in the Mediterranean world, India and the Far East contain thoughts and sentiments which cannot be neglected in any universal religion of the future if, as some think, humanity is moving towards such a religion. On the subject of a possible universal religion, and of the elements which might compose it, there is of course much difference of opinion. There may indeed be 'a religion behind the religions.' Unitarians certainly hold that the spiritual insights and experience of people upholding religious traditions other than the Christian one must be taken into account and are able to teach us much. Unitarians do not believe that Christianity has necessarily a monopoly of religious truth. It is undeniable that intelligent Christians to-day are much more ready than formerly to respect the religious truths of other world faiths. Such a

## OTHER RELIGIONS

well-known expert as Professor R. C. Zaehner, who is himself a Roman Catholic, has written that the religions of the world differ not so much in the answers they give as in the questions they ask. Each has its own point of view on reality and its own starting point. In his book *At Sundry Times* (1958) he wrote: 'Religions of Semitic origin are for ever proclaiming the Truth, one and undivided. For the Hindu truth is a many-sided affair and can be viewed from many angles. Semitic religions are ideologies; Hinduism and Buddhism are ways of life.'

**WITNESSES TO THE DIVINE.** God has never left himself without a witness. Nothing is truer in the Bible than the words contained in *Acts* x, 34, 35: 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.' A similar thought has been expressed by a modern student of world religions (Professor Zaehner, p. 29): 'If man tries to seek out the ways of God, it is because the breath of God is in him, and this breath will not be stilled.'

**VALUE OF OTHER RELIGIONS.** When Unitarians find in the books of other religions a truth contained in the Bible they rejoice, and are strengthened in their conviction that it is divine in origin. In sending missionaries to foreign lands, the old idea was that Christianity is a complete and supernaturally inspired religion, which 'the heathen' refused at the peril of eternal damnation. The truer idea is that Christianity is like a seed, capable of growth, and is to be planted in the hearts of people of different races, in the faith and hope that whatever is true and good in it will become assimilated with the highest and noblest elements in the religion they now profess.

Among the legitimate claims of Unitarians is that they have done much to further the study of Comparative

## OTHER RELIGIONS

Religion. Few men have made larger contributions to its progress than the Unitarian scholar, Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter. His attitude may be taken as typical of Unitarians generally. He sought for the best in the other religions and was convinced that God had not limited his inspiration to the Christian Church. This strengthened his belief in the message of Jesus that God is the Father of all men. Instead of his devotion to this study making him less a believer in the gospel, it made him more a believer in it. He saw the nobility of the Buddha and of many another leader of non-Christian faiths, but this enabled him to give a higher place to Jesus. After he had made an extensive survey of the various founders of religion and their work, he could say that 'Jesus was the most significant figure in history.' That meant much coming from a man who had studied impartially the lives of the other leaders of religious thought. It means very little, when it comes from men who know nothing of faiths other than their own. The gain to the world from this wider search for religion will be great, when its full effect is felt. As Dr. Carpenter said, 'Instead of a world of darkness, irradiated only by one spot of light, we see the whole progress of human thought slowly advancing along divers paths towards clearer truth, and the immense resources of the moral experiences of the race converging on a common testimony to the education of the children of man as the sons of God.' The comparative study of the religions of the world rests on a broader basis than an occasional similarity of doctrine or of isolated sayings. It is founded on the discovery that a deep underlying sympathy exists between all higher religions and that the inspiration of One God and Father of all is the source of all of them.

## PRACTICAL RELIGION

### 55. Practical Religion

UNITARIANS lay great emphasis on practical religion. Preaching, as they do, salvation by character, they have often been accused of exaggerating the importance of good works. Considering the number of professed adherents, it will be found that they have occupied and still occupy a prominent place in public service and in schemes for social welfare.

SOCIAL SERVICE has been no small part of the religion of Unitarians, and in furthering the public welfare they have acted in the belief that, apart from works, faith is dead. Their religion is not a mere intellectual interest: if it were, it could never be the inspiration it is to them in daily life, nor the consolation it undoubtedly is in times of bereavement.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF UNITARIANISM. Take its cardinal belief that God is the Father of all men and has endowed his children with divine possibilities. Many a youth has led an upright life, because he has considered it his duty to maintain the honourable traditions of his family. What a reformation, then, must take place when men truly believe that they themselves are divine by nature, that the kingdom of God is within them, and that they have been inwardly endowed with a strength beyond that of all the evil which can meet them in life. Men only do base deeds because they have mean ideas of themselves. Further, how noble they would be in action towards others if they accepted the early teaching that *all men* are the offspring of the Most High, and are to be regarded as divine beings! Let this teaching be given a trial, and men will soon witness at work the greatest moral dynamic the world has known.

## PRACTICAL RELIGION

**EDUCATION.** Unitarians have been prominent in the promotion of education. Sometimes they have been charged with having too much faith in it. In the days of the voluntary system they built elementary schools in the larger towns and a few of these survive. They provided these schools for education on broad lines and not for instructing the young in their own distinctive beliefs. Consequently, when the State introduced compulsory education, they gave up most of them or handed them over to the School Boards. For the most part they have supported the movement in favour of secular education, and have held that moral harm is done to children by committing religious instruction to the care of teachers who do not believe what they are compelled to teach. In recent times Unitarians have shown the deepest interest in higher education. Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education 1916-1922, who had watched the development of the modern Universities, paid a glowing public tribute to the service rendered to them by Unitarian laymen, and when the history of those Universities is written, the names of Unitarians, who have been most lavish in their generosity and support, will occupy no small part in it.

**PEACE.** Unitarian concern for peace is focused in the Unitarian and Free Christian Peace Fellowship. Outstanding acts of witness have been made by Unitarians in protest against the development and testing of atomic weapons. A Unitarian was first in attempting to enter an atomic testing area. Another led the 1962 peace march from San Francisco to Moscow. A third organised the movement known as Voice of Women.

Over a century ago William Ellery Channing declared, 'War is made up essentially of crime and misery, and to abolish it is one great purpose of Christianity, and

## PRACTICAL RELIGION

should be the earnest labour of philanthropy; nor is this enterprise to be scoffed at as hopeless. . . . It is now thoroughly understood that the development of a nation's resources in peace is the only road to prosperity; that even a successful war makes a people poor, crushing them with taxes and crippling their progress in industry and useful arts. . . . Let it be remembered that the calamities of war, its slaughter, famine and desolation, instead of being confined to its criminal authors, fall chiefly upon the multitudes who have had no share in provoking it and no voice in proclaiming it; and let not a nation talk of its honour which has no sympathy with these woes, which is steeled to the most terrible sufferings of humanity.' These words were spoken in 1835.

**TEMPERANCE.** The National Unitarian and Free Christian Temperance Association focuses the work of those Unitarians who are concerned to meet the challenge in recent years of a significant rise, especially among young people, in the number of prosecutions for drunkenness, and who see drinking habits as a factor in the causation of the appallingly high figures for road casualties.

**YOUTH WORK.** A considerable amount of Unitarian effort goes into the 'service of youth' in various forms. Apart from the Sunday Schools maintained by most Unitarian congregations, there is a large number of youth groups or youth clubs catering for the religious and social needs of young people, and the Unitarian Young People's League provides national and regional organization for them. The Religious Education and Youth Department of the General Assembly is concerned with the well-being both of the Sunday Schools and the Youth organizations. In many of the churches there are also Boy Scout and Girl Guide organizations, or similar youth-training opportunities. The 'FOY Society' is

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

another youth organization connected with the denomination, catering largely for students.

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.** The Social Service Department of the General Assembly is responsible for keeping the needs and opportunities of practical Social Service before the churches, and by issuing literature and arranging local conferences from time to time encourages Unitarians to be alert to social needs. Unitarians, of course, associate very happily with members of other denominations in the various local and national organizations for social service. They agree with the late Professor Sir Henry Jones that: 'There is no more certain symbol of a limited and crude personality than heedlessness of the common good—of which the political State, with its institutions, is the representative. The man who does not carry his city within his heart is a spiritual starveling. The measure of manhood is the fulness and generosity of its interests. The diviner the man the wider the world for which he lives and dies.' Unitarians believe that in his conception of the Kingdom of God, Jesus undoubtedly included the achievement of better and juster relations among men. To him religion was brotherliness and love; and the plea of any body of religious men who claim fellowship with him, must be for social well-being.

### 56. Eminent Unitarians

MANY eminent men and women have been Unitarians. The number is out of proportion to the worshippers who have assembled in the Unitarian churches and chapels in England and America.

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

Unitarians may be divided into two classes. (1) Those who were born into the communion and who owed much of their development to the freedom in the search for truth, fostered by their religion, and to the emphasis it placed on character; and (2) those who were attracted to Unitarianism by their admiration for the frank and fearless spirit of its teaching.

It must be borne in mind that the men in the following list who lived two or three centuries ago had not reached the modern Unitarian position, but they held that the doctrine of the Trinity was scripturally unsound.

### Martyrs and Heroes

George van Parris, burned at Smithfield, 1551.

Michael Servetus, burned at Geneva, 1553.

Patrick Pakingham, burned at Uxbridge, 1555.

Matthew Hamont, burned at Norwich, 1579.

John Lewes, burned at Norwich, 1583.

Peter Cole, burned at Norwich, 1587.

Francis Kett, burned at Norwich, 1587.

Bartholomew Legate, burned at Smithfield, 1612.

Edward Wightman, burned at Lichfield, 1612, the last man to be burned in England for heresy.

John Bidle, founder of the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in England, condemned to death and died in prison 1662.

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

### Scientists and Inventors

- Sir Isaac Newton, d. 1727, discoverer of the law of gravitation.  
John Dollond, d. 1761, inventor of the achromatic telescope.  
Sir John Pringle, d. 1782, President of the Royal Society, 1772-78.  
Josiah Wedgwood, d. 1795, reformer in industry and transport, etc.  
Joseph Priestley, d. 1804, discoverer of oxygen.  
Thomas Wedgwood, d. 1805, pioneer of photography.  
Sir Charles Lyell, d. 1875, geologist.  
Charles Darwin, d. 1882, was educated in a Unitarian home.  
William B. Carpenter, d. 1885, physiologist.  
N. Bishop Harman, d. 1945, ophthalmologist, Vice-President of B.M.A.  
F. J. M. Stratton, d. 1960, astro-physicist.

### Writers, Philosophers, Poets, Musicians

- John Milton, d. 1674, poet.  
John Locke, d. 1704, philosopher.  
William Roscoe, d. 1831, poet and historian.  
Jeremy Bentham, d. 1832, political theorist.  
Charles Lamb, d. 1834, essayist.  
Samuel Rogers, d. 1855, poet.  
W. H. Prescott, d. 1859, historian.  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, d. 1864, novelist.  
Mrs. Gaskell, d. 1865, novelist.  
Charles Dickens, d. 1870, novelist, for some years a member of Little Portland Street Chapel.

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

- Hans Christian Andersen, d. 1875, writer.  
J. L. Motley, d. 1877, historian.  
William Cullen Bryant, d. 1878, poet.  
Samuel Sharpe, d. 1881, Egyptologist and translator of the Bible.  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, d. 1882, philosopher and poet.  
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, d. 1882, poet.  
Louisa May Alcott, d. 1888, novelist.  
George Bancroft, d. 1891, historian.  
James Russell Lowell, d. 1891, poet.  
Oliver Wendell Holmes, d. 1894, poet.  
Edvard Grieg, d. 1907, composer.  
Julia Ward Howe, d. 1910, writer.  
Laurence Pearsall Jacks, d. 1955, philosopher.

### Philanthropists and Reformers

- Thomas Firmin, d. 1697, founder of St. Thomas's Hospital, London.  
Thomas Cogan, d. 1818, joint-founder of the Royal Humane Society.  
William Smith, d. 1835, a leading Nonconformist Member of Parliament, grandfather of Florence Nightingale.  
John Pounds, d. 1839, the Portsmouth cobbler, and founder of Ragged Schools.  
Joseph Tuckerman, d. 1840, founder of Domestic Missions for the Poor in England and America.  
John Fielden, d. 1849, introduced Ten Hours' Bill into House of Commons and pleaded it should be Eight Hours.  
Robert Hibbert, d. 1849, founder of the Hibbert Trust.  
Kitty Wilkinson, d. 1860, pioneer of Liverpool's public wash-houses and baths.

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

- Southwood Smith, d. 1861, pioneer of sanitary and industrial reform.
- Mary Somerville, d. 1872, scientific writer.
- S. G. Howe, d. 1876, educator of the blind and deaf—famous for the treatment of Laura Bridgman.
- Mary Carpenter, d. 1877, founder of Industrial Reformatory Schools for girls.
- Dorothea L. Dix, d. 1887, 'the Florence Nightingale of America,' who brought about better treatment of lunatics.
- Sir James Stansfeld, d. 1898, 'champion of womanhood.'
- Sir Henry Tate, d. 1899, founder of the Tate Gallery.
- William Rathbone, d. 1902, founder of District Nursing Associations.
- Frances Power Cobbe, d. 1904, animal welfare and social reformer.
- Sir Sydney Waterlow, d. 1906, donor of Waterlow Park, London.
- Joseph Chamberlain, d. 1914, politician and pioneer of local government.
- C. Killick Millard, d. 1952, founder of the Euthanasia Society.

## Unitarian Preachers

- Theophilus Lindsey, d. 1808, Vicar of Catterick, founder of the first Unitarian Chapel, Essex Street, London.
- William Ellery Channing, d. 1842.
- Theodore Parker, d. 1860, American anti-slavery pioneer.
- James Freeman Clarke, d. 1888.
- Charles Beard, d. 1888, writer and historian.
- John Hamilton Thom, d. 1894.
- James Martineau, d. 1900, philosopher and hymn-writer.

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

- Richard Acland Armstrong, d. 1905.
- Edward Everett Hale, d. 1909, chaplain of U.S.A. Senate.
- Stopford Augustus Brooke, d. 1916, writer on English literature.
- James Drummond, d. 1918, author of *Studies in Christian Doctrine*.
- Joseph Estlin Carpenter, d. 1927, writer on comparative religion.
- Philip Henry Wicksteed, d. 1927, Dante scholar, economist and theologian.
- Alexander Gordon, d. 1931, historian of nonconformity.
- R. Travers Herford, d. 1950, writer on Judaism.

## Unitarian Hymn Writers

- Sarah Flower Adams, d. 1848, 'Nearer, my God, to thee.'
- Anna Laetitia Barbauld, d. 1825, 'Praise to God, immortal praise.'
- Ambrose Nicholls Blatchford, d. 1924, 'A gladsome hymn of praise we sing.'
- Sir John Bowring, d. 1872, 'In the Cross of Christ I glory.'
- Stopford Augustus Brooke, d. 1916, 'When the Lord of Love was here.'
- John White Chadwick, d. 1905, 'Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round.'
- William Gaskell, d. 1884, 'Though lowly here our lot may be.'
- Oliver Wendell Holmes, d. 1894, 'Lord of all being, throned afar.'
- John Page Hopps, d. 1911, 'Father, let thy Kingdom come.'

## EMINENT UNITARIANS

- Frederick Lucian Hosmer, d. 1894, 'Thy Kingdom come, on bended knee.'
- Julia Ward Howe, d. 1910, 'Mine eyes have seen the glory.'
- Samuel Johnson, d. 1882, 'City of God, how broad and far.'
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, d. 1882, 'Tell me not in mournful numbers.'
- Samuel Longfellow, d. 1892, 'Holy Spirit, Truth divine.'
- James Russell Lowell, d. 1891, 'Once to every man and nation.'
- Edmund Hamilton Sears, d. 1876, 'It came upon the midnight clear.'
- William George Tarrant, d. 1928, 'The fathers built this city.'
- John Reynell Wreford, d. 1881, 'Lord, while for all mankind we pray.'
- Love Maria Willis, d. 1908, 'Father, hear the prayer we offer.'

The hymns quoted are found in hymn-books of many denominations. There are many other Unitarian hymn-writers whose hymns have not been much used outside the denomination.

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