

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM UP TO THE TRANSCENDENTALIST AGE

Tsunao OHYAMA

Christianity is Christocentric. This feature characteristic of Christianity, however, has not always been safely protected against various attempts to deprive it of its Christocentricity. When attempts had not implied a direct "anti" in themselves, Christianity had to be confronted with perplexing difficulties. Though not from the beginning, Unitarianism has showed in its history a tendency of depriving it of its Christocentricity.

This paper deals with a general sketch of the history of American Unitarianism up to the time of Channing, and a study of the changes of its character in the first half of the nineteenth century. My further concern is to study Unitarianism's relation to modern Japan. Therefore this paper provides a preparatory study for it.

PART I. AMERICAN UNITARIANISM UNTIL WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

"No movement in American history stands closer to the fundamentals of liberal democracy than Unitarianism. Most of the founding fathers of the the United States were of Unitarian conviction."⁽¹⁾

There are many Unitarians among the most prominent people in American history. According to a Unitarian pamphlet, five presidents of the United States, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Millard Fillmore, and William Howard Taft are

counted as Unitarians. A part of the reason why many important figures in American history were involved in Unitarianism may be answered in that Unitarianism was a religious appearance, in American Christianity, of individualistic and rationalistic thoughts, which were early influenced by John Locke and inspired many political and intellectual leaders to have the principles of reason and individual freedom.

Unitarianism was, no doubt, influenced and strengthened by Locke's view of man in that a soul or individual is a mental substance being "tabula rasa." He emphasized the original simplicity of Christianity and thought that those who believe Jesus as Messiah accept all that is essential. He, a rationalist, gave more trust in the conclusion of reason than anything given in the name of revelation, though he did not deny revelation. Accepting Christianity with simple confidence, he subjected it to the careful scrutiny of reason. For him, everything was to be understood in the rationale of scrutiny. Therefore, as George Willis Cooke says,⁽²⁾ Locke did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity in the most approved form.

Needless to say, Unitarianism denies the doctrine of the Trinity which has been maintained in orthodox Christianity, and claims the unity of God. This point is common in

any form of Unitarianism, though not all Unitarians have the same belief. Since the Unitarian movement cannot be traced back to any single person or any specific date, the content of Unitarian belief consequently differs according to each Unitarian and his time. American Unitarianism of today, the original belief of which is, in my impression, already cast out, however, seems to have gone far beyond the so-called Unitarianism which just holds, within Christian faith, the doctrine of the single personality of God the Father, in contrast with the Trinitarian conception of His threefold being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To see what kind of belief American Unitarianism holds today, it may be useful to trace theological changes of American Unitarianism.

The most conspicuous feature in American Unitarianism of today⁽³⁾ is its non-Christocentric character, while European Unitarianism is still Christocentric. Jesus, accordingly, is Jesus of Nazareth rather than "Christ." The Deity of Jesus is, Unitarians affirm, not warranted in the Scriptures, therefore, they reject the notion of the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus. This leads them to the notion that Jesus was not infallible. Since they humanize Jesus in this way, the severe dispute on Trinity which brought about the birth of Unitarianism becomes easy to solve. Their affirmation that Trinity is un-Biblical is strengthened by their belief what Jesus was just a man. Jesus in their belief was one of the extremely distinguished moral leaders in history. Jesus as the Savior is denied by their conviction that God is loving and merciful, therefore God does not place men in sinful condition.

American Unitarians of today do not stress the significance of the Scriptures, because

they do not think that the Scriptures are absolutely correct. The Scriptures are a valuable record of human experiences, they think, but the writers were subject to error.

Thus they reject the authority of Christianity, in another word, the content of Christian faith. Instead, they stress the trust in the validity of the reasoning power of man, and pick up only the worthwhile ideas out of established religions. Although there are possibilities for men to sin and err, they believe, the human intellect may be trusted.

This American Unitarian belief today, as well be seen in the later discussion, was attributed to the thoughts created in the Transcendentalist movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. The original Unitarian belief was different from the above-mentioned.

By 1830 Unitarianism was a community by itself, a new denomination.⁽⁴⁾ However, it is rather obscure as to what extent American Unitarianism was directly related to European Unitarianism in its early days. Although Cooke traces its origin to Europe and says that Unitarianism was brought to America with the Pilgrims and the Puritans,⁽⁵⁾ it is rather difficult to support this opinion. Rather, it might be correct to consider that American Unitarianism did not have a direct contact with the European Unitarianism but grew independently under different conditions. The first direct contact with European Unitarians was not until 1794 when an English Unitarian, Joseph Priestly came to the United States and gave several Unitarian lectures. By this time, however, there emerged Unitarian thoughts in American Christianity. Hence Earl Morse Wilbur says:

"Nothing would be more natural at first thought than to expect that here we should find American

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Unitarianism merely a transplanted into a fresh field of religion already fully developed and organized in other countries, much as Socinianism in Holland was only a continuation of teachings and customs that religious exiles had brought with them from Poland. Such an expectation, however, would not be confirmed by the facts; for there is no evidence that the Socinianism of the Continent had more than the slightest influence, if any, on the development of Unitarianism in America, or that Socinian books were known or read in New England by any one at the time when Unitarianism was first taking shape there. Still less can Unitarianism in Massachusetts be accounted for as something brought over from England by the colonists that settled New England in the seventeenth century, for at that period the Unitarian movement had not yet arisen in England."⁽⁶⁾

In America, Unitarianism grew out of the efforts of those who sought to liberalize the rigid Calvinism of the Congregational churches in New England. In the later part of the eighteenth century, the liberal movement took place, which took the shape of Unitarianism gradually.

According to Conrad Wright, this liberal movement was constructed out of three major streams: Arminianism, supernatural rationalism, and anti-Trinitarianism.⁽⁷⁾ Wright's explanation is new in the study of the Arminian role in the formation of Unitarianism. The older studies such as that of Cooke tended to seek the origin of American Unitarianism in Europe. They also stressed the continuity of anti-Trinitarian tradition and the influence of new power of supernatural rationalism. But Wright tries to find the indigenous origin of American Unitarianism in the social and intellectual atmosphere of New England during the last three quarters of the eighteenth century. He says that the Arminianism which on the one hand alarmed Jonathan Edwards and led him to the Great Awakening, on the other hand led New England liberals in the

direction of American Unitarianism. "The New England liberals," he says, "were called Arminians, not because they were influenced directly by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), the Dutch Remonstrant, but because their reaction against Calvinism was similar to his."⁽⁸⁾ His central theme is that the Arminian movement bridged the gap between seventeenth century Puritanism and nineteenth century Unitarianism. It should be noted that these three streams never stepped out from the Biblical line, even though they were heterogeneous and were opposed by orthodox Christianity. Although Wright's explanation is very persuasive, in what follows I shall be much concerned with the reaction of American liberals against Calvinist Christianity and their departure from it.

Even before the eighteenth century, when the liberal movement made its shape clear, there was some disagreement with the tenets of Calvinism. Anti-Calvinism, which vaguely existed, emerged to public in 1650 when William Pynchon presented a view of the atonement that was at variance with Calvinistic orthodoxy. His utterance caused a theological disturbance. But the liberal movement did not again appear until the Great Awakening of the 1730's, which appealed to emotions of people. Ironically, the Great Awakening eventually frightened intellectual groups who were influenced by the trend of rationalism and learned from it the necessity of sobriety and reasonableness. Ebenezer Gay (1696-1787), who had no sympathy with the emotionalism of the Great Awakening, was also the first figure who took a liberal stand with regard to the Trinity. He clarified his standpoint as early as 1740. Hence he has often been called the Father of American Unitarianism.

The ministers of great influence in Boston in the eighteenth century were Charles Chauncy (1705-1787) and Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766). These two became famous for their disagreement with orthodoxy and for their liberal thinking. Mayhew, for instance, who was familiar with the writings of such English liberal writers as Milton, Locke, and others, strongly urged the duty of free inquiry and of private judgement in matter of religion, and opposed the use of creeds. These people were of the Congregational clergy in New England. Their theology, however, was not necessarily the same as Unitarianism. Wilbur says; "None of these may truly be called Unitarian (although this has often been done), for while they had clearly ceased to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, they should not be considered more than Arian; and they did not regard their view as heresy since it was widely held in the English church and by Dissenters."⁽⁹⁾

Toward the close of the eighteenth century, New England Congregationalism began to show its doctrinal discrepancy. King's Chapel in Boston under the leadership of James Freeman (1759-1833) changed its position from Episcopalian to Unitarian. It was in 1785 when King's Chapel revised its liturgy, omitting the Athanasian and Nicene creeds and other specifically Trinitarian passages. The doctrine of the Trinity was openly discarded for the first time in American church. Although it is not accurate, it has been said that "the first Episcopal church in New England became the first Unitarian church in America."⁽¹⁰⁾ Underneath Freeman's action was, one author says, the influence of English Socianism.⁽¹¹⁾

The name Unitarian came to be used commonly after Joseph Priestly came to the

United States in 1794. In 1796, the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia was founded, and became the first institution to take the Unitarian name.

Unitarianism developed during and after the American Revolution and stretched its influential power deeper inside New England Congregationalism, which, eventually in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, became the source from which Unitarianism gained its main strength.

Concerning a chair of divinity at Harvard, a crucial controversy which was directly related with the Congregational faith and Unitarianism took place among the Congregational churches. This theological battle the main figures of which were the Old Calvinist minister Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826) and the liberal William E. Channing (1780-1842), stirred the whole body of Congregationalism in New England. By the end of the first quarter of the century, there were 544 Congregational churches in Massachusetts, of which 135 were Unitarian. And out of the twenty-five original churches in Massachusetts twenty became Unitarian.⁽¹²⁾ They either withdrew or were forced from the Congregational denomination.

The crucial issue for the people concerned was on Calvinistic dogma. The liberal questioned and criticized the doctrine that Jesus is God, the theory of predestination, the belief in the depravity of human nature, the dogma of the atonement, the conception of the Deity as a God of wrath, damnation and hell-fire and others.

But their attitude was not necessarily all negative. They stressed the positive side of life. They tried to free the present from both the past and the future (=predestination). They believed too much in independence

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and individualism to tolerate the kind of uniformity that was imposed by a strict adherence to creeds. The historical experience of the American Revolution must have confirmed their position.

It was William E. Channing who built the solid foundation of Unitarianism by supporting and strengthening the above-mentioned positions. Probably his most famous public address was his sermon at the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore in 1819. In this sermon he pointed out several major points of Unitarianism. He explained Unitarian belief composed by the following thoughts: God's unity; unity of Jesus Christ, which means, Jesus Christ is a being distinct from and inferior to God; the moral perfection of God; the mediation of Christ and the purpose of his mission, which is the recovery of men to virtue or holiness; and the moral nature of man. In addition to these, he referred to the Scriptures and said: "We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. . . . We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection."⁽¹³⁾ His point was that the Scriptures, when interpreted within the limits of reasonableness, teach the doctrines held by the Unitarians. He claimed that the liberal position was more soundly based on the Scriptures than is traditional Calvinism. Because it took up the main doctrines on which the Unitarians depart from orthodoxy, this sermon deserves the name of magna charta of early nineteenth century rational Christianity. One author says:

"... the sermon bears basic theological continuity with the thought of such earlier liberals as Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncy. In its biblicalism, Arianism, anthropology, soteriology, and deep ethical passion, the Baltimore discourse was indeed

the culminating expression of the Christian rationalist movement that began in the middle third of the previous century."⁽¹⁴⁾

However, Channing was much more radical in his views than has been considered. Even in this sermon, it may be noticed that he probably unconsciously followed a radical development of theology. It was the problem of how and where to place the authority of the Scriptures. In his attitude toward the Scriptures was an inclination of shifting the locus of authority from the Scriptures to the experience and reasoning powers of living men. Original Unitarians abandoned the authority of the creeds only to substitute that of the Scriptures as supreme. But Socinians in Poland came to realize that in at least some cases even the Scriptures had to be submitted to the test of reason.⁽¹⁵⁾ When he said: "We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection" or "we make use of reason in interpreting Scriptures," Channing began, probably unconsciously, to deprive the Scripture of its absolute authority. He trusted his rational nature bestowed from God rather than any book written as an expression of God's will. When he came to this point, he was on the verge of denying the authority of the Scriptures, but he did not seem to be conscious of the position which he reached. In fact, it was the people influenced by Emerson and Parker who discarded the Bible as the proven text of authority for their religious life, not Channing.⁽¹⁶⁾

Nevertheless, Channing was still Christocentric. For him, "the divine Christ was still the chief cornerstone, sent of the Father, though not God. . . His will was wrought in man through the agency of the Holy Spirit."⁽¹⁷⁾ In this sense, he may be not called Unitarian in the sense of present American Unitarian-

ism. But it must be considered that Channing believed in the essential likeness of man and God, and hence man's perfectibility. He had an optimistic view of the nature of man which clarified his attitude toward morality and ethics. And he had confidence in human progress. He stated in "Likeness to God":

"... I think, however, that every reflecting man will feel that likeness to God must be a principle of sympathy or accordance with his creation; for the creation is a birth and shining forth of the Divine Mind, a work through which his spirit breathes... The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, purified and enlarged to infinity. In ourselves are elements of the Divinity... We see God around us because He dwells within us... We see, however, the tendency of the soul to the infinite in more familiar and ordinary forms... To grow in the likeness of God we need not cease to be men... To resemble our Creator we need not fly from society... Our proper work is to approach God by the free and natural unfolding of our highest powers... of understanding, conscience, love, and the moral will."⁽¹⁸⁾

The optimistic view toward human nature which characterizes Unitarianism was expressed in his thought. America must have been the soil which made it possible to hold such an optimism either religiously or in other ways. "Half-consciously, but explicitly, he provided a major Christian synthesis of historic New England doctrines, the Enlightenment, the fervor of pietism, Transcendental romanticism, and American democratic optimism."⁽¹⁹⁾

Meanwhile, Unitarianism began to show its inclination to conservatism and to easy-goingness. There were liberals who retained the Unitarian name only because of the looseness of the denominational, doctrinal and ecclesiastical bonds. Near his death, Channing noticed that the conservative tendency was creeping up and Unitarians were going to have orthodoxy. The Unitarian orthodoxy

regarded the Scriptures with almost the same unquestioning attitude as do Christians today. Although it rejected the Trinity, Unitarianism of those days affirmed the unique, supernatural character of the Messiahship, and considered Christianity the only way of salvation. In such an atmosphere, Channing had to be isolated.

Rather, he was understood and welcomed by the so-called "Transcendentalist" of his day rather than by "Unitarians." He was neither an unquestioning follower of Locke nor a Transcendentalist in the strict sense, but a "transitional figure." His basic Unitarian philosophy was accepted, conquered, and developed by the Transcendentalists.

PART II. THE TRANSCENDENTALIST MOVEMENT

The word Transcendentalism is difficult to define. It is difficult to call it a systematically articulated philosophy. There are many elements in it which make a decisive definition difficult. From the viewpoint of development of Unitarianism, it would be safe to follow Alice Felt Tyler's definition, which goes: "Just as New England Unitarianism stemmed from orthodox Calvinistic Congregationalism in the eighteenth century, so Transcendentalism was an offshoot of Unitarianism when it too had grown and conservative."⁽²⁰⁾

It is also a difficult question to determine whether Transcendentalism was a movement inside or outside Unitarianism. Since many non-Unitarians participated in it, Transcendentalism gives us the impression that it was an outer-movement. However, since it arose as a reaction against conservative tendency of Unitarianism, it is possible to regard Transcendentalism as an inner-movement.

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The criterion which I adopt is the comparison of it with the content of later Unitarianism, especially present day Unitarianism. This criterion leads us to the possibility of defining Transcendentalism as a inner-Unitarian movement. It means that present day Unitarianism is, in my understanding, rather an heir of Transcendentalism than of Unitarianism of former days.

As Unitarianism became popular and conservative, Channing lamented the drift to formalization. The man who broke down the stagnation and formalization of Unitarianism and breathed new life into it was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), a Unitarian-born intellectual, who renounced his Boston pulpit at the age of twenty-nine. Following the contemporary cultural tendency in New England, he took a brief sojourn to Europe. A new spirit was brought to America through his study of European philosophy. It is a very notable fact because American Unitarianism had come into existence, grown and developed in the isolated circumstances independent from European Unitarianism which itself had a long and continuous tradition from the very time of Arius in the fourth century. However, what Emerson brought was not European Unitarianism but European philosophy. In 1838, after his European trip, Emerson delivered a famous "Divinity School Address" to the graduating class at Harvard Divinity School. He stresses that, whereas religious truth is properly intuitive in man, the churches of his day insisted on finding the truth in external events and on founding it upon the persons and canonized writings of historical Christianity. He urged the young preachers to search for God within and today rather than in persons of by-gone ages. Moreover, the passages in his address say:

"Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets... Alone in all history, he esteemed the greatness of man... He said... 'I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or, see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think.' But what a distortion did his doctrine and memory suffer in the same, in the next, and the following ages! There is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding... The idioms of his languages and the figures of his rhetoric, have usurped the place of his truth; and churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes. Christianity became a mythus... He spoke of miracle... But the word miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is a monster."⁽²¹⁾

In these passages, he determined where to place Jesus Christ in history and how to understand miracles. Plainly speaking, Jesus Christ was not God but a prophet. The essential meaning of Jesus Christ has been misunderstood. On such misunderstanding and misinterpretation, historical Christianity was created. The true meaning of miracles was on man's life not on monster. Emerson, insisting that man must discipline his "understanding before his "reason" can be allowed to sally forth into the realm of transcendent truth,⁽²²⁾ used the most rational way in understanding things. Christianity should be exposed to sober rational understanding.

His criticism of historical Christianity was exceedingly stern. He continues:

"In this point of view we become sensible of the first defect of historical Christianity. Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion... It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus. The soul knows no persons."⁽²³⁾

In Emerson's understanding of Christianity, the significance of Jesus was neglected. Fundamentally, in today's belief, Christianity cannot be understood without the historical Jesus, but for Emerson, the essence of Chris-

tianity existed apart from the person of Jesus. Emerson, therefore, had to reject Christianity, historical religion, because Jesus as a historical figure did not make sense to him. He thought that no historical figure in the religious field should be accounted important or essential. Therefore, "the soul knows no persons." In this rejection of the historical Jesus as a foundation of understanding Christianity, Emerson's transcendental philosophy was clearly expressed. This declaration by Emerson was, we should think, a decisive aberration, or even abandonment of Christian faith in orthodox sense.

Emerson's attack was not only against the established form of Christianity. He continues:

"The Puritans in England and America in the Christ of the Catholic Church and in the dogmas inherited from Rome, scope for their austere piety and their longings for civil freedom. But their creed is passing away, and no arises in its room."⁽²⁴⁾

He saw American Puritanism collapsing. Christianity in an any established form existed only less substantially. The "true" Christianity, he thought, was lost. "What in these desponding days can be done?", he asks himself, and answers:

"The remedy is already declared in the ground of our complaint of the Church. We have contrasted the Church with the Soul. In the soul then, let the redemption be sought. Whenever a man comes, there comes revolution."⁽²⁵⁾

Here, he showed his decisive change from old Unitarianism to his own new religious philosophy, Transcendentalism. As Tyler says, it is because Transcendentalism was based on the fundamental belief that the individual soul is identified with God.⁽²⁶⁾ The soul was, for Transcendentalists, the substitute for God. All that was needed was the soul. First, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul. Emerson was preparing for

an intellectual revolution in himself. As all reformers think, he thought: "... all attempts to project and establish a cultus with new rites and forms, seems to me vain. Faith makes us, and not we it, and faith makes its own forms."⁽²⁷⁾ Although he did not necessarily make its content clear, he stressed faith. What can be concluded from his address is that he shifted the basis of religion from historical documents (=distrust in irrationality in the Scriptures) and external happening (=religion in the established form) to the life within (=soul). His confidence which continued from his "Nature" was distrust in the supernatural manifestations of God's presence, which led him to denial of Christianity as the absolute religion. In this point, Emerson should be distinguished from Lockean people or supernatural rationalists, who did not deny the existence of revelation. Emerson, who emphasized the soul, thought that Christianity was only an expression of the divine. He did not completely ignore nor disdain Christianity, however, but in some aspects, admitted its contributions. For example, he praised the Sabbath and the institution of preaching.⁽²⁸⁾ These are, however, somewhat irrelevant to the essence of Christianity. He admitted only things rational and worthwhile. He developed radically Channing's rationalism, and went beyond Channing.

Finally he emphasized the importance of the individual's role in religion, which means, that each man is to be his own priest. He says: "Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; refuse the good models, even those which are sacred to the imagination of men, and to love God without mediator or veil."⁽²⁹⁾

This address affected the religious field in

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various ways. Theodore Parker (1810-1860), then a young Unitarian, was deeply impressed by it. Older heads, however, regarded it with grave suspicion as subtly undermining the very foundations of the Christian religion. Since many Unitarians regarded themselves as Christian, they were alarmed by Emerson's excesses. "Unitarian ministers' meeting debated whether Emerson was Christian, pantheist or atheist, and writers in various newspapers attacked him."⁽⁸⁰⁾ One attacked Emerson's views as "the latest form of infidelity." "Most of the old Unitarians still held that miracles were the foundation of the Christian religion and thought that one who denies them denies simultaneously the existence of God and ought to leave the ministry. The question of the supernatural origin or miracles of Christianity became open even to public discussion.

Theodore Parker courageously supported Emerson. In 1841, he delivered the sermon "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity." Before then he had already affirmed that the highest religion must always be based on the experience of the natural rather than on the supernatural. In this sermon, he proclaimed that the teachings of Jesus do not depend on the authority of Jesus or any supernatural authority. Since these teachings are part of the natural universe, they would be true even if it should be proved that Jesus had never existed. His rather lengthy address begins with the citation from Luke XXI: 33; "Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass away," and continues:

"Looking at the words of Jesus, at real Christianity, the pure religion he taught, nothing appears more fixed and certain. Its influence weidens as light extends; it deepens as nations grow more wise. But, looking at the history of what men call Christianity, nothing seems more uncertain

and perishable."⁽⁸¹⁾

He indicates how much the so-called Christianity differs from the true Christianity. He says: "The difference between what is called Christianity by Unitarians in our times, and that of ages past, is greater than the difference between Mohamet and the Messiah."⁽⁸²⁾ What he implied in this was not only against the so-called Christianity but also sarcastically against Unitarianism of his day. Also, Parker criticizes the selfish interpretation based on particular sectarian positions, and its tendency to step out of Christianity. He states: "If Paul and Jesus would read our books of theological documents, would they accept as their teaching what men have vented in their names?"⁽⁸³⁾ He warns against reliance on established orthodoxy or on books which are, more or less, mere human invention and never divine. Without such measures man could know the divine, claims he: "... if we are faithful, the great truths of morality and religion, the deep sentiment of love to man and love to God, are perceived intuitively, and by instinct, as it were, though our theology be imperfect, and miserable."⁽⁸⁴⁾

Like Emerson, Parker did not consider the personal authority of Jesus to be important, but regarded him as the organ through which the Infinite spoke. He also indicated that the use of the Scriptures has been guided wrongly.

"If it (Christianity) rests on the personal authority of Jesus alone, then there is no certainty of its truth if he were ever mistaken in the smallest matter, ... as some Christians have thought he was predicting his second coming... Men sometimes use worst the choicest treasures which God bestows. This is especially true of the use men make of the Bible. Some men have regarded it as heathen, their idol, or the savage his fetish. They have subordinated reason, conscience, and religion to

this. Thus have they lost half the treasure it bears in its bosom."⁽⁴⁸⁾

Thus, although he did not deny miracles at all, Parker thought that Christianity does not need them to prove itself. The permanent element of Christianity is the teaching of Jesus not the authority of Jesus. It is the forms and doctrines that are transient in Christianity. He addressed all this in terms more blunt than Emerson used.

Just as in the case of Emerson, Parker was thrown into bitterness because of his radical views. Some of his old friends called him unbeliever, infidel, deist, atheist and tried to get him expelled from the pulpit. Even Channing, a radical forerunner, doubted whether Parker should be regarded as a Christian.⁽⁴⁹⁾ It is true that Parker doubted and lessened the authority of the Scriptures, whereas Channing, in spite of standing on almost the same threshold, did not. What Emerson and Parker had spoken became understood by younger people, and their number increased gradually. Modern American Unitarianism succeeded to and maintained their thoughts. This process may be proved when their thoughts are compared with the former-mentioned content of present American Unitarian belief. I avoid this overlapping.

PART III. A CONCLUSION

Parker, as time went on, declined to shift his field of activity from religious to social reform. He began to concentrate more and more on the reform movements which included temperance, prison reform, the elevation of woman, and against capital punishment, war, and slavery. These reform claims and peace movements are also a legacy which present American Unitarianism inherited from the Transcendentalists. Of course, the Uni-

tarians who were not involved in the Transcendentalist movement engaged in reform movement. But it seems that the more deeply they were dedicated to reform movements, the more liberal and the less Christian they became.

Whereas most Japanese Unitarians lost faith and became social reformers or socialists, Parker remained in the religion which eventually formed present American Unitarianism. American Unitarianism emerged in the continuation of the history of Christianity and was accepted as a new religious form despite the fact that there was a noticed or unnoticed radical trend of mingling Christianity with modern humanism. But Japanese Unitarians, became more easily social- and political-minded and less religious, perhaps due to lack of Christian tradition in the society. The humanism and humanitarianism that densely color present American Unitarianism may have been one of the factors that attracted but allowed the Japanese intellectuals to lose their faith.

Unitarianism in America grew from a criticism against the rigid New England Calvinism, the thorough form of which, however, went beyond the limit of reorganization of Christianity. The line from Channing to Transcendentalists, Emerson and Parker shows the process of humanization of Christianity. The tragedy of the twentieth century recognized by the men such as Spengler or Reinhold Niebuhr was the inevitable product or by-product of optimism for human power which was the core of humanism, the philosophy of total trust in man. Although American Unitarianism seemingly has not been hurt until the present, it has progressed along the way to a philosophical and moralistic movement, not to Christianity. It is a way

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of humanism and modernism based on trust in man, in which American Unitarianism began its step from the very beginning. But to predict the future of humanism, especially Unitarianism is out the scope of this paper.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Fred Gladstone Bratton, The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit (New York, 1943), p. 184.
- (2) George Willis Cooke, Unitarianism in America (Boston, 1910), p. 13.
- (3) The discussion here is about American Unitarian belief before the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America were merged. Cf. Henry B. Scholefield, A Pocket Guide to Unitarianism (Boston, 1960).
- (4) Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A historical Survey" in James Ward Smith and others ed., Religion in American Life (Princeton, 1961), p. 252. But Cooke says that a denomination in the strict sense did not exist before 1865. See Cooke, op. cit., pp. 158-159.
- (5) Cooke, op. cit., p. 16.
- (6) Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge, 1952), p. 379.
- (7) See Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston, 1955).
- (8) Ibid., p. 6.
- (9) Wilbur, op. cit., p. 389.
- (10) Ibid., p. 391. In the footnote, Wilbur says: "These are the words, often quoted, used by the Rev. F.W.P. Greenwood, History of King's Chapel (Boston, 1833), p. 139. But in the interest of accuracy it should be stated that as early as 1640 an Episcopal church had been organized at Portsmouth, N.H. Cf. William White, Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal (New York, 1880), p. xxiii."
- (11) H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher, American Christianity (New York, 1960), vol. 1, p. 481.
- (12) Wilbur, op. cit., p. 433.
- (13) William E. Channing, "Unitarian Christianity" edited in H. Shelton Smith and others, op. cit., p. 493.
- (14) H. Shelton Smith and othes, op. cit., p. 484.
- (15) Wilbur, op. cit., p. 486.
- (16) Ibid., p. 486.
- (17) Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 254.
- (18) William E. Channing, "Likeness to God" edited in Perry Miler, The Transcendentalists, (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 21-25.
- (19) Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 254.
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