

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainment of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

A list of free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional and practical works, will be sent to all who apply.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals.

There are two forms of membership in this Association provided for those who desire to cooperate in the spread of liberal religious thought and influence:

I. *Life Membership.* Any individual may, by the payment of \$50, become a *Life Member* of the American Unitarian Association. Such a person is entitled to vote at all business meetings, to receive the Year Book and Annual Report, and, by means of frequent communications, is kept in touch with the various enterprises promoted by the Association.

II. *Associate Membership.* Other individuals desiring to affiliate with the Association may become *Associate Members* by signing an application card (sent upon request) and the payment of \$1.00. As such they will receive a certificate of *Associate Membership*, also *Unitarian Word and Work* (the monthly magazine reporting denominational news), each new pamphlet as it is issued, and occasional other communications from Headquarters.

Address communications and contributions to the

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WHY "THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS"?

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THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
WAS FOUNDED IN 1825 WITH THE
FOLLOWING EXPRESSED PURPOSE

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

Why "The Leadership of Jesus"?

"In every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, will rejoice."—PHIL. i. 18.

It is not unfrequently asked by both liberal and orthodox churchmen, why we, Unitarians, who believe in the universality of religious truth and in the validity of the claims of all the great prophets of religion, should seek to attach ourselves in a peculiar manner to Jesus Christ, and to proclaim him our spiritual leader. Again it is asked, why do we, who believe in a natural, continuous and progressive revelation of religion, and who differ so widely from the historic creeds, wish to be called Christians?

Not a few among us say "What's in a name?" So long as I know what I stand for, call me what you please." I notice, however, that this unusually liberal attitude of mind is cheerfully maintained until those who assume it are misnamed and their real position is erroneously described; then they protest against such misrepresentation as vigorously as would those who do believe that there is something in a name.

If your name is William, you may forgive being called John or Matthew, a few times; beyond that your situation becomes rather unpleasant. In a similar manner if you are an individualist, to be called "socialist" will not be agreeable to you; and if you are

a Christian by preference and sentiment, you would not enjoy being called a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist, however friendly you might feel toward those religions. The fact is, what you "stand for" is of real worth to you as a social being only when it is understood by those who know you, and they (at least for convenience) must know you by some name. Inasmuch then as a name means identity of person and attitude, it is of great worth. And so long as we value what we stand for, we must "care" what we are called.

Yes, as Unitarians we do believe in the universality of religious truth, in the sense that "never was to chosen race that unstinted tide confined." But at the same time we believe that universal truth, as such, is of no practical worth and has no direct appeal. Truth is power, healing, and health only as it comes through human souls; otherwise it is no more than a mental abstraction. The purest and most persuasive revelations of truth in the possession of man have come through the greatest and purest souls.

Now, whatever other religious leaders have done or failed to do, to us spiritual truth has come, at least chiefly, through Jesus Christ. His message is our chief spiritual treasure, and that message is inseparable from the person who first proclaimed it. To us, in a real and not a dogmatic sense, "the truth is in Jesus." That his gospel has not come down to us in its virgin purity, that his person has been fancifully idealized, are facts of which we are

keenly mindful. Nevertheless, in all this we perceive the eagerness of the generations that have gone before us to keep the Master's personality central in their minds and hearts, and to know the Gospel not as a speculative treatise on religion, but as "the Word made flesh," and the truth in the form of a living personality.

But why, in any case, should we desire to follow a leader in an age and a communion which have such strong passion for democracy? Do we not proclaim the perfect freedom and the sovereignty of the individual? Do we not preach religion as individual first-hand contact with God? If so, why then do we crave a leader?

Yes, we are profound believers in democracy and the free study and practice of religion. But, truly understood, democracy of all social orders is pre-eminently the mother of leaders. That free social order which does not know and appreciate the value of competent leadership is not democracy, but anarchy. Again, the difference between democracy and autocracy, or between a fraternal and an ecclesiastical church, is that in the former the leader is a servant, while in the latter the leader is a tyrant. Democracy believes in the contagion of character and the leaven of beneficent leadership. Its leaders are its life centres, and the greater and truer the leader, the fuller the life of the society he serves.

In our democratic communion we own Jesus as our leader because he was the world's first democrat. His declaration was that he came "not to be minis-

tered unto, but to minister " and to give his life for others. We would follow him not as slaves driven to obedience by the lash of authority, not as believers in the infallibility of his reported sayings or the church which bears his name, but as his free and loving disciples who would learn from him the secret of disinterested service and unselfish love. We have other leaders within the Christian fold whom we love and honor, but they also point to him as their inspiring guide and enlightening teacher.

And let me say here that the matter of leadership and discipleship transcends all theories. The lesser is bound to look up to the greater, and smaller souls to gravitate toward greater souls. "He who has more soul than I conquers me." Those who refuse the leadership of Jesus, as a rule, follow some other leader. Many of the so-called "infidels"—whatever this term may mean—would follow Ingersoll or Spencer or Huxley; they would be led by some soul mightier than they.

For a similar reason we would be called Christians. Christianity is our home and native land. The word "Christianity" has a richer meaning for us than the general term "religion," just as the word "America" has a sweeter meaning to a true American than the expression "the habitable world" has. Nor do we feel like abandoning the designation "Christian" to that mass of superstitious and ecclesiastical creeds and dogmas of which Jesus knew nothing, and which are foreign to the spirit of the New Testament. To us Christianity is not what has been cast in such

philosophical moulds, but the light and leading of divine-human love, which is never too high for the lowly, nor too low for the wise and learned.

Christianity, therefore, is that progressive, continuous revelation which is limited to the mentality of no one age, and is in the exclusive keeping of no one sect or creed.

But why do we call Jesus Leader rather than Saviour, the title given him by the majority of Christians? The term "saviour" as applied to Jesus is still used by some among us in an ethical rather than a dogmatic sense. Few of us, I believe, would object to this designation if it was understood to mean that, by his example and teaching, Jesus saves those who faithfully follow him from the thoughts and deeds which tend to corrupt and degrade, and leads them to the things that heal and build and ennoble the soul.

But, unfortunately, the word "saviour" has been understood to mean that Jesus saves those who believe in the dogmas of his deity, miraculous birth, and vicarious atonement from damnation hereafter, and that those who "believe not shall be damned." Now, in order to avoid this cruel doctrine we prefer to call Jesus "leader" or "teacher," rather than "saviour."

Needless to say that I respect all those who do sincerely and honestly hold such a view of "salvation," so called, and I have no doubt that by it many are encouraged to face the vast unknown with confidence that the great "Advocate" is there to save

them from its hidden terrors. And, like Paul, I rejoice in the preaching of Christ in whatever form. The orthodox Christian preaches Christ, the liberal Christian preaches Christ. The Socialist, the Communist, the Theosophist and others preach Christ, each of them from a different viewpoint. In so far as Christ is preached by all of these as a spiritual or a social ideal, he is a help to all.

But, as for me, I must confess that I do not know what all that is said about "salvation" in a dogmatic sense means. If I ever feared the vast unknown, I do not remember it. And it seems to me that for a Christian to proclaim that God fills all time and space, and then to fear the hereafter, is a species of disloyalty. For a Christian to proclaim that God is love, that He loves us more than we can love our children, and then to suspect that He has set a trap for us somewhere in His universe into which we should surely fall without a saviour is, to say the least, a huge contradiction.

My thought of the hereafter is that of confidence and trust that He who has brought me here and wrought a thousand miracles in my body and soul will take care of the work of His hands hereafter. I ask for no advocate to save me from whatever my heavenly Father has for me. If Jesus and the other saints and seers of earth live hereafter as personalities, as I believe they do, they will surely be my friends and helpers in those higher spheres, as they were the friends and helpers of men while on this earth.

The vast unknown can have no terror for a true Unitarian Christian, because it is the many-mansioned house of our divine Father.

Amid the many changes and chances of my life, and in my frequent associations with pain and sorrow as a Christian minister, this thought has never deserted me. I have never stood by an open grave without this faith as my sustaining friend. On all such occasions, although I always share far more than I dare express the tender sorrow of those who weep around me, my controlling thought always is that He who spreads the beneficent heavens over us and gives us life and love has in His parental keeping the soul which has just vanished from our midst. And as I say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust," I say also, "Life to life, spirit to spirit!"

It is often said that Unitarian Christianity is a religion good enough to live by, but not to die by. I can not see how a religion that is good to live by is not good to die by. A religion that is good to live by must be true, good, and beautiful. It must lead to personal purity, spiritual aspiration, and deeds of sacrificing love, all of which graces are certainly not lacking in the lives of true Unitarians. Now, why should any one believe that what is true, good, and beautiful here is very likely to prove false, bad, and ugly hereafter? Is God such a deceiver that the truths and virtues which He gives us to live by in this world are destined to deceive us in the world to come? Is it possible that the divine graces which feed and beautify the soul in this earthly life will

prove counterfeit as soon as we step over the threshold of another room in our Father's house?

No! We have too strong a faith in the sanity of the universe and the goodness of God to harbor such suspicions. The best testimony to the truth and goodness of our faith is that it does away with the fear of death. It is a constant assurance that what is truth here will be a greater truth hereafter; that love here will be purer love in the great beyond, and the life to come will be the fulfilment of the present life.

This is what the Christian faith and the leadership of Jesus mean to us. Trust in God and complete reliance upon His laws, courage in the face of danger, sacrificing love, and, in the hour of death, faith and hope that "this mortal shall put on immortality."



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