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“MY LIFE AMONG THE UNITARIANS,” BY CURTIS W. REESE

This autobiography by Curtis Williford Reese (1887-1961) offers a window into the early history of the Unitarian movement in America, with special reference to its non-Theist Humanist element. His story, which he recounts in *My Life Among the Unitarians*, was originally submitted to Beacon Press but turned it down because the editors felt Reese had not given sufficient detail to the issues. The manuscript is housed among the Edwin H. Wilson Papers in the Special Collections Division of Morris Library at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. It was presumably given to Wilson since he had intended to write a history of the Unitarian movement but died before he was able to complete it.

The ninth child in a family of six boys and three girls, Curtis Reese came from a long line of Southern Baptist preachers. They included his great-grandfather, grandfather, two uncles, two brothers, and two nephews. In 1911, after being ordained in the Baptist church in 1908 and serving as pastor in several churches, including becoming the State Evangelist for the Illinois Baptist State Association, he came to the realization he was preaching things he no longer believed and turned to Unitarianism in 1913. Curtis's autobiography captures his education as well as his years as secretary for the Western Unitarian Conference, his work for Lombard College, the Meadville Theological School, his membership on the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association, his involvement in the preparation of the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, and his years as Dean of the Abraham Lincoln Centre in Chicago. In many respects, his life provides the interested reader in a bird's eye view of the first fifty years of the Unitarian movement in the United States.

MY LIFE AMONG THE UNITARIANS

By

CURTIS W. REESE

edited by

JOHN S. HALLER JR.

PROLOGUE

The thought of writing one's life story is terrifying. The problems involved are innumerable. One must include in the story all pertinent and significant thoughts and experiences, and by the same token the irrelevant and insignificant must be omitted. But sometimes it is difficult for one so close to the events to distinguish between the significant and the irrelevant. Then there is the constant intrusion of the perpendicular pronoun, which cannot be avoided in writing of the ideas and experiences that make up one's life story.

The title of this volume, *My Life Among the Unitarians*, automatically rules out the idea of a complete autobiography, for not all of my thoughts and experiences have had to do with my life among the Unitarians. Moreover, there are areas of experience even among the Unitarians that must of necessity be omitted out of consideration for other people. I have often said that a Conference Executive should be shot at sunrise on the day following his retirement from office, so that his memories would be blotted out with him.

Also, there is the problem of revealing how one attempts to be both an effective preacher and a capable administrator. Much of my life among the Unitarians was spent in the role of an executive officer. The prophetic and the executive are difficult to combine in one career. I am not entirely convinced that it has ever been done before. I have the pleasant recollection that one of my sermons was chosen by the editor for inclusion in the volume, *The World's Great Sermons*, along with the Sermon on the Mount, Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry god," and other equally momentous homilies in Christian history; on the other hand, no one has ever accused me of being an inefficient administrator. Perhaps people are basically kind.

The combining of spiritual leadership and effective administration, at any rate, has always been one of my basic aims in life.

To a certain extent these two aims are in conflict. My belief in the importance of administration kept me from accepting calls to some of the most influential churches in the Unitarian denomination, where any ability as a preacher which I happened to possess could have found ample opportunity to develop. True, I preached the Anniversary Sermon in Boston, and I was selected to preach the 100th Anniversary Sermon at the centenary of the Western Unitarian Conference, and also preached on the innumerable anniversary, installation, and dedicatory occasions in churches from coast to coast. But in trying to develop prophetic preaching ability, nothing can take the place of week-to-week preaching in a regular pulpit. Let me say this loudly to all who fear that the weekly round leads to apathy. I believe profoundly in the importance of preaching, as did the old Virginia divine who paced the floor of his study and exclaimed, “I can’t preach, I have never preached, and I have never heard anyone who could preach!” So great was his feeling of the importance of preaching! And I have always kept in mind a sentence from the history of the Southern Baptist Association, which in speaking of my grandfather said, “He preached as a very evangel from the spirit world.”

Yet the most eloquent and prophetic preaching cannot make a permanent impression on the world unless it is backed up by effective and well-balanced administration. Hence my interest in administration, including the most minute matters connected with the management of committees and boards of directors. I have tried to combine as best I could these two somewhat diverse functions of a minister—and there have been times when I felt that I’d made it, and others when I knew that I had not.

It is a heavy responsibility to attempt to determine the spiritual trends and organizational life of a great denomination. But this I deliberately set as my goal early in my Unitarian career. From the beginning of my Unitarian ministry I believed that the future of Unitarianism lay in steering it in the direction of Humanist aims and ideals, involving a faith beyond the limitations of Christianity or any other ethnic religion, and in the development of organizational machinery that lent itself to this goal. I am aware that there are other points of view in the movement. Here, however, I speak for myself.

I am under special obligations to Mrs. D. D. Fennell of Kissimmee, Florida, for transcribing and typing the first draft of this book; to Mrs. Ann Cook, my former administrative aide at Abraham Lincoln Centre, Chicago, for editing and typing the final draft; and most of all my wife, Fay Walker Reese, without whose sympathetic understanding and encouragement, not to mention prodding, this volume would not have seen the light of day.

CHAPTER ONE

MY BAPTIST BACKGROUND

On the third day of September, 1887, I was born into a rigidly orthodox Baptist family four miles up to the French Broad River from Marshall and down the French Brad River twenty miles from Asheville, in the midst of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina—some thirty miles from Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in the eastern part of the United States. I was the ninth child of a family of six boys and three girls. My father was the thirteenth child in his family. I was once introducing Margaret Sanger to an audience in Chicago when, after expressing my approval of the movement that she represented, I said that I was nevertheless glad she had not come along earlier, since I was the ninth of a thirteenth child. Probably it would not have made any difference.

One of my great grandfathers, one of my grandfathers, two of my uncles, two of my brothers, and two of my nephews were Southern Baptist ministers. I was educated for the Southern Baptist ministry, but when my sister married a Southern Baptist minister I thought there were too many Baptist ministers in one family, so I became a Unitarian.

I had been taught that when a person reached the age of accountability—around twelve years—and did not confess his sins, accept Jesus Christ as his Savior, if he died he would go straight to hell. At the age of nine, believing myself to be unusually mature, I confessed, was converted, and baptized in the middle of the French Broad river in the middle of winter.

It was customary for the minister to take two candidates for baptism out into the deep water, baptize one of them; then this one stood aside and waited for the baptism of the second.

The minister then ushered both out to the shore together. I was baptized first. When the minister turned me loose, I did not wait—the water being somewhat cold—but immediately pulled for the shore alone, thus asserting my independence at an early age.

Soon thereafter my parents moved from rural Madison County to the small college town of Mars Hill, North Carolina. The first dollar that I ever made was earned by operating a hand printing press and by piloting a neighbor's cows to and from the pasture. With my pocket heavy with dimes, nickels, and pennies, I walked down the street until I ran into the local Baptist minister. Thrusting my hand into my pocket I pulled out one dollar in change, put it in the hand of the minister, and said, "Here, Brother Wilkins, I want to pay you one dollar on your salary."

My father's early career, often told and retold in the family, exerted a great influence on my life. Although reared in North Carolina, my father at the age of seventeen found his way through the lines of the Confederacy, and raising his age to eighteen volunteered in the Union Army, where he served three years. He cast his first vote for Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States. He was a lifelong Southern Republican, although he voted for Theodore Roosevelt on the Progressive ticket in 1912.

It was commonly said that Southerners from the Appalachian Mountains were in sympathy with the Union because they owned no slaves. This is not entirely true. One of my grandparents owned many slaves. A legend frequently told in the family was that when my grandfather died and his slaves were sold at auction, one of the older slaves when he had walked one hundred or one hundred-fifty feet from the old homestead turned around and faced the family of his former master and said, "I bid you a long and lonesome farewell."

My father was one of three Union soldiers who were involved in the last shots of the Civil War east of the Mississippi River, near Waynesville, North Carolina.

In May of 1908, a Council of Baptist ministers assembled for the purpose of examining my qualifications to become ordained as a Baptist minister. The examination established by doctrinal soundness and my ability to perform the functions of a Baptist minister. I was duly ordained, and immediately thereafter went to southern Alabama where I lived in the home of my brother, Rev. T. O. Reese, then minister of the First Baptist Church of Geneva. I accepted a position as acting pastor of the Bellwood, Alabama, Baptist Church, serving until September when I returned to Mars Hill to complete arrangements for going to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

The day of my departure from Mars Hill was a rainy one. Our only means of transportation was a mail wagon which made the trip from Mars Hill to Marshall, a distance of some ten miles. The young man who accompanied me to Louisville, I allowed to ride on the seat by the driver under a big umbrella. I myself purchased several yards of oilcloth, cut a hole in the center, put my head through the hole, and sat on my trunk where I got the full benefit of both the rain and the drippings from the umbrella. I do not know why I took along a bit trunk, for I did not possess enough clothes to fill a handbag. In fact, when I wore holes in the soles of my shoes shortly after arriving in Louisville, I sold one of my two suits to a second-hand store for seventy-five cents to get money to half-sole my shoes.

Upon arriving at Marshall and going to the railway station, I found I did not have quite enough money for the ticket to Louisville without using a five-dollar gold piece which I had won in a composition contest. Fearing that the station agent would not recognize a five-dollar gold piece, I walked down the street to the bank to get the gold piece changed into regular money. As

the cashier gave me the change, I told him that I had won this gold piece in a composition contest, and he very thoughtfully suggested that he would put it in an envelope, seal it, and hold it until a later date when I could redeem it. Later I did redeem it, and after “pawning” it two more times I finally lost it and it went into general circulation.

Upon arriving in Louisville, after registering with the Seminary and settling down in New York Hall, I faced the problem of securing textbooks. I went to a Baptist bookstore and arranged for credit. Next I heard that the Kentucky Anti-Saloon League could use some special lecturers in fund-raising appeals. I applied for a position, got it, and earned sufficient money not only to buy textbooks but to meet other necessary costs during my first year at the Seminary. Later I accepted a call to serve the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at Pleasant Home, Kentucky, and also the Baptist Church in Gratz, Kentucky. These two churches enabled me to finance myself fairly satisfactorily. It was while I was minister of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church that I met my future wife, Fay Rowlett Walker.

Following my graduate from Louisville I went to southern Illinois where, after conducting a couple of revival meetings, I was offered a position as State Evangelist of the Illinois Baptist State Association. The Illinois Baptist State Association was a group of some five hundred churches which split away from the Illinois Baptist State Convention and affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

During the year as State Evangelist, my heresies, which had begun even during my Seminary days due to the impact of higher criticism, began to grow apace. I resigned my position as Evangelist and accepted a call to the First Baptist Church of Tiffin, Ohio, which was an unusually liberal Northern Baptist church. While at Tiffin I was allowed a considerable measure of freedom. Nevertheless, I began to thirst for more liberty, I preached twice each Sunday, but

following the evening service my conscience bothered me. I could and did say what I believed, but I did not feel free to say what I did *not* believe; and I remembered that William James once remarked: “For the mind to function effectively it must not only say, ‘I mean this’ but also ‘I do not mean the other.’”

While on vacation one summer during my pastorate at Tiffin I returned to Mars Hill, North Carolina, where I was invited to make a speech in the college chapel on “The Leadership of the Cigarette,” following which one of the students made a motion that I be requested to try to induce the merchants of the town to cease selling cigarettes. I visited each of the four or five merchants in town, got them all to sign a statement that they would cease keeping in stock, for the purpose of selling or giving away, cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, and cigarette wrappers, provided the agreement went into effect when their present supply was exhausted. The next day I reported to the college chapel that the agreement had been signed. Immediately a collection was taken, and I sent the students to the stores to pick up their supplies of cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, and cigarette wrappers. The supplies were piled up in the center of the campus and, as some three hundred and fifty students stood in a circle around the pile, I poured a gallon of kerosene on it and lit it with a match. As the tobacco burned, the student body sang “Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.” The story of this episode was given wide circulation throughout the United States by the Associated press and brought some opposition from North Carolina papers which, not knowing that I was a native of the state, said this foreigner had entered the state to interfere with their private business.

I have always been proud of my Baptist background. The Baptists are a great people with a great tradition, coming down from pioneer days through Roger Williams. They have always supported strongly the separation of Church and State, and have stood for the direct relations of

the individual souls to God without any intervention on the part of priests, institutions, or holy books. I have always regarded the Southern Baptist Convention as one of the best illustrations of democracy in action, for without benefit of any hierarchy or supreme authority the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention are organized from local associations through state conventions to the general Southern Baptist Convention in a most efficient way. Baptist basic principles are sound and Baptist ways are good—but there was a powerful something that pulled me another way.

CHAPTER TWO

I BECAME A UNITARIAN

When I became a Unitarian minister there was consternation, deep sorrow, and mourning equal to that of a death in the Reese family. My mother said in honest cruelty that she would rather have seen me dead. This is understandable, for had she heard of my death she would have had the satisfaction of knowing that I was flying around with the angels in heaven. But now she was sure that if and when I died, I would burn in hellfire and brimstone forever and ever. All of my loved ones were dumfounded. I was a lost soul, an apostate, and a maverick.

There was also in my own soul a great struggle. I was turning my back on all my relatives, all my friends, and all that was familiar to me, and entering a strange new world. But it was a change that I had to make. I was tired on the restrictions of orthodoxy. I wanted the liberty of a free faith, and I was determined to find it if it existed.

During my days in the Southern Baptist Seminary, I visited the Unitarian Church of Louisville one Sunday and brought along with me some copies of a tract that I had compiled, which told specifically how to be saved. These I left scattered on the pews for the enlightenment of Unitarians. Also, I took with me from the racks two or three pamphlets of Unitarianism, and was particularly impressed with one of the tracts that spoke of salvation by character. Hence, I had a slight introduction to Unitarianism while in Louisville.

In Tiffin, Ohio, I became increasingly restive under the limitations of the Baptist doctrines. One who has not gone through the experience of changing from a rigidly orthodox connection to a magnificently free fellowship can hardly imagine the agony that accompanies the

process. I considered the Universalist Church, the Christian Connection Church, and the Unitarian Church. I think what led me into the Unitarian movement was the social gospel of Francis G. Peabody.

The Baptists believed in the bible as the infallible Word of god, for one thing; and this I simply could not bring myself to believe. They also insisted on the Virgin Birth, and this I could not accept. Also they believed in man's redemption through the death of Jesus on the cross—a doctrine that was repulsive to me Hellfire for those not saved I found impossible to reconcile with my own belief in a good and just God. I finally sat down at my desk and drafted a statement of my creed. Up to this time, I had never seen or heard of the Five Points of Unitarianism nor the Five Points of Universalism, but there is a striking similarity between these two statements and the one that I drew up for myself. My creed, as I stated it at that time, read as follows:

1. A universal Father, God.
2. A universal brotherhood, mankind.
3. A universal right, freedom.
4. A universal motive, love.
5. A universal aim, progress.

I did not know whether there was a Unitarian church in Toledo, Ohio, but I wrote a letter and addressed it to:

Pastor,

Unitarian Church,

Toledo, Ohio

Asking if I might come up and have an interview with him. Very soon I received a reply stating that the minister would be glad to see me at any time it was convenient for me to make the trip.

I went to Toledo, had a very friendly visit with the minister, read him my creedal statement and asked if it was in general accord with the Unitarian position. He replied that it was. He then suggested that he would be very glad to arrange for me to meet the Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, Rev. Ernest C. Smith, who had his headquarters in Chicago. I replied that I did not want to go that far. I was chiefly interested in determining whether my beliefs were in accord with the Unitarian position. Some weeks later I wrote this minister another letter telling him that I would be glad if he would arrange a conference between me and the Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference. This he did, and in my conversation with Rev. Ernest C. Smith, in the study of the Unitarian church in Toledo, I recited my creedal statement. He said that I would be acceptable as a Unitarian minister. Since that time the rules of the Fellowship Convention has wisely been greatly tightened. He told me that there were two possible openings—one as assistant minister of All Souls Church at Abraham Lincoln Centre in Chicago, where Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones was looking for an assistant, and the other a vacancy at Alton, Illinois, a church which had not had a resident minister for some four or five years. I told him that I would prefer the Chicago position. Within a couple of weeks, I had a letter from Mr. Smith stating that All Souls Church was not in a position to finance an assistant minister. Mr.

Smith inquired if I would be interested in Alton. I replied immediately that I would be glad to candidate at Alton. I went to Alton, preached twice—once on Sunday morning and again on Wednesday evening—and returned to Tiffin where I anxiously waited for the word which I soon got, that Alton had voted to call me as their minister, that my period of service could begin on August 1, but that I would not be expected in Alton until September 1.

The summer preceding my going to Alton was the most difficult financially of my life. I had left Tiffin the first of June. My wife and I went to Kentucky, where we lived with my wife's parents through June, July, and August. Our only source of finance for that terrifying summer was from the sale, at ten cents apiece, of a pamphlet which I had written, called "Plain Facts about Roman Catholicism." Orders came flooding in from all over the United States, and thus we kept the wolf from the door until time for us to go to Alton the first of September. Then I faced the problem of money for our transportation to Alton. This I borrowed from my father-in-law. When we reached Alton I collected my August salary and the August rent on the parsonage, and was then back in business.

In addition to the spiritual upheavals and financial difficulties of the summer of 1913, I had to face the most severe reactions from my father, mother, brothers, and a sister. As previously stated I was the baby of the family and was looked upon as having great promise in the Baptist ministry, and when I became a Unitarian the shock was such as to be almost unbearable to my family. My mother wrote and said quite frankly that she would rather have heard of my death than that I had become a Unitarian. My two brothers who were Baptist ministers pleaded with me to renounce Unitarianism and come back into the Baptist fold. My sister—with whom I had had the closest and most affectionate relationship—had some six months before I became a Unitarian named a second son, Curtis Williford, in my honor.

Following my becoming a Unitarian, she advised my wife to leave me, and she changed the name of her six-month-old son from Curtis Williford to Bruner Truett, after two of the most famous Southern Baptist ministers.

Five years elapsed before I returned to Mars Hill, North Carolina, to visit my parents. One evening when we were all sitting around the fireside, my sister's first son who had taken a liking to me startled the assembled family by saying right out of the blue, "Mama, let's change Bruner's name back to Curtis." I must add, in all fairness to my sister, that she later became reconciled to my change and herself attended the Unitarian Fellowship meetings in Charlotte, North Carolina. She might very well have become a Unitarian had she not at this point in her life married a deacon of the First Baptist Church of Charlotte.

My pastorate in Alton was one of the happiest periods of my life. I had complete pulpit freedom and sympathetic understanding from a fine group of people. Where was a gratifying increase such as many young ministers have experienced with a church they serve has been without a resident preacher for some time—of Alton the membership increased by 40%. During my first year,

Soon after I started my Alton pastorate a lecturer came to the Y.M.C.A. and told them how the minister of the Unitarian church had led an anti-vice campaign in Tiffin, Ohio. A committee of Alton women was formed, called the Vigilant Improvement Association. This committee called on me to lead a movement in Alton to rid the city of vice and gambling. I agreed to do so. There was a sufficient purse to enable me to employ secret service operators, and the campaign to clean up Alton was under way. But before putting the secret service operators on the job I, in company with the Congregational minister and a layman, made a tour

of Alton's underworld. We visited the houses of vice, the gambling dens, and the saloons where liquor was sold illegally.

A mass meeting was then called in the First Baptist Church where I delivered an address to an overflowing audience. I then put a detective on the job gathering affidavits on the widespread violations of laws, which I presented to the Grand Jury. A number of indictments were secured and things began to get rather hot for me in Alton. There were many threatening letters and threatening telephone calls warning that my wife, our baby, and I were in grave danger.

One of the most prominent members of the church was away when this movement started and, frankly, I dreaded her return to the city, for I was fearful that she would not approve of the doings of her new pastor, but when she returned the first thing she did was to make a special contribution of \$100 for the purpose of employing a man to guard the parsonage at night and to accompany me every time I went out on the street. On one of the first trips on which this special guard accompanied me, I went into a newspaper office, leaving him stationed across the street where he could observe my actions through the window of a grocery store. Afterwards I traveled all over downtown Alton, at no time seeing my guard, and went back home and he was not there. I then went out to search for him and found him where I had first left him, with his face pasted to the glass window watching to see me come out of the building across the street.

The chief difficulty that I had—at least the one that was really dangerous to me personally—was upon returning from Edwardsville, the county seat of Madison County, Illinois, after presenting evidence to the Grand Jury. I had to change cars at a little station called Mitchell. While there for the care from St. Louis to Alton, I was attacked physically by one of a mob that had assembled at the station door to keep me from entering. To say that I was terrified is to put it

mildly, but I was able to ward off his blows with a good left arm, suffering only a sprained thumb in the process. I made a circle as this attacker attempted to strike me, and wound up back at the station door where, meantime, the station agent had gained control. I entered the station and the agent quickly closed the door. Within a few minutes the car came along; I got on it—sitting across the aisle from the man who had attacked me. He sat in a position as if he were ready to spring on me at any moment, and I must confess that I was duly and properly terrified. The next day the *Alton Daily Telegraph* had a big front-page spread about this story, with the result that the reform movement gained rapid headway.

The next move was to elect a new mayor on a cleanup ticket. The campaign was a hot one, but on election day the cleanup ticket won by a substantial majority. Some of my parishioners thought it would not be safe for me to be in the parsonage the night of the election, so my wife, our child, and I were whisked away to the third floor in the home of one of my parishioners where it was believed we would be safe. The night of the election saw a huge crowd surround the parsonage, build fires in the yard, and in general create a big disturbance. It was well probably that we were not there.

While in Alton I spent one month at Abraham Lincoln Centre in Chicago, where I preached one Sunday in All Souls pulpit and in general performed ministerial functions while Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones was on vacation. I had also run across a life of Jasper L. Douthit which I read with a great deal of interest. Mr. Douthit had founded at Lithia Springs, near Shelbyville, Illinois, a Chautauqua on a beautifully situated campus. The Chautauqua, however, was undergoing great financial difficulties. I proposed to the Lithia Springs Chautauqua Board that I would be willing in the summer of 1915 to assume charge of the Chautauqua, including complete

financial responsibility, provided I would be absolutely free to build the program as I chose. The proposal was eagerly accepted.

The Chautauqua lasted for three weeks, spanning three Sundays. The rains fell every day of the three weeks, and on Sunday the clouds opened up with usual vigor. Thus the overall attendance was considerably reduced, and on the last day of the program period I was faced with a substantial deficit. I took my complete savings, borrowed from other people, and paid all bills. Later when I was a candidate for Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, this was used as an illustration of my integrity and possibly gained some votes for me.

During my first vacation from Alton in the summer of 1914, my zeal for Unitarianism was such that I determined to conduct a liberal mission at Gratz, Kentucky. Gratz is a small village on the Kentucky river, nineteen miles from a railroad. It has three churches, and is rampant in its orthodoxy. Close communion, alien-immersion, final preservation of the saints, sanctification, the unpardonable sin, the exact size of heaven, and literal hell-fire are “vital” questions. The old joke about a Baptist church singing, “Will there be any stars in my crown?” while a Methodist church across the street sang, “No, not one, no, not one,” is said to have originated in Gratz. This joke is certainly expressive of truth if not true to fact.

I once had been student-pastor of the Baptist Church of God at Gratz and at the same time pastor of the Baptist Church of Jesus Christ, three miles from Gratz. These two churches had membership of four hundred and employed me for half-time. Great was their surprise upon learning that their former pastor had “become a Unitarian,” “fallen from grace,” “forsaken the faith,” “become an infidel,” “denied the authority of the Bible,” “turned his back upon Jesus,” and “committed the unpardonable sin.” But greater still was their surprise upon hearing that this

same pastor had contracted for the Opera House and would lecture eight evenings on Liberal Religion.

Any fear that I may have had as to the size of my audiences vanished when I was told that the local pastors had advised their members to stay away. "When a man talks about you, put him on your payroll, no matter what he says, just so he talks." Leading church members openly declared that "I ought to be hanged," while others, less aesthetic, suggested "eggs." I distributed posters for miles around and these, together with community gossip, thoroughly advertised the lectures.

On the day announced to begin, Sunday, August 23, 1914, the manager of the Opera House left town, no one could find the keys, and the private dynamo was out of repair. This state of affairs was known to me only about forty minutes before time to begin. I got a boy to climb in a window and open the house from the inside; we then borrowed coal oil lamps, and, notwithstanding two conflicting church services, between seventy-five and one hundred people were present, some of whom had come nine miles. After stating that the Constitution of the United States provides for freedom of speech, and that my own constitution demanded the same, I spoke on "The Modern Awakening." Monday evening the audience was double that of Sunday. I secured a rough box for a pulpit, and spoke on "The Unitarian Fundamental: Character;" Tuesday on "God: The World Capacity for Good;" Wednesday on "Rationality in religion;" Thursday and Friday on "The bible and the Fallible Word of Man, not the Infallible Word of God." These two addresses on the Bible caused considerable stir. Friday evening several came for miles through one of the hardest rains I have ever witnessed. Saturday I spoke on "The Deity of Jesus," and standing room was at a premium. As to my belief in Jesus, every conceivable rumor had gone abroad, hence the large crowd. Sunday, the closing evening, I reviewed the

previous addresses, answered some wild rumors, and spoke on "World Religion." Extra seats were brought in, and the Opera House was packed to its utmost capacity. More than twenty-five men and boys rode horseback for from six to nine miles, in order to attend this last lecture.

All through the series the interest was intense. Never have I seen men more anxious to catch every word from the speaker and, as the week drew to a close, I heard from every direction of young folks, and many older people, who were saying that they "believed like Brother Reese." Young people, whose parents had been styled "infidels" for half a century, openly affirmed their belief in the faith of their fathers. One family revealed the fact that their deceased father, a noted physician, who for fifty years had been called an "infidel" and "atheist," was a Unitarian, and members of this family attended every lecture, in order to learn what their father had believed.

I asked for no "joiners," took no collection, and had no one solicit funds; I paid for the Opera House myself, except for \$1.15 voluntarily contributed by two men more thoughtful than the rest. As a result, I won honorable status in the community. I have spent every summer for the last 46 years there, and am still called "Brother Reese."

In the spring of 1915 I received a letter from the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, Iowa, asking if I would be interested in coming to Des Moines as a candidate for their pulpit. Everett Dean Martin had resigned under some rather embarrassing circumstances. I replied that I could not do so in the spring, but if in the fall they were still looking for a minister I would be glad to pay them a visit. In October I received a letter from Des Moines, asking me to name two Sundays on which I could visit that church. Arrangements were made, I candidate two Sundays, visited in the homes of the people during the week, and returned to Alton, where within a couple of weeks I received a telegram stating that I had been called to the pastorate of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. I took up my pastorate in Des Moines on the first of December, 1915.

There was, of course, some increase in salary, but there were also substantial increases in living expenses.

In Des Moines I resolved to try a different attack on civic affairs. Instead of fighting the mayor and the council, and attempting to elect a new administration as we had done in Alton, I approached the mayor and the city council or commission, as it was called, with a proposal for an improvement in the housing conditions in Des Moines. The *Daily News* not only published a series of articles by me but assigned a photographer to take pictures showing the dreadful housing situation, and a staff artist to do sketches showing how slums could be cleared and how improvement could be made in the general overall pattern of the city. The mayor appointed me as chairman of a City Housing Commission. I soon found that nothing very effective could be done in Des Moines without state legislation.

I wrote a letter to Governor, W. L. Harding, suggesting that he had a great opportunity to render a big service to the State of Iowa by interesting everyone in housing. He replied by inviting me to come over and see him for a conference. He was a very shrewd politician, and he suggested that he call a statewide wartime conference on housing. He commissioned me to get in touch with all of the civic organizations of the state and invite them to send representatives to an all-day conference at the State House. This conference was markedly successful.

The Governor then appointed a Statewide Housing Commission and named me as chairman. I proceeded to draft a state housing law regulating housing in all of the major cities of the state. This draft was approved by the other members of the Commission and was introduced into both the upper and lower houses of the State Legislature. Hon. James B. Weaver, son of General Weaver who once ran for President of the United States on the Populist Ticket, introduced the proposed legislation in the lower house and he, being very busy, granted me

authority to conduct hearings on the Bill. For some three months I spent practically every weekday at the State House lobbying for the Bill. I sent telegrams all over the state asking leaders of civic groups to request a number of persons in their communities to send telegrams to their Representatives and Senators, expressing their support of the bill. One Senator came to me and said, "My people are all for your Housing Bill. Today I received ten telegrams in support of it." When it came up for passage the Bill did not receive an opposing vote in either house. And when the Governor signed the bill he presented to me the gold pen he had used in signing it.

I was appointed by the Governor as the first Housing Commissioner of the State of Iowa; and since this was the first statewide Housing Bill adopted in the United States, I became the first State Housing Commissioner in the United States. This resulted in a great deal of favorable publicity for me, and I was approached by one of the chief labor leaders of Des Moines and invited to run for mayor of Des Moines on a ticket that would be backed by organized labor, by the Chamber of Commerce, and by other civic groups. This was a great temptation, but I had prior commitments to the Unitarian ministry, and I declined the honor. Also, a successful broker offered me a position as stock and bond salesman, stating that he would guarantee that I could make \$50,000 a year. It sounded good, but with a cheerful *me retro, sathanas*, I held to my commitments to the denomination. After serving during my vacation of 1919 as State Housing Commissioner, I became Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference—but that is another story.

After experience in various churches from Miami to Montreal, from King's Chapel to Minneapolis, from San Diego to the Isles of Shoals, I am convinced that a Unitarian minister can express his deepest convictions on any subject from birth control to the World Federalists without suffering any major difficulties, provided only that he exercises common courtesy and

consideration for those who differ from him. The Unitarian church is without doubt the roomiest on the face of the earth. I wish something could be done to get young ministers—particularly socially radical young ministers—to understand and appreciate this point. Many young men with a vision of saving the world start out in the ministry and, without too much thought or consideration for the opinions of those who differ from them, themselves deal rather roughly with the opposing opinions; and then when they get some unfavorable reactions they feel persecuted. This is not at all necessary. The minister who is careful in the presentation of his material, who shows that he is competent in the field that he is discussing, and that he is not trying to run roughshod over his opposition, as a rule will receive a very friendly hearing from his parishioners.

Of course there are always differences of opinion. For example, a memorial service was conducted in Des Moines honoring Theodore Roosevelt. I was asked to deliver the invocation. I did so in terms which did not appear to me controversial. Let the reader judge:

As we gather here to pay tribute of reverence and honor and love to the sacred memory of a great thinker, a great doer, a great citizen, a great man, may we imbibe somewhat of the simplicity, the nobility, the activity, and the genuineness which constituted the greatness of him whom we commemorate; may we renew our loyalty to those first principles of good citizenship—industry, honesty, and truth—which he so splendidly and gallantly proclaimed; may we consecrate ourselves—all that we are and all that we hope to be—to that true fellowship of service so signally glorified in the life and work of this great American who will be emulated for a thousand years and more; and so may we become better citizens; so may we become more earnest and zealous in

behalf of government of, for, and by the people; and may we here firmly resolve that such government shall never perish from the earth! Amen.

On the following day a citizen of Des Moines complained to one of my parishioners that I had not used the term “God” in my invocation. My parishioner replied, “Don’t you think god knows his own name?” Yet it is of such materials that many serious disputes can be made.

While I was minister in Des Moines I delivered what I believe to be the first systematically Humanist sermon preached from any pulpit in America. Prior to this, even as early as the Unity men in the Western Unitarian Conference, there were many sermons that were essentially humanistic in purpose and spirit, but the term *Humanism* had not then come into vogue, nor had the later controversies on this issue appeared. Also, John H. Dietrich, while minister in Spokane and after coming to Minneapolis, had delivered many thoroughgoing, rationalistic sermons. Everett Dean Martin, my predecessor at Des Moines, had delivered lectures in which he expounded the philosophical Humanism of F. S. C. Schiller, but so far as I have been able to learn, the sermon which I preached in the Des Moines pulpit in the late winter or early spring of 1917 was the first thorough-going completely humanistic interpretation of religion preached from any pulpit in the United States. I called the sermon “A Democratic View of Religion.” In the preparation of this sermon I was influenced by the writings of Roy Wood Sellars and by James Macdonald’s Meadville thesis.

In the sermon I struck out as powerfully as I could against the theistic system with its unSocratic God requiring obedience to some divine will or other and supported by a hierarchy of lesser autocrats while impotent mankind suffers and obeys. Instead I asserted the rights of Man,

the power of Man, and the responsibility of Man in the events of this world—in the matters of poverty, disease, war, alcohol, crime I called for a democratic and scientific religion established on human effort and not on divine intervention: a natural religion, intended to serve human welfare. We are not living merely to prepare for heaven; we are living to create our eternal-now on this earth, I said.

This sermon, while creating no great stir in the Des Moines church, where practically every member was in general accord, won for me denominational-wide recognition as a leader of the new movement in Unitarianism.

CHAPTER THREE

I BECAME WESTERN CONFERENCE SECRETARY

The western Unitarian Conference was organized in 1852, and in the sixty-seven years that intervened before 1919, the Conference had as Secretaries and Anniversary Preachers some of the most illustrious names in Unitarian history in America. Among them were Theodore Parker, Frederick L. Hosmer, Jabez T. Sunderland, and Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Hence, I considered it a very great honor when at the age of thirty-two I was selected as the chief executive officer of the Conference.

My election was not without some minor controversy. The Honorable Morton D. Hull had proposed to pay the difference between the regular Conference Secretary salary of \$3,000 annually and the \$5,000 that would be required to secure the services of Dr. Richard Boynton, then minister of the Unitarian church in Buffalo, New York. Dr. Boynton was one of the most able and scholarly ministers in the denomination, but when the balloting of the board was over, I had been elected by a vote of eleven to two. My service with the Conference began September 1, 1919, and continued for the next ten and one-half years, that being the longest secretaryship in the history of the Conference up to that time.

The first task that confronted me was the filling of twenty vacant pulpits. It had been a denominational habit for many years to ship off to the Midwest from New England ministers who for one reason or another were not regarded as satisfactory for the eastern Unitarian churches. To this I immediately put a stop. There were a number of eastern ministers that I wanted for our Midwestern pulpits and I went directly after them by mail, by telegrams, and by

long distance telephone. Among the first of these men handpicked from the East and settled in Midwestern churches were Dr. Charles H. Lyttle who was brought from Brooklyn to Omaha; Rev. James Macdonald from Melrose to Lincoln; Rev. Edmund H. Reeman from Trenton to Des Moines; Rev. Robert S. Loring from temporary retirement in the East to Milwaukee. Later on I brought additional men from the East, including Dr. Frank C. Doan to Iowa City; Dr. Ralph E. Bailey from Charleston to Omaha; and Rev. Julius Krolfifer from the staff of the American Unitarian Association to Davenport, Iowa, and to St. John's in Cincinnati. Also, I made it a habit to keep my eye peeled for promising and able ministers in other denominations who might consider serving in Unitarian churches. Thus, I brought Dr. Von Ogden Vogt from the Wellington Avenue Congregational Church in Chicago to the First Unitarian Society of Chicago; and Rev. Kenneth Patton from the Disciples Church to Madison. There were a number of others both from the East and from other denominations who came into the Conference at my request.

Naturally, I was subject to some criticism from men who felt that they were being overlooked for promotions and the better pulpits given to men from the East or from other denominations, but my fixed policy during the ten and one-half years of my secretaryship was to present some two, three and, occasionally, more names to the pulpit committees of the churches and then make one recommendation as my choice for that particular pulpit. I am somewhat aghast to note, upon reviewing the record, that without exception my recommendation was accepted, and the minister recommended was settled as the pastor. This seems almost incredible in Unitarian circles. It was always a great satisfaction to me to watch the careers of the men whom I had recommended.

Today my method of placing ministers in pulpits would be regarded as highly autocratic, if not dictatorial, since today the regional directors do not make any specific recommendations

but guide the pulpit committees in their consideration of the abilities of several different men. I do not say that my method was superior to the method now in vogue, but I do say that it worked satisfactorily from 1919 to 1930. I considered myself a director of personnel and not an employment agent. There *is* a difference.

I want to divide my Conference experience into two sections, one covering the Chicago area and the other the Conference in general.

When I came to Chicago in September 1919 there were only two ministers presiding over Unitarian churches in the Greater Chicago Area—William Hanson Pulsford at the First Unitarian Society with twenty-seven voting members, and Fred v. Hawley at Unity Church on the Near North Side with approximately the same number of voting members. It was a dreary and a gloomy outlook that I confronted. The headquarters at 105 South Dearborn Street had dilapidated furniture and was lighted by gas.

My first move was to ask the Alliance Branches in the Western Unitarian Conference to make special contributions for the purpose of rehabilitating the headquarters of the Conference. These gallant women, bless their hearts, responded quickly and generously, and the office was thoroughly modernized and equipped with efficient machinery.

Before proceeding further with details of my activities in the Greater Chicago Area, I want to make it perfectly plain that I do not claim credit for all the developments that have occurred in Unitarianism in the Greater Chicago Area from 1919 to 1960. What I do claim, however, is to have had an influential part in creating the prior conditions and the atmosphere which have made possible these developments. Surely I will not be accused of immodesty for such a claim, the record being what it is.

There was, as I have already said, five ministers presiding over seven Unitarian churches in the Greater Chicago Area in 1919. There are now twelve Unitarian ministers presiding over Unitarian churches and two fellowships in the Greater Chicago Area.

After the rehabilitation of the Conference headquarters, my next task in the Greater Chicago Area was the reestablishment of the Third Unitarian Church, which had closed and sold its property. I got together the names of all the Unitarians that I could, who lived on the West Side, wrote letters to them, and invited them to a meeting at the home of Congressman Mason on West Washington Street. After holding several meetings in the Mason home, one Sunday we assembled as West Side Unitarians and passed a vote, asking the Third Unitarian Church to consolidate with us. We then adjourned as West Side Unitarians and reassembled as Third Church Unitarians, and voted to accept our own invitation as West Side Unitarians to consolidate. Thus, the Third Church was rescued, together with the funds from the sale of its building; and arrangements were made to move further west into the Austin area, where Rev. A. Wakefield Slaten became minister.¹ The Third Church is now one of the most active and one of the most stable churches in the Greater Chicago Area.

I am not sure of the chronology from this point on but certainly one of the next projects was the rehabilitation of the Hinsdale Church, which had not had a minister for some five or six years—that is, not since its last minister, who had gone to another church, was arrested one Sunday evening following his second service of the day, charged with having three wives at the same time, and was later sentenced to three years in Leavenworth—a year for each wife. For the job of rebuilding Hinsdale, I chose a woman minister from Iowa, namely Rev. Cora Van Velsor

¹ Slaten was followed by the Rev. Dr. David Rhys Williams. Williams was followed by Rev. Walton Cole. Cole was followed by Rev. Edwin Wilson, under whose pastorate a beautiful little church was erected. Wilson was succeeded by the present minister, Edwin T. Buehrer, who has recently dedicated an enlarged building.

Lambert. Mrs. Lambert was the last in a long line of highly successful women ministers in the State of Iowa. From the beginning of her pastorate the church began to pick up and has continued to prosper, until today under Rev. Sunder Joshi it is active, growing, and vigorous.

I placed Rev. Hugh Robert Orr in Evanston, under whose pastorate the parish house was erected, and under whom the church grew and flourished. The Evanston Church continued under Raymond B. Bragg, Lester Mondale, John Nicholls Booth, and reached the high point in its career as a church and as a community force under the able leadership of Dr. Homer Jack, who has recently been succeeded by an unusually able minister, Rev. Ross Allen Weston.

One of the most delicate situations that I had to deal with was in connection with the retirement of Dr. William Hanson Pulsford from the First Church. Dr. Pulsford was much beloved and a good friend of mine. The Honorable Morton D. Hull, who was always generous, tolerant, and broad-minded, brought into my office \$20,000 in bonds and we arranged for the Unitarian Service Pension society to pay the income from these bonds, which was \$1,000 a year, to a retired minister of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago. This income of \$1,000 a year was considerably in excess at that time of the regular pension that the Society was paying retired ministers.

Dr. Pulsford then resigned, and I negotiated the establishment of Von Ogden Vogt at the First Church. I had read Dr. Vogt's book, *Art and Religion*, had put him on the program in a meeting of the National Federation of Religious Liberals in New York city, and had been greatly impressed with his general abilities and his desire to build a new church. After introducing him to the leaders of the voting members of the First Unitarian Society, I then introduced him to Mr. Hull. Mr. Hull agreed, in a telephone conversation between himself and me, when he was in Washington, D.C., where he was serving as Congressman, that if Dr. Vogt accepted the church

and within two years demonstrated, not the necessity, but the desirability of a new church building, he would erect it. Dr. Vogt accepted the call, was installed in the church, and in the third, or at most the fourth, year of his pastorate, the new building was in process of erection at a cost of more than \$500,000—thus becoming the cathedral church of the Western Area.

Under Leslie T. Pennington, who succeeded Dr. Vogt, the church membership and budget have both grown markedly, and the church has become a real social force in the Hyde Park community.

There were various efforts to revive Unity Church. After Rev. Fred V. Hawley died, Rev. G. W. Allison was minister from 1928 until 1930, when Rev. John R. Heyworth was installed. He has been minister of Unity Church since then.

Geneva had not had a minister since the time when the mind of man runneth not to the contrary until Dr. Charles H. Lyttle moved to Chicago in the late twenties. With his eye for history, realizing that Geneva was the oldest Unitarian church building west of the Hudson, Dr. Lyttle took a special interest in it, became its minister, revamped the building, and now continues as minister with his characteristic devotion.

Hobart, Indiana, which had not had a settled minister since the late teens now has a full-time minister and is flourishing under the leadership of Rev. Orson Moore.

The Peoples Liberal Church became affiliated with the Conference largely under the guidance of Dr. Charles H. Lyttle. This church gave birth to the Beverly Unitarian Fellowship which was housed in “the Castle” in Beverly. Later the parent church merged with its child in what is now the Beverly Unitarian Church, which still meets in the Castle, under the able leadership of Vincent Silliman. I take special pride in the development of this particular church

because it was I who negotiated with the American Unitarian Association the purchase of the Castle, over strong opposition of Percy W. Gardner, Treasurer of the Association, and Dr. Palfrey Perkins of King's Chapel, both powerfully influential men.

North shore, with Rev. Russell Bletzer as its minister, and Park Forest, with Rev. Robert Hoagland as its minister, were more recently organized under the secretaryship of Rev. Randall S. Hilton.

I have left the Peoples Church to be mentioned last, though it was not chronologically last, because it requires special treatment.

When I first came to Chicago I heard of a large Peoples Church, under the leadership of Dr. Preston Bradley, meeting in a theatre on the North Side. I made contacts with Dr. Bradley, attended his services, and negotiated his entrance into the Unitarian ministry. In those days, under the rules of the Fellowship Committee, a minister who was not pastor of a Unitarian-affiliated church lost his ministerial status after a period of three years. Before the three years were up, the Board of Trustees of the Peoples Church voted to affiliate with the Western Unitarian Conference, the American Unitarian Association, and the National Federation of Religious Liberals. Thus, the People's Church became a regularly affiliated Unitarian church. It then proceeded to erect its present adequate building, with financial assistance to the tune of \$25,000 from the American Unitarian Association, and which has been fully and completely repaid.

Dr. Louis C. Cornish, President of the American Unitarian Association, held me personally responsible for the loan to the Peoples Church, and frequently sent me telegrams urging that I proceed to make collection. Finally, Dr. Cornish came to Chicago to attend an

annual dinner of the church, with strong determination to contact Dr. Bradley personally and discuss the beginning of payments on the loan. The annual dinner was a very large affair at a loop hotel. At the speakers' table sat the Mayor of Chicago and many other dignitaries. When it came time to introduce Dr. Cornish, the chairman said that Dr. Bradley had asked for the honor of introducing the next speaker. Dr. Bradley arose and said, "Yes, I want to introduce Dr. Louis C. Cornish, the President of the American Unitarian Association, an organization that loaned us \$25,000 without interest, and we have not yet paid one cent on the principal." This took the wind out of Dr. Cornish's sails; and, besides, he was so impressed with the occasion and the personalities at the speakers' table that he left Chicago and returned to Boston without even mentioning the loan to Dr. Bradley. What was more, he let up on me in this connection.

For the Conference as a whole I had a great vision, that of making it a rallying ground for liberals of various sorts in the Central West. To this end I negotiated with the Christian Union Church in Rockford, Illinois, the People's Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Clifton Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and St. John's Church in Cincinnati, and brought all of them into membership in the Conference.

One of the problems that immediately confronted me was the financial condition of the Conference. In 1919 the Conference had a total endowment of \$39,000. When I left the secretaryship in 1930, the endowment was slightly more than \$140,000. The Conference secretaryship paid \$3,000 in 1919. In 1930 the salary was \$6,000 which, in terms of today's dollar, would be the equivalent of some \$12,000 to \$15,000.

Before my election to the secretaryship of the Conference I had been named chairman of a By-Laws Revision Committee. At the meeting of the Conference in Minneapolis in 1920, I made a minority report which was accepted by the Conference. The minority report changed the

statement of purpose to read: “The object of the Conference shall be to foster religion and to make it effective in the life of the world.” This statement of purpose has survived several By-Laws revisions and is still the official purpose of the Conference.

During the summer of 1920 there was held, at Harvard University, the Cambridge Summer School for Ministers, which was financed by the Unitarian Layman’s League. I was asked to deliver one of the evening addresses on the subject, “The Content of Present-Day Religious Liberalism.” In this address I proceeded to state what, on the basis of my experience in the Central West, was a more or less commonplace understanding of the Unitarian point of view. Imagine, therefore, my surprise when the discussion period following my address a great furor occurred. Dr. William G. Eliot, minister at Portland, Oregon, arose and with trembling voice said, “I would rather suffer my right arm to be severed from my body before I would take God from my people.” Innumerable ministers spoke in similar vein, but finally Dr. Samuel McCord Crothers of the Cambridge, Massachusetts church, and Dr. John H. Lathrop of the Brooklyn church both came to my defense—not that either of them was in perfect agreement with what I had said, but they defended by theological liberty and my right to state my position without succumbing to pressure from any direction.

There followed in the *Christian Register* during the next twelve months a furious discussion of the issues that I had raised, and the so-called “Humanist Controversy” was in full swing. While I did not attempt to answer in detail all of the letters that appeared in the *Christian Register*, I did state in the magazine that I regarded theism as philosophically possible but not religiously necessary. This brought George R. Dodson and William L. Sullivan into the fray. There were, of course, many persons who came to my defense in the *Register*, chief among them Dr. Albert C. Dieffenbach, the editor; and I shall always be grateful to Dr. Howard N. Brown,

the minister of King's Chapel and chairman of the Board of Directors which published the *Register*, who took the position that "we must not interfere with the liberty of the brethren."

The earlier Western issue was fought over the freedom of the pew. Now some forty years later, I was carrying the battle from the pew to the pulpit. And people who were never too much concerned over what the pew believed or did not believe were horror-stricken over the prospect of ministers who did not put any limits to the freedom of the pulpit.

The early Western Conference Unity men did not especially question the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor did they at all question the theistic basis of religion. But in my Harvard Summer School Address I not only gave no weight to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but asserted flatly that the very thought of God could pass away without damage to the modern liberal position. This was simply too much for the more tender-minded Unitarian clergy to take. They were frightened and they reacted accordingly. I was a heretic with no proper place in the Unitarian ministry. One gentle soul put his right hand on my left shoulder and said in bated breath, "I am sorry for you."

The Humanist-theist Controversy has continued with varying degrees of heat from 1920 until today, but it would not be, I think, too much to say that the issue has been resolved to a situation where the prevailing point of view in the denomination is today substantially the position of the Humanists of the twenties and early thirties.

What was the nature of the Cambridge Sumer School address that it launched a forty-year controversy—a Unitarian Civil War? This Humanist-Theist controversy has been with us ever since, often accompanied by the most savage emotional outbursts. Here is what I said, *verbatim*, and it should be remembered that these remarks were addressed to professional, trained ministers.

Historically the basic content of religious liberalism is spiritual freedom. Out of this basic content has come the conviction of the supremacy of reason, of the primary worth of character, and of the immediate access of man to spiritual sources. Always religious liberalism has tended to replace alleged divine revelations and commands with human opinions and judgments; to develop the individual attitude in religion; and to identify righteousness with life. The method of religious liberalism has always been that of reflection, not that of authority. Liberalism has insisted on the essentially *natural* character of religion.

Believing that religion is best promoted in the presence of live issues, and that every age must achieve its own faith, liberalism has been willing to hazard its affirmations in an open field where the contestants strive for only the greatest service possible. And this experience has led liberalism not only to free religion from extraneous accretions, but also to think of religion primarily as conscious committal and loyalty to *human* causes and goals. Formerly liberalism emphasized chiefly emancipation and freedom; now it emphasizes also committal and loyalty.

Liberalism has had to face, even more than have other forms of religion, the age-old philosophical question “why?” That is, to what purpose, to what end, do we live? In answer to this question humanistic liberalism proclaims as the end and aim of religion, and of life, free and positive personality, loyalty and intellectually associated, and cosmically related

If liberalism can be reduced to a single statement, I think this is it: Conscious committal and loyalty to worthwhile causes and goals in order that free and positive personality may be developed, intelligently associated, and cosmically related.

Let us see where this leads.

I

The liberal is not satisfied with a religious experience acquired through confession, repentance, and divine communion, and terminating in a heaven of subject existence. He is not willing to accept the promise of a distant estate of doubtful character and location in lieu of concrete worths and measurable values here and now. He believes that whatever the future may hold for him it must be the outcome of his own spiritual achievements. Hence he demands that his personality be free and self-directive.

He liberal is not satisfied with purely material ends. In his swing away from mystic union with entities of doubtful existence he does not plunge into the abyss of gross material satisfactions. He may go from one of these extremes to the other but, if so, it is only for a while. In the long run he hangs tenaciously to the conviction that fundamentally his nature is spiritual—that a spiritual self-adjusts and guides and controls.

The liberal is not satisfied with freedom alone. Emancipated from superstition and prejudice, he may lead a carefree and easy existence for a while, but soon the essentially positive nature of personality becomes assertive, and the liberal knows that positive committals and loyalty are essential to the full expression of himself.

The center of spiritual gravity has shifted from objective and supernatural forms to individual man. This is not the denial of the existence of significant and objective worths, but only the removal of the seat of authority from an indefinite something somewhere, to a definite self-known to be native to human existence. This is not a hasty conclusion reached by the liberal. It is the plainly observable trend of history. The lesson

of the long experience of the race is that of the primary importance of human initiative and self-direction.

The outstanding characteristic of modern liberalism, and indeed of all modern thinking, is the evaluation of personality as the thing of supreme worth. Hence liberalism now affirms in terms unmistakable that institutions are only the tentative and temporary expressions of personality, that they are frequently outgrown and must, like the hull of the chrysalis, be burst asunder and left only to mark an epoch past. Institutions—religious, capitalistic, socialistic, or what not—must now stand or fall as they are able or unable to serve effectively and efficiently in the building of free and positive human souls.

II

Present-day liberals see the essentially interdependent nature of human beings; that the fulfillment of the individual self requires orderly, purposeful association with other selves. This thought finds expression in various terms: brotherhood, solidarity, mutuality, reciprocity, fraternity, community. For a long time, prophets, poets, and statesmen have proclaimed the ambition of the race to be linked together for mutual service; and now biology and social science agree that there is and can be no complete self-realization aside from cooperation with other selves.

Ideally this is the heart of Christianity. The organic unity of the race is found in the teachings of Christianity. Jesus, at his best, thought and spoke in world terms. Human solidarity is the heart of the labor movement. This finds expression in the motto: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” The red flag is meant to be symbolic of the blood of the

race. The latest and best type of statesmanship thinks in world terms. We are now becoming accustomed to world issues, programs, and achievements.

Humanistic liberalism constantly aims to promote the widest possible human comradeship and the closest possible human fellowship. And this aim is underwritten by the knowledge that cooperation and not competition is the dominant factor in the growth of the race.

In the most intimate of human relationships, the home, we know no complete satisfaction apart from the good of those whom we love. Notions of the exact character of this relationship, laws defining its social responsibilities may and do and should change with changing time; but always the race finds deep and abiding satisfaction in the solidarity of what we call the home. We now know that the positive sentiments and other hard facts of the solidarity of the home belong essentially to other social relationships. In industry we are trying as never before, and with a measure of success, to reorganize on the basis of community of interests. So with other relationships. The old notion that the individual experiencing good can be an isolated individual has gone forever.

The legacy from the best prophets of the past is a conception of a united world. The coming order is a world order. Any religion that hesitates to proclaim this gospel is neither an heir of the prophets of the past nor the parent of the achievements of the future.

The cohesive principle in the achievement of this human world order is radical good will. This leads to the new competition, completion in the rendering of the greatest service. The pride of the old professions—law, medicine, ministry—is in the rendering of

the greatest service. The spirit of the old professions must be fused into the social order from bottom to top, from the corner grocery to the League of Nations.

Liberals think of democracy not only as freedom and equality of opportunity but also as mutual assistance in the use of freedom and opportunity. To take one class off the shoulders of another class is not enough. All people must work shoulder to shoulder.

Radical good will alone does not satisfy humanistic liberalism. Now comes the demand on good will to develop a technique for making itself effective in the world of hard facts. Social science is still in its infancy. There is room for and need of creative statesmanship in the reorganization of human relationships. How to secure food, shelter, and clothes without losing one's soul is a pressing problem. At last humanity has rebelled against a state of affairs that requires the forfeiture of the soul in order to acquire a rag, a shack, and a loaf of bread. In the solution of the problems involved in the rescue of the soul from the clutch of mammon are causes worthy of committal and loyalty. Liberalism declares that the church needs to understand the economic expression of brotherhood, and that everybody needs to understand the spiritual significance of economic cooperation. The next step in world progress is the proper coordination of economic forces with intellectual, moral, and spiritual forces.

III

In the past the basic content of most religions has been that of the submission of persons to supernatural agencies, and the consequent appropriation of worths. In these systems of religion man was worthwhile because he participated in or was possessed by supernatural agencies. In virtue of this relation man received a supply of finished goods.

In these systems men got their rights, powers, and goods by servile tenure. There was submission from below and control from above. This monarchic view of religion rose to its noblest height in the expression, "Thy will be done."

The realm of the divine is now subject to investigation. Here, as elsewhere, the scientific method is being applied. Here regulated observation and experiment may result in new theological discoveries, and so liberalism must remain undogmatic in regard to God. The theology of Augustine and that of Channing, the theology of Billy Sunday and that of H. G. Wells might all be found utterly inadequate without consequent injury to the religion of the liberal. *Liberalism is building a religion that would not be shaken even if the very thought of God were outgrown.*

Nevertheless, the liberal recognizes and zealously proclaims the fact that purposive and powerful cosmic processes are operative, and that increasingly man is able to cooperate with them and in a measure control them. What these processes be styled is of but little importance. Some call them cosmic processes, others call them God. In life there is wisdom beyond our present comprehension. This is seen in the amoeba as it adjusts its structure for the attainment of the ends desired; in the living protoplasmic cells on the ends of the rootlets of bean and wheat, both apparently identical, the one refusing flint, the other receiving it; in the cooperative colony of the sponge and the daisy, the bee and the wolf; and in the marvelous neural arrangement of man.

To the ancients the contemplation of cosmic events led to the theory of direct supernatural operation or to that of the use of natural forces by supernatural agencies. But to an increasing number of serious thinkers and to an innumerable host of liberals everywhere the contemplation of cosmic events has given way to regulated observation

of, and experiment with, cosmic purposes; and this has led to conscious cooperation with, and partial control of, cosmic processes. With this must go much of the nomenclature and many of the forms of worship of the religions of the world.

Humanistic liberalism understands spirituality to be man at his best, sane in mind, healthy in body, dynamic in personality; honesty facing the hardest facts, conquering and not fleeing from his gravest troubles; committed to the most worthwhile causes, loyal to the best ideals; ever hoping, striving, and achieving. To know one's self as inherently worthwhile, actually to find fullest expression in the widest human service and consciously to become a co-worker with [page 57 top end of sentence]

I shall have more to say on the Humanistic-theist controversy in the chapter on "Controversial Issues in Unitarianism."

While I was Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, the British and Foreign Unitarian association celebrated its centennial in London in 1925. Dr. Charles W. Wendte, in appreciation of my work for the National Federation of religious Liberals, felt that I should go to London to represent the Western Unitarian Conference. He wrote a letter to Mr. E. L. Richardson, the treasurer of the Western Unitarian Conference, enclosing a contribution, and suggesting that Mr. Richardson contact some of the leading laymen in the Midwest to raise a purse to defray my expenses to London and return. This Mr. Richardson did, and a purse was raised sufficient to cover my entire expenses to London, in London, and return. I spoke in London at the President's Dinner, which was the equivalent of our annual Festival Dinner in Boston. The burden of my remarks at the dinner was to the effect that whole liberty alone is not a

sufficient end in itself, we must *never* forget that liberty is a condition and a means of reaching all worth-while ends. I was greatly delighted at the response the audience gave to this remark, for all through the week of celebration I had heard British Unitarian ministers decry, and to a certain extent deride, the concept of liberty in the Unitarian movement.

It was also while I was Secretary of the Western Unitarian conference that word reached me that Lombard College in Galesburg, Illinois, was undergoing a financial crisis. The treasurer of the College had made unwise investments and virtually depleted the endowment of the College. The President, Dr. Joseph Mayo Tilden, had died and the College faced the prospect of closing its doors forever. Lombard had been one of the first three colleges in the United States to open its registration to women on precisely the same terms as men. The first such college was Oberlin, the second was Antioch, and the third was Lombard—back in the pre-Civil War days. Also, Lombard had been the first college to confer an honorary doctorate of divinity on a woman minister. So it seemed to me a great pity to see this college close. I contacted the President of the American Unitarian Association, Dr. Louis C. Cornish, and presented this problem to him. He was immediately sympathetic and in fact his imagination was greatly stirred. I shall tell the remainder of this story in the chapter dealing with the Meadville Theological School. Suffice it for the time being to state that the Association put up sufficient funds to keep the College from Closing, and I was elected President of the College while still retaining my secretaryship of the Conference.

When I resigned my secretaryship in the fall of 1929, to become effective March 1, 1930, there was the thought on the part of some of the more conservative brethren that this was a good opportunity to free the Conference from the grip of Humanism. Rev. Robert G. Loring one of the able and well-balanced traditional Unitarians, then minister in Milwaukee, told me that I had the

confidence and the support of the Conference but not to think that I could transfer this to my successor. There were able men considered for the secretaryship, but when the balloting was over, my choice of Rev. Raymond B. Bragg was vindicated and he was elected by an overwhelming majority of the Board. Thus it appeared that I had successfully transferred my influence in the selection of my successor, and that the wide-open spiritual leadership of the Conference would be continued, as indeed it was.

Soon after my resignation as Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, I was elected President of the Conference, a position which I held for fourteen years. During this period there were two interesting episodes that I should like to relate.

Due to some financial reverses, the Conference was hard-pressed to meet its budget during the secretaryship of Dr. Lon ray Call, and the easiest solution—which was proposed by Mr. D. I. Jarrett, treasurer of the Conference, and supported by a considerable number of ministers—was to reduce the salary of the Secretary. I stood adamant against this solution of the problem and won out. Then Dr. Charles E. Snyder, minister of the Unitarian Church of Davenport, Iowa, and I devised a plan to get Dr. Call appointed as a Minister-at-Large by the American Unitarian Association. We proposed this to the Church Extension Committee which approved the idea and recommended it to the Board of Directors, and the plan was adopted. This proved to be one of the most important developments in modern Unitarianism, for Lon Call was not only markedly successful in reviving churches that were all but dead and in starting new churches, but he also conceived the idea—and sold I to the Church Extension Committee and the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association—to launch the Unitarian Fellowship movement, which has done more to enliven the organization life of Unitarianism than any other

development in Unitarian history. I am firmly of the opinion that a monument should be erected to Dr. Call bearing the inscription: “The Father of the Unitarian Fellowship Movement.”

A second episode had to do with a controversy within the Western Unitarian conference during the secretaryship of Dr. Randall S. Hilton. A motion was made at an annual meeting of the Conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska, that a Survey Commission be created to study the Western Unitarian Conference and make recommendations to the next annual meeting. The motion included a provision that I, as President of the Conference, together with Dr. Leslie Pennington and Rev. Lester Mondale constitute a committee to name the members of the Commission. I did not at first take the movement very seriously and came very near being caught fast asleep. The Commission was created, with Mr. J. Bryan Allin, a layman of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago, as chairman. When the report was completed and I secured a copy of it, I discovered innumerable inaccuracies, and that some of the recommendations were not possible under the Illinois laws governing non-profit corporations. I could have saved the Commission from much embarrassment had they conferred with me prior to completing their report. Among their many recommendations was one to the effect that the Western Unitarian conference be decentralized to the point of having no central office or chief executive officer.

I wrote an editorial in *Unity* in which I blasted the report into smithereens and accused the Commission of proposing to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Conference by having it commit suicide. It became evident before the annual meeting, at which the report was to be made, that the recommendation faced sure and devastating defeat. Whereupon, a considerable number of the backers of the Survey Commission shifted their attack—not to me but to the Secretary of the Conference. When the Conference assembled in Evanston there was an unusually large number of delegates and proxies present. In presiding over the all-day session

which considered the report of the Survey Commission, I came as near having a really mystical experience as I ever did in my whole life. I called on the chairman of the Commission to report their recommendations one by one, and as fast as they could be made they were voted down by an overwhelming majority. By the late afternoon when the meeting adjourned, I felt as if I were walking on air. Actually, the hidden motive of not all but a number of those who proposed and supported the Survey Commission was, as one prominent minister asserted, to change the ideology of the Conference. They did not dare make a frontal attack on the President of the Conference, but tried by political maneuvering to upset the prevailing theological position of the Conference which I had represented for a quarter of a century. The following year I was asked to preach the 100th Anniversary Sermon at the annual meeting held in Cincinnati, where the Conference had been organized in 1852. So ended in decisive defeat the effort to virtually liquidate the Conference.

CHAPTER FOUR

MY SERVICE ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

My first trip to Boston was in 1918 to deliver an address at the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association, held in Tremont Temple. I spoke on “The Development of Unitarian Missionary Zeal.” To recall the depths of my concern forty-three years ago for the growth of Unitarianism, I want to insert highlights of this address in my story:

Zeal according to knowledge and with a definite purpose; zeal broad and tolerant and venturesome and daring—this I take to be the ideal Unitarian kind. The *development* of this zeal is my task.

The zealots of the new order are sympathetic and inspirational, poised and confident; and to the proclamation of such persons the world has responded and will ever respond.

I assume that the desirability of Unitarian missionary zeal is not debatable, since without its emotional content no message is complete or capable of creating an intelligent response; that the adaptability of the Unitarian faith to the spiritual needs of an ever-increasing number of people is beyond question; that the conversion of the people generally from an enslaving, narrowing, devitalizing type of thinking and living to an emancipating, broadening, vitalizing way is possible, and that such conversion is so

supremely necessary in the reordering of the life of the world that a great church with a great heritage is committed wholeheartedly to the task of bringing this about. I proceed on the basis of these assumptions.

Belief in the spiritual status quo is not conducive to missionary zeal. Faith in Divine Providence is not enough. Hope, that belief-inspiring passion, is not sufficient. There must be conviction that fires the soul and stirs the motor impulses.

There must be conviction that the spiritual goods that satisfy the abiding desires and fulfill the cherished visions of mankind are attainable.

All great prophets have believed implicitly in the attainability of spiritual goods and in the infinite capacity of the human soul.

I press this point: If we *half-heartedly* preach the gospel of unity and divinity, we may continue drawing our salaries but we will never draw people. Conviction is the mother of zeal.

Lack of missionary zeal is evidence of spiritual bankruptcy. No man spiritually rich in his own right was ever satisfied to enjoy his riches alone.

The chief responsibility of nourishing missionary zeal rests with the men in the pulpits. If we whose call it is to teach the gospel of life are not ourselves living, if our outlook on life is pessimistic, if in our proclamation the confident ring is absent, our people will not be enthusiastic over making it possible for other men of the same phonographic type to inflict the same kind of mechanically etched gospel onto the innocent inhabitants of nearby towns—and I do not blame them.

To disregard organization and methods is to fall a victim to the fallacious theory that matter is the enemy of spirit and the body hampers soul.

The universe may be full of electricity, but that power does not move a wheel until it is organized. The church may be charged and surcharged with righteous zeal, but that zeal is effusive and ineffective and ineffective until organized. And zeal that cannot be organized is not zeal according to knowledge!

Organization may be both efficient and democratic; it must be democratic, i.e., from below upward, not from above downward. The members of the local churches must feel that they are an essential and important part of the whole denominational life. The whole structure of church organization must rest on the consent, approval, and support of the membership generally. There is no natural conflict between local, state, district, and national Unitarian bodies. Their interests are mutual. They are interdependent. They go up or down together. The East is not East, and the West is not West—the twain have long since merged, except in the minds of the few who live in the long ago.

The final and efficient cause of Unitarian missionary zeal, nothing short of the right ordering of relations—human and cosmic. Not merely increasing the number of the churches, not that; but so doing with a clearcut purpose of rightly ordering life—back of which purpose is the consciousness of certain creative responsibility resting upon us in the life process—that is our goal.

However well our church may have served the past, its future must be justified and indeed made possible by functional readjustment to the spiritual and social needs of a new world. Our must became the outstanding institution laboring in behalf of the new

world order, wherein justice and righteousness and love shall rule in the affairs of men. Every problem that concerns humanity or God—from housing conditions to reverential prayer, from the latest novel to the oldest Bible—concerns a growing church. We as a church dare not enter into Paradise until every atom of the social order shall have entered in before us.

Unitarians of America! Thus far you have labored nobly and well; and I glory in your past! But now, as one of you, I challenge you to go on to greater heights of service!

I was happy to get a strong impression that the delegates supported this ideal for the future of the movement.

Upon coming to Chicago as Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference in September of 1919, I was immediately elected to the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association. The President of the Association at that time was Dr. Samuel A. Eliot. Dr. Eliot was an astute administrator, and, while he was often condemned by his opponents as being autocratic, I must say in all truth that in comparison with his illustrious relative who later became President, he seemed to me a model of the democratic administrator. I had innumerable run-ins with Dr. Eliot, but he was always generous in his attitudes toward those who differed from him and was not one to hold grudges.

One of my first proposals as a Board member was that we establish a Council of Unitarian Agencies. I explained my proposal to Dr. Eliot, and at the Board meeting on the following day, he presented a plan for consideration; but it did not correspond in all respects to my ideas about such a Council. I proceeded from the floor of the Board meeting to move

amendments and deletions from the Eliot plan, and all of my proposals were accepted by the Board, whereupon Dr. Eliot, said quietly, "I have no particular pride in authorship and am willing to go along with the changes." This Council of Unitarian Agencies resulted finally in 1925 in the adoption of a plan which eventually made the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association a Central Council of Unitarian Agencies, and also in the consolidation of the General Conference and the American Unitarian Association.

The ever-vigorous "Christian" controversy came up again when I was a member of the By-Laws Revision committee which made its report at the May Meetings in 1925. My particular contribution to the work of the Revision Commission was threefold. First, the by-law on Purpose. For one hundred years this had read: "The purpose of the American Unitarian Association is to promote pure Christianity" I explained to the Commission that the original plan of the founders of the Association had been to state that the purpose was "to promote pure religion," but that in deference to opponents in other churches who had charged that Unitarians were not Christians, it was decided to state the purpose in terms of promoting pure Christianity. In this 1925 revision I proposed that we adopt as the purpose the promotion of pure religion, and upon the suggestion of Dr. John H. Lathrop that he would go along with that change provided we would add "which, in accordance with the teaching of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man," I accepted this amendment, and the revised statement of purpose was adopted by the Commission and later by the Association.

My second contribution had to do with the making of the Board in effect a Central Council of Unitarian Agencies by providing that representatives of the General Alliance, the Laymen's League, and the Unitarian Youth Organization should be elected to the Board on nomination from their various agencies.

My third contribution was provision for administrative vice-presidents who would as regional directors be automatically members of the Board of the Association. This was on the theory long held by me that responsibility should be accompanied by power.

I still think that these three changes in the By-Laws were a major step in the modernization and democratization of the Association.

I also served on the By-Laws Revision Commission, the report of which was adopted in 1950. Here again the statement of purpose was at issue. Apparently Unitarians are constituted so that they must discuss this matter at rather regular intervals—and I see no harm in this if it clarifies our thought. I secured a change from “which, in accordance with the teaching of Jesus, is summed up in love to god and love to man” to “which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man.” This I regarded as a significant change, because the 1925 statement could be interpreted as committing Unitarians to the interpretation of “pure religion” as love to God and love to man, while the 1950 version left each Unitarian free to interpret “pure religion” in his own way, since the 1950 statement merely acknowledged the historical fact that Jesus interpreted “pure religion” as love to God and love to man. This was a meaningful if subtle change.

I served on the Board continuously from 1919 to 1930 when I resigned to make way for my successor as Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, Rev. Raymond B. Bragg. In 1936 I was reelected to the Board where I served continuously for the next fourteen years as a Board member and as a Vice-President. During these twenty-five years of service on the Board of the American Unitarian Association I was for many years’ chairman of the Committee on Church Extension and also chairman of the committee on the Division of Churches. As chairman of these two Committees, it became my duty to be floor leader in behalf of innumerable

appropriations both in the aid of churches and in the purchase or erection of new church buildings.

When Dr. Eliot voluntarily retired from the presidency of the Association it became the duty of the Board of Directors to elect his successor. There were three able men under consideration. First, there was Dr. Minot Simons who had served as Dr. Eliot's first assistant and who at that time was minister of All Souls Church in New York. Dr. Simons was an able man and had had a long and extraordinarily successful pastorate in Cleveland, Ohio. The second was Dr. Frederick R. Griffin, the long-time minister of the Philadelphia Unitarian church and one of the most prominent and most beloved ministers in the denomination. The third was Dr. Louis C. Cornish who had served for a long time as Secretary of the American Unitarian Association, who was wise in counselling, and who many times had kept the ship from rocking through many storming seas. My choice was Dr. Cornish, and I had a sufficient block of votes to make it impossible for anyone that I opposed to be elected. A coalition of Dr. Cornish's supporters and the men who were following my leadership resulted in the election of Dr. Cornish by a substantial majority. Dr. Eliot walked into Dr. Cornish's office immediately following the meeting and said, "Louis, you owe your election to Reese."

Dr. Cornish was not one of the best administrators in the world, but he had a loyalty to the ministers which is unsurpassed in the history in the Association. He also had a saving sense of humor. Once when I was showing him through the chapel of the First Church in Chicago, I remarked casually that the lectern was on the right side of the altar facing the audience, and the pulpit on the left—whereas the usual position was the reverse of this, and I supposed this arrangement had been made so that the lectern would be near the organ and the choir. After Dr. Cornish returned to Boston within a few days I received through the mail a huge volume with

gold lettering on the front of the cover reading, "From the Pulpit to the Altar, by Curtis W. Reese." I had recently had a slight illness, and at first I suspected that in my feverish state I had written a volume without knowing what I was doing. I so wrote Dr. Cornish and added that it was to me a great relief to open the book and find the pages completely blank, thus corresponding exactly with my state of mind on the subject matter indicated by the title.

In 1928 and 1929 the Brahma Samaj in India was celebrating its 100th Anniversary, and the American Unitarian Association had been invited to send fraternal delegates to take part in the celebration. Dr. Cornish proposed to the Board of the Association that Dr. Franklin C. Southworth, Dr. John Lathrop, and I be named as official delegates, with a suitable appropriation adequate to cover all expenses. Strangely enough, my good friend, Dr. Lathrop, opposed my being named as one of the delegates, and while I was not present at the Board meeting, Dr. Lathrop's brief speech was reported to me rather fully. Among other things, he was quoted as saying, "I have great respect for Dr. Reese's abilities. I can well understand how he can serve as Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, as President of Lombard College, as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Federation of Religious Liberals, and as Dean of Abraham Lincoln Center. I think he can do all of these jobs and do them well, but I do not see how he can do so from India."

Nevertheless, I was elected and the Lathrops and I, together with Mrs. Sydney B. Snow and her daughter Alice, as well as some six or eight additional Americans, set sail from San Francisco bound for India in the fall of 1928. From San Francisco to Honolulu I was seasick. If there had been any way to return to the States without crossing the same body of water again, I would have abandoned the trip to India and around the world.

Upon leaving Honolulu I was told that if I wanted to get off the ship at various points around the world I would have to show that I had been vaccinated against smallpox and had had injections to prevent cholera. Although I was then forty-one years of age I had never been vaccinated. I went to the ship's doctor; he made a long scratch on my arm, applied the vaccine, pulled down my shirt and that was that—but within a few days I had a terrific reaction, and when we landed in Yokohama I was running a temperature of 103 ½ degrees and went directly to the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo where I spent a most uncomfortable night. The next day I was hustled off to St. Luke's International Hospital where I was confined for two weeks and to which I had to return daily for two additional weeks. Meantime, Dr. Lathrop was confined in the same hospital with paratyphoid.

Before reaching Yokohama I had received a radio invitation to speak to a liberal group in Tokyo representing the remnants of the Clay MacCauley Unitarian Mission to Japan. Due to my illness, the meeting had to be postponed; but later my doctor agreed that in company with a nurse I might leave the hospital long enough to meet with this group of liberals. There were some thirty men present, all of them either members of the House of Parliament, doctors, lawyers, or professors. All of them understood and spoke English. I spoke for forty minutes on the subject of Humanism, following which there was a question period of one-half hour. Just before adjournment, one of the members of Parliament arose and said, "I would like to remind the members present that they have just heard the first Humanist missionary to Japan."

We spent two days in Shanghai, where we witnessed on the streets the most atrocious behavior by British soldiers on leave. Two days were spent in Manila, where we met and conferred with Bishop Aglipay of the Independent Church of the Philippines about cooperation

of the Independent Church and the American Unitarian Association. Two days were spent in the beautiful city of Hong Kong, and some ten days in Singapore.

We arrived in Calcutta on January 22, 1929, and went directly to the Great Eastern Hotel where I learned that at four o'clock that afternoon at City college there was a special convocation of the Meadville Theological School for the purpose of conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on Rev. Hemchandra Sarkar, the veteran leader of the Brahmo Samaj. Dr. Franklin C. Southworth presided, Dr. Drummond of London told of Dr. Sarkar's early life at Manchester College, and I delivered an address on the subject, "Current Trends in Theological Education." I tried to show that there was a marked change to more human and less abstract content. I treated the subject under a threefold heading. I said, in part, (1) especially is this true in the field of the history of religion. Where the old theological education interested itself in the history of a single ethnic religion with dates, epochs, and charts, the new theological education was interested in the history of religion itself as a help to mankind endeavoring to wring a satisfying life from an environing situation sometimes none too friendly. So the history of religion becomes a living thing instead of a dry academic matter. (2) The old abstract theology with its proofs of the existence of God and the analysis of His character was likewise giving way to a type of philosophy that dealt not with super-abstractions but with concrete human values, building the designs of tomorrow with the materials of today's experience, and then changing them tomorrow in the light of tomorrow's experience. (3) The old study of how ecclesiastical machinery has worked was being replaced by a more useful knowledge of the social sciences—psychology, sociology, and economics. This change from an abstract and otherworldly theological content to one that is concrete and worldly, I affirmed, is the hope of religion. It will stir the soul, it will vivify the church, it will commit religion to a program for a full and rich life for every man,

woman, and child. I still think that almost on the spur of the moment I stated desirable trends in theological education, although I must admit that a considerable number of theological schools are still far removed from the position that I took in this address.

I delivered some five additional addresses in the Calcutta area during the week of the celebration. I wish I had the time and the space for a more detailed chronicle of my doings in India, but I can only state that I traveled from Calcutta to Benares to Delhi to Lucknow to Bombay and Madras. I must, however, relate one interesting and amusing experience we had in Calcutta. A young Indian had been invited to have dinner with our party in the Great Eastern Hotel. He was elegantly dressed in native attire, but upon entering the dining room the head waiter said, "That man cannot eat here in native dress." "In that case," I replied, "neither will we." I added that the rule seemed to me a very unreasonable one. We then went to a nearby restaurant-club. To add to the merriment, I was there told that I could not eat in the club without my dinner suit. This, fortunately, removed some of the embarrassment from the former experience, and we returned to the hotel and ordered dinner served in a private room.

While touring India we made a stop at Jaipur, where I offered a goat as a sacrifice to the Goddess Kali. I inquired what a goat would cost and was told that I could purchase one for ten rupees. A boy went down the hill to get a goat, but soon yelled something which I could not understand. I was told that he had said he could not find a ten-rupee goat. I supposed that he could find a fifteen-rupee goat. But later when paying my bill, I learned that what he had actually said was that he could only find a five-rupee goat. This was a weird ceremony, but was conducted by the local priests who actually cut the throat of the goat with solemn dignity. The Hindus who do not ordinarily eat meat, do eat the meat of a sacrificed animal. So I justified my sacrilege by the thought that I had furnished the attendants at the Temple with a good meal.

After visiting and lecturing in Bombay and Madras, we sailed from Colombo by way of the Red Sea to Egypt where we did all the usual sightseeing stunts, including a night in a tent on the desert, crossed over to Italy and on to France and back to New York. The trip had required six months and was, I think, one of the most valuable experiences of my life.

Incidentally, it was rumored in some circles that my going to India was Dr. Cornish's way of paying me off for my service in getting him elected to the presidency of the American Unitarian Association. However, I myself took no stock in this rumor.

There were two major battles during my service on the Board of Directors of the Association where I played rather important roles. One was in the battle over Committees A, B, and C of the proposal for Unitarian Advance. The other was in connection with the severance of the Unitarian Service Committee from the Association and its establishment as an independent corporation. I shall reserve a detailed discussion of the controversy over Committees A, B, and C for a later chapter, in which I shall consider controversial issues in Unitarianism.

The Unitarian Service Committee was originally established as a committee of the American Unitarian Association. Dr. Robert C. Dexter was the first director of the Committee. He was succeeded by Dr. Charles R. Joy who in turn was succeeded by Rev. Raymond B. Bragg. Mr. Emerson, the Grand Old Man of the Service Committee, and Dr. Bragg conceived the idea of incorporating the Service Committee as an independent agency. This, it was believed, would have a number of distinct advantages, including the ability to get appropriations from foundations which would not—and perhaps could not—make appropriations to ecclesiastically controlled agencies. As a member of the Board of the Association, I became floor leader of the proposal to separate the Service Committee from the Association so that it could be incorporated as an independent agency. This was one of the most bitter fights in my experience. Dr. Frederick

Eliot, the President of the Association, was dead set against separating the Service Committee from the Association. The Board battled with the issue back and forth for the better part of a day, but finally when the vote was taken on the motion, it carried by a substantial majority, and the Service Committee was launched upon an independent career. I believe the intervening years have proved this was a wise decision. The controversy really left scars, and I do not think Dr. Eliot ever quite forgave me for my leadership in it. At one point in the discussion, Dr. Eliot requested me to agree to a rather small change in the proposed motion. I simply quietly shook my head. Whereupon Dr. Eliot subsided and the final vote was taken.

I served for six years as a member of the Unitarian Hymnal Commission. The other Unitarian members of this Commission were: Dr. Henry Wilder Foote, Chairman, Rev. Von Ogden Vogt, and Rev. Edward F. Daniels. This was a difficult assignment for me, since I could not myself in good conscience use more than fifty or, at most, sixty of the hymns in the book, *Hymns of the Spirit*, but I must add that the other members of the Commission were entirely willing to include all of the Humanist hymns that could be found that I was willing to see stand side by side of the great hymns of the Christian tradition. Also, there was willingness on the part of the Commission to include Humanist forms of service, Humanist readings, Humanist closing words, and Humanist aspirations; and on the whole I believe the result was all that could have been expected in the year 1936.

I have already related my part in the election of Dr. Louis C. Cornish as President of the American Unitarian Association. I also was a member of the Western group that sponsored Dr. Frederick M. Eliot for President, and I believe that it is commonly conceded that I had a major part in the election of Dr. Dana Greeley as the present President of the Association. I myself never had any aspirations to be President of the Association and hence never suffered any

disappointment in this connection; but it was commonly said that my Humanism cost me the presidency of the American Unitarian Association.

CHAPTER FIVE

MY SERVICE ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

I was first elected to the Board of the Meadville Theological School in the early 1920s and immediately jumped into the fight to move the School from Meadville, Pennsylvania to Chicago, Illinois. Various efforts had been made though the previous half-century to move the School to Chicago. One of them, which came near succeeding, was led by Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Dr. Franklin C. Southworth, President of Meadville, worked with almost infinite patience to get sufficient changes in the Board of Trustees to make it possible to move the school from Pennsylvania. In the course of Dr. Southworth's efforts, sites other than Chicago came into the picture, including Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Ithaca, New York. There was an especially strong group who favored Ithaca over Chicago. A special committee had been created to survey the various possibilities and make recommendations to the Board. This report recommended rather strongly against Chicago, stating that it was not a suitable place for scholars to live. This greatly aroused my ire, and those of us who were favorable to Chicago defeated the recommendation and secured a vote creating another committee to confer with Shailer Mathews, Dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. This committee consisted of Dr. Southworth, Mr. E. L. Richardson, and myself. Dean Mathews was not especially favorable to Meadville's moving to Chicago. In fact, he said that it was sometimes embarrassing to him personally when conducting chapel services to discover that there were Unitarian students present, thus

necessitating a quick thumbing through the hymn book to try to find hymns that would not be offensive to Unitarians.

There had been in existence a plan called Affiliated Schools. These schools consisted of the Congregational Theological Seminary, the Disciples Divinity House, the Ryder Divinity School of Lombard College, and the Y.M.C.A. College. By special contractual arrangement, these schools had certain privileges of the Divinity School of the University. Dr. Mathews was definitely opposed to extending this status to any other school, and especially to Meadville. In our extended negotiations, however, Dr. Mathews and I worked out an agreement which we called an Associated Relationship, in which it was provided that Meadville would enjoy all of the privileges that the affiliated schools had.

For a number of years Meadville had conducted a summer session at the University of Chicago. This plan had been originally worked out by Anna Garland Spencer. A building was purchased for the purpose of housing the students during the summer and was also rented during the fall, winter, and spring to University of Chicago students.

Matters dragged along for what seemed to me to be an unnecessary length of time. Hence, one day I made an appointment for lunch with the honorable Morton D. Hull, who was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Meadville Theological School, and in the course of our conversation I suggested that if he would pledge \$100,000 to the School in case it voted to move to Chicago I thought this would be very helpful. I would then make a trip east to confer with some of the members of the Board. After considering the suggestion for a few minutes, Mr. Hull said, "All right, go ahead and make your trip east."

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees soon thereafter, I announced to the assembled board that there was a pledge of \$100,000, provided the School voted to move to Chicago. I then moved that the Board should take the necessary legal steps to transfer academic functions of the School to Chicago. A majority of the Board voted in favor of the motion. I had previously put a damper on the suggestion to move to Ithaca by telling Dr. Southworth very plainly that there were enough of us who favored Chicago who, added to those who favored staying in Meadville, could easily make it impossible for the School to move to any other place than Chicago. So those who had previously favored Ithaca and Ann Arbor voted with those who favored Chicago, and the deed was done.

The attorneys representing the School then got busy and secured the services of Attorney Roberts of Philadelphia, who later became a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, to handle the legal proceedings, which involved going before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and getting the court's permission to move the academic activities of the School from the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania. The Supreme Court of the state acted favorably on this proposal, with the specific provision that the corporation continue as a Pennsylvania corporation so that the State of Pennsylvania could retain a general supervision over the corporate life of the School.

Following the meeting in which the move to Chicago was authorized, in conversation with Mr. Hull, he remarked that he thought I had made the announcement of his gift a bit prematurely—that he might have got by with a smaller gift. I said, “No, Mr. Hall, I save you \$150,000, for Dr. Southworth was going to hit you for a quarter of a million.”

Then came the problem of acquiring suitable property at Fifty-seventh Street and Woodlawn Avenue, including a residence for the President and another building adjoining the vacant lot on which it had been determined to erect the library and main academic building. It

became my function to negotiate with the owners of these two pieces of property, which proved to be a very difficult assignment. Dr. Dallas B. Phemister, one of the most prominent medical men connected with the University, owned a residence on the southwest corner of Fifty-seventh Street and Woodlawn Avenue. After prolonged negotiations with Dr. and Mrs. Phemister, they finally agreed to sell their property to the School for \$70,000. I got this word on a Saturday forenoon. I when immediately to Mr. Hull's office, and his secretary put through a long distance call to Bennington, Vermont. I told Mr. Hull that the Phemisters had agreed to sell the property to us for \$70,000 and that I needed \$2,000 to bind the contract. He said, "Well, where are you going to get the \$2,000?" I replied that his secretary had told me that there was a special account of his in a Chicago bank on which she had authority to draw checks. He said, "Tell her to give you a check for \$2,000." This she did, and I returned to my office and drafted a contract of sale in terms which would have been shocking to any good lawyer, but apparently it was sufficiently legal to hold water. I then went out to the Phemisters Saturday afternoon, secured their signatures on the contract, and turned over to them Mr. Hull's check for \$2,000.

The following Monday morning when I reached the lobby of the Abraham Lincoln Center on my way to the Western Conference office, Dr. Phemister was there waiting for me. He said he wanted to return the check and secure the contract of sale. I told him that I could not accept the return of the check, nor would I surrender the contract of sale. Within half an hour of my arrival at my office downtown, an attorney came in stating that he represented Dr. Phemister and wanted to return the check and secure the agreement to sell which Dr. and Mrs. Phemister had signed. I told him, as I had previously told Dr. Phemister, that I could not and would not accept the check nor surrender the contract. The attorney said in that case he would mail the check to me. I said, "In that case I will refuse to accept any mail for the next ten days." He

replied that it would not be necessary for me to return all mail that came to my office, that he would plainly mark his envelope so that I could recognize it and return it. This he did, and I returned it unopened.

The attorneys on both sides then got busy and drew up a mutually agreeable contract which put the money and all necessary legal papers in escrow until the following fiscal year when the income tax structure appeared more favorable than it had previously. In this way the School came into full possession of an attractive and adequate home for the President of the School.

Next I negotiated with the owners of what is now Channing House. They proposed to sell for a sum of \$80,000. I got the agreement directly with the owners, but a real estate operator with whom the property had been listed demanded his commission. There followed anxious days until a suitable agreement was had with the real estate operator involving a substantial reduction in his commission.

Upon Dr. Southworth's resignation as President of the School, Dr. Sidney B. Snow was elected as his successor. Immediately following Dr. Snow's election, a campaign was launched to raise additional funds for the School. This campaign resulted in raising funds approaching \$300,000. Meantime, the widow of a Unitarian minister in the East had died and in her will left the residue of her estate to the School. The residue, fortunately, was approximately \$250,000. Dr. Snow's presidency was markedly successful. While he was not a scholar nor an especially good administrator, he *did* have the loyalty and affection of the entire student body and made an excellent impression for the School wherever he visited among the churches of both the Western conference and the rest of the denomination

It was under Dr. Snow's administration that the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago became effective. Dr. Snow, Dr. Charles H. Lyttle, and I represented Meadville in the negotiations with the University and with the Divinity School of the University, the Chicago Theological Seminary, and Disciples Divinity House in the drafting of the articles of agreement. My special contribution to the articles of agreement was a solution of the somewhat knotty problem of how faculty members should be elected. I suggested that all four schools vote to approve or disapprove faculty appointments to each school. This provision went into the articles of agreement. Later, when the original articles of agreement were revised, I also served on the committee representing Meadville. Recently notice has been filed terminating the Federated Theological Faculty. In my opinion, this is a good thing for Meadville, which can now enjoy its independent relationship to the University of Chicago. All the advantages of proximity to the University can be preserved and all the disadvantages of the Federation can be obviated.

When Dr. Snow resigned his presidency of the School in January of 1944, I was named chairman of a special committee to survey the ministers of the denomination and secure their recommendations for a new President. Meantime, Dr. Raymond B. Bragg and I sat on the side of my bed in a room at the Bellevue Hotel, Boston, and devised a scheme to make Dr. Wallace Robbins—then minister of the Unitarian church in St. Paul, Minnesota—the President of the School. When the returns came in from my letter to the ministers, a wholly unexpected development occurred. The overwhelming majority of the replies suggested my own name for the position. I reported the result of the poll to the Board and immediately resigned as chair of the Survey Committee; and while I did not have any great hope of being elected to the presidency, I must in all honesty say that I looked upon the possibility with a great deal of favor. There soon developed a campaign among the Eastern ministers favorable to Dr. Leslie

Pennington, then pastor of the First Parish in Cambridge. The Humanist issue was raised against me, and a great furor raged throughout the denomination. A petition signed by more than a hundred Unitarian ministers, both theists and Humanists, was presented to the Board of Trustees recommending that I be elected. The denomination-wide movement in my behalf was led by Dr. Edwin H. Wilson, then of Dayton, Ohio, and Rev. Edwin T. Buehrer, minister of the Third Unitarian Church of Chicago. Meanwhile, Dr. Bragg and I kept in constant contact, I believing that the battle between Dr. Pennington and me would finally result in a compromise candidate—and so it did.

The Board of Trustees met in the University Club of Chicago, where extended discussion took place. It was pointed out that the charter of the School provided that there should never be any theological tests for either faculty members or students. The President of the Board, Judge William H. Holly, and the Vice President, Dr. George Davis of the staff of the American Unitarian Association, and certain other members of the Board were distinctly favorable to my candidacy. But at a suitable time in the Board meeting when I was convinced that neither Dr. Pennington nor I could be elected, I moved the election of Rev. Wallace Robbins, and the motion was passed with only one dissenting vote.

I believed then, and still believe, that I could have helped to make Meadville a really great theological school and one that could have made a powerful impact on the other divinity schools in the Federation. I held Dr. Sydney Snow, Dr. Frederick May Eliot, and Dr. Von Ogden Vogt as chiefly responsible for my not being elected, although I must add that the two Universalist members of the Board, Dr. Frank Adams and a layman by the name of Kerr, were also frightened by my Humanism.

When Dr. Robbins resigned the presidency to accept a call to the First Parish in Worcester, Massachusetts, the committee to select a successor delegated me to interview Dr. Sidney Mead, to determine whether he would be interested in the position of President of the School. Dr. Frank Schramm, Dr. Ralph Fuchs—two of the three members of the committee—Dr. Sidney Mead, and I were all in attendance at the Lake Geneva Summer Assembly. Dr. Mead and I had a very extended discussion of the School and its possibilities from many angles. Among the possible difficulties was the fact that Dr. Mead had only recently joined the First Unitarian Society of Chicago, that he had a long-time membership in the Baptist denomination—but I argued that the School needed as its President first of all a recognized scholar; second, a good administrator; and third, a man who would circulate widely among the churches and build up the somewhat lagging interest of the churches in the School. Dr. Mead said that he would be interested in the possibility of becoming President. This I reported to Mr. Schramm and Dr. Fuchs. They then had an interview with Dr. Mead. A meeting of the Board of the School was called soon thereafter, and Dr. Mead was unanimously elected. This I believe was a very wise selection. Under Dr. Mead's skillful and scholarly handling of the School, morale has greatly increased and in general the reputation of the School has been much enhanced.

Recently Dr. Mead, for reasons which seemed adequate to him and which the Board of the School understood and sympathized with, resigned and accepted a professorship in the Southern California School of Theology, Claremont, California. His resignation came as a great shock to the Board of Trustees of Meadville and was accepted with deep regret not only by the Board but by the students of the School, the local community, and throughout the denomination. The Board then faced the problem of selecting a successor. Some forty names were suggested to the special Nominating Committee, of which Dr. Joseph Barth was chairman. This list was

thinned down to some four or five men who seemed to offer real promise. A minority of the Board, of which I was one, was more or less committed to a candidate who seemed to be adequate from the point of view of scholarship, administrative ability, and parish experience. The Nominating Committee presented the name of Rev. Malcolm R. Sutherland and, in order to make the selection unanimous, I made a motion, which was seconded by Rev. Robert Raible, that the recommendation of the Nominating Committee be approved and that Rev. Malcolm R. Sutherland be elected as President of the School. The motion was put to a vote and there was no discussion. Mr. Sutherland has had successful parish experience in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Unitarian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia, and in the First Congregational Parish, Milton, Massachusetts; and has served for one year, while on leave from Milton, as Executive Vice-President of the American Unitarian Association—a position which he has filled to the complete satisfaction of the President of the Association and his associates on the Headquarters Staff.

So begins a new and hopefully a great period in the long and eventful history of the Meadville theological School. But if it is in fact to be a great period, the Administration must be more venturesome than any in the past in making faculty appointments of men highly competent in the field of religious education, in the literature of religion, in the sociology of religion, and especially in the philosophy of religion.

Now I must go back to a much earlier date and bring into the picture the story of Lombard College.

Upon learning of the difficulties that Lombard College was undergoing, I enlisted the active support of Dr. Louis C. Cornish, President of the American Unitarian Association, and drafted an agreement between the American Unitarian Association and Lombard College which

provided that a majority of the Board of Trustees of Lombard would be nominated by the American Unitarian Association and that the Association would set aside on its books a fund that would yield \$15,000 a year to be paid to Lombard College. The agreement was approved by both the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association and of Lombard College. I was elected to the presidency of the College without being required to resign my secretaryship of the Western Unitarian Conference.

At the first Commencement after I became President, I had the honor of conferring the Degree of LL.D. on the world-famous Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago. Miss Addams received requests every year from innumerable universities wanting to confer honorary degrees upon her. She declined most of them. I explained to Miss Addams that Lombard had been one of the first three schools in the United States to admit women on the same terms as men and had been the first school in the history of the world to confer an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on a woman minister; and I would especially appreciate it if she would allow the College to give her an honorary degree, and if she would also deliver the Commencement Address. She very readily consented.

At the second Commencement after I became President, the Commencement Address was delivered by the famous editor of *The Christian Century*, Charles Clayton Morrison.

Plans were made to launch a financial campaign on a nation-wide scale to raise a substantial endowment for Lombard, in the fall of 1929, but before the campaign could get under way, the stock market crashed and we were launched upon the period of the great financial depression. I resigned from the presidency of the College in the spring of 1930, and Dr. George Davis was elected to succeed me. It soon became apparent that, since it would not be possible to conduct a financial campaign, it would be necessary to close the college. Hence, the academic

activities of the College were transferred to Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois; the Divinity Department together with an invaluable charter were merged with the Meadville Theological School.

The charter of Lombard College provided complete tax exemption for any and all property owned by the College, a provision which no school has been able to secure for nearly a hundred years. An agreement between Lombard College and Meadville Theological School was worked out which provided that each school would elect the same persons as Trustees, thus maintaining the continuous life of the Lombard Corporation and also the independent corporate existence of the two schools.

An effort was made to free Meadville from the necessity of remaining a Pennsylvania corporation. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled that the determination of this issue could be made by the Circuit Court in Meadville. It appeared that this determination could and would be easily made in favor of the liquidation of the Pennsylvania corporation, but at the last minute an attorney for the one surviving person of the old Meadville group—namely, Mrs. Elizabeth Huidekoper Kidder—raised objections and the Court ruled against us. Mrs. Kidder has since died, and it would now appear to be possible to get a favorable ruling from either the Pennsylvania Supreme court or the local Circuit Court. Steps in this direction are being taken. Lombard College owns the Ryder building adjacent to Channing House, and certain other Chicago real estate. Lombard also holds endowment funds, some of which are administered by a bank and consequently were not where they could be dissipated by the former treasurer of Lombard College, whose investments went sour, thus precipitating the crisis of the College. Also, various wills have been probated in recent years and there are some fairly sizable sums in the offing. Lombard has in no sense been a financial drag on Meadville but, on the contrary, has

provided funds for scholarships, and in other ways the arrangement has proved mutually satisfactory. All graduates of Meadville are now also graduated from Lombard College. The Ryder House is named in honor of a distinguished Universalist minister. It has recently been overhauled to make it suitable for the headquarters of the Western Unitarian Conference and of the Mid-West Universalist Conference, thus realizing a dream—which I held for a quarter of a century—to have the headquarters of the Western Unitarian Conference adjacent to the Meadville Theological School and part of the plan to make Fifty-seventh Street and Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, one great Unitarian and liberal center, including the First Unitarian Society, Fenn House, Meadville House, the Meadville Library and Administration Building, Channing and Ryder Houses, and the residence of the President, thus occupying the four corners of Fifty-seventh Street and Woodlawn Avenue.

CHAPTER SIX

I BECOME DEAN OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN CENTRE

Abraham Lincoln Centre was first conceived by Jenkin Lloyd Jones in the late eighties or early nineties. Young Frank Lloyd Wright, who was Jenkin Lloyd Jones' nephew, was engaged to draft plans for a building to be erected at Oakwood Boulevard and Langley Avenue in Chicago. This was the first major commission that Frank Lloyd Wright received, and he drew plans that were attractive on the outside and very commodious on the inside. In Frank Lloyd Wright's son's biography of his father, entitled *My Father Who Is on Earth*, there appears a picture of Frank Lloyd Wright's original drawings of the building. Dr. Jones and Frank Lloyd Wright, both of whom were very strong-willed, could not agree on some of the details of the plans, whereupon Dr. Jones called in a prominent Chicago architect, Dwight Perkins by name, to make some revisions. This offended the young Frank Lloyd Wright—then temperamental, as he was throughout his tragic but successful life—and he completely pulled out of the picture. I recently verified this by writing to Frank Lloyd Wright and telling him what my understanding of that episode was. He replied that I was correct in my understanding; then he added: “The interior of Lincoln Centre is mine; the exterior is Dr. Jones' and Dwight Perkins', and I have always hated it.”

The building was finally completed and dedicated in 1905. It became the home of All Souls Church of which Dr. Jones was the minister, the headquarters of *Unity* of which Dr. Jones was the editor—he holding these two positions in addition to that of Head Resident of the Centre.

From the very first, the Articles of Incorporation of the Center provided that it would render service without regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, or political opinions. Abraham Lincoln Centre was the first institution in Chicago—and undoubtedly one of the first in the entire country—to integrate Negroes into its regular program of activities. When Dr. Jones died in September of 1918, the church and the Centre soon split apart.

During the war years the church had greatly declined in attendance and activities, owing to Dr. Jones' pacifist position. He had been chairman of the delegation aboard the famous—or infamous depending on your viewpoint—Ford Peace Ship, and had displayed at the Centre and draped over his pulpit a peace flag—that is, the regular United States flag with a white border. He was required to remove the peace flag from use, since it was illegal to add to or take from the United States flag. Many of Dr. Jones' parishioners thought so highly of him that they would not interfere with whatever he wanted to do—but quietly dropped out of the church.

Rev. John Morris Evans, the minister of the Unitarian church in Dayton, Ohio, was called to succeed Dr. Jones as minister of the church and as Head Resident of the Centre, but he soon proved to be an unfortunate choice. He attempted to consolidate All Souls Church with a nearby Congregational church, but this effort failed, whereupon he resigned under pressure from both the church and the Centre. All Souls Church then moved to Sixty-sixth Place and Blackstone Avenue and consolidated with a new movement which had been started by Prof. Fred Merrifield, a member of the faculty of the University of Chicago. Abraham Lincoln Centre paid All Souls Church \$10,000 for its right to use the Center for its ecclesiastical purposes. The Honorable Morton D. Hull made a substantial contribution of \$15,000 to a building fund for All Souls Church, and the American Unitarian Association spent some \$55,000 on the project. A building was erected on the northwest corner of Sixty-sixth Place and Blackstone Avenue, and it looked

as if the church would be successfully launched on a new career; but the venture was a failure and Dr. Merrifield resigned and accepted a call to the Hinsdale Unitarian church. The building on Blackstone Avenue was then rented to the First Universalist Church of Chicago and later purchased by the First Universalist church at a bargain price. The First Universalist Church sold the property at a very substantial profit and erected a new building further south on East Eighty-third Street.

The Board of Directors of All Souls Church and the Board of Trustees of Abraham Lincoln Centre both voted independently to invite me to move into the parsonage at the Centre in the spring of 1923, to see if I could find some solution to their problems. I have already related what happened in connection with All Souls Church. I was elected to the Corporate Body of Abraham Lincoln Centre at their annual meeting in 1923, made chairman of the Boys' Work Department, and in 1924 I was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Center. In 1926 I was elected Dean of the Centre, still retaining my membership on the Board of Trustees until my resignation at the annual meeting of the Centre on February 12, 1957.

On March 1, 1930, I severed my connection with the Western Unitarian Conference and became full-time Dean of Abraham Lincoln Centre. One of my first actions in 1930 as Dean of the Centre was to secure approval of a plan to restore the traditional racially integrated policy of the Centre as provided for in its charter. After Dr. Jones' death, the Centre had drifted into a policy of having white and colored groups meet separately.

In 1928 I organized a campaign to increase the endowment of the Centre from slightly over \$100,000 to well over \$200,000. Also, a separate campaign had increased the endowment of *Unity* from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Dr. John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York, had been elected editor of *Unity*, and Francis Neilson, Rabbi Louis L. Mann, and I were

associate editors. After I became the full-time Dean of the Centre, I was made managing editor of *Unity*, and Dr. Holmes and I worked together amicably until the approach of World War II. Dr. Holmes published an editorial in which he declared it his purpose to make *Unity* an organ of the Pacifist movement. I wrote to Dr. Holmes and told him that neither he nor I had authority to make *Unity* an organ of the Pacifist movement, the Unitarian movement, the Humanist movement, or any other movement. That authority rested solely with the Board of Abraham Lincoln Centre which owned and published *Unity*. A very bitter and painful correspondence ensued, and finally the Board of the Centre supported my authority as managing editor to really manage the journal, not only in a business way but also in regard to the content of the paper. Whereupon Dr. Holmes resigned as editor, and I was elected to succeed him.

When Dr. Holmes resigned as minister of the Community church of New York, I wrote an editorial for *Unity* in which I commended Dr. Holmes' career in the highest of terms and received a letter from Dr. Holmes stating that of all the comments that many journals had made about his career, he prized by statement most of all. Thus, what for a while appeared to be a severe break between two long-time friends ended with mutual respect and appreciation.

The program of Abraham Lincoln Center was an exceedingly diversified one, thus making it desirable to make some alterations on the inside of the building. Soon after I became the full-time Dean of the Centre, the Board of Trustees voted to affiliate with the Western Unitarian Conference and the American Unitarian Association. All Souls Church had originally been a regular Unitarian church, but under Dr. Jones' leadership at one point in his career the church declared its independence and raised a sum of money, which Dr. Jones called a Freedom Fund, to pay back to the American Unitarian Association funds that the Association had originally invested in the All Souls Church building which stood across the street from where

Abraham Lincoln Centre was later erected. But, in point of fact, All Souls Church continued to pay its duties to the American Unitarian Association and the Western Unitarian Conference, and Dr. Jones remained a Unitarian minister in good and regular standing. The Center as such had had no Unitarian affiliation until 1930. The American Unitarian Association loaned the Centre \$12,000 without interest, payable \$1,200 a year, for the purpose of making alterations in the auditorium, which had included the entire second and third floors of the Centre—a loan which was repaid long before the final due date. In this way the auditorium was made a more attractive and more useful one, although greatly reduced in size. Four additional classrooms were made where the first balcony had originally been, and four two-room apartments, each with bath, were built where the second balcony had previously been.

The Board of Trustees of Abraham Lincoln Center was, and still is, one of the finest groups of people that ever managed a social institution. At the time I was elected Dean, the President of the Board was Mr. S. O. Levinson who, it will be remembered was the father of the plan for the Outlawry of War which was written into the Pact of Paris. Francis Neilson, former member of the British House of Commons and a well-known writer, was a member of the Board. Judge William H. Holly, Senator Paul H. Douglas, and Professor Louis Wirth were elected to the Board during my administration. The members of the Board from the very first had been hand-picked by Dr. Jones for their liberal attitudes, and I continued that tradition during the twenty-four years that I was connected with the Centre. One member of the Board, Mrs. Irwin S. Rosenfels, has served on the Board for thirty-nine years, twenty-seven years of which she has been treasurer of the Centre. A better informed and more liberal-minded woman it would be difficult to find anywhere.

Prior to my administration there had not been either a Jewish or a Negro resident of the Centre, although Jews were prominent in the financing of the Centre and on the Board of Trustees, and there were Negro members of the Corporate Body. Very early in my administration I proceeded to remedy this situation. I brought in a well-known Chicago Jewish artist, Mr. Morris Topchevsky. Mr. Topchevsky had been a member of the faculty in Alexander Meiklejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin, a teacher of art for many years at Hull House, and an interpreter for Hubert Herring's Mexican Seminars. I also brought in a young Negro singer, Mr. John Greene, who had recently won a Rosenwald scholarship in music and was well known in Chicago for his strikingly successful concerts. Both Mr. Topchevsky and Mr. Greene became members of the staff of the Centre.

Later I faced the problem of mixed marriages. An application for residence was received from a University of Chicago graduate student, a Negro by the name of Horace Cayton, who was married to a white social worker who was a graduate of the University of the State of Washington. They both qualified, on the basis of education and the nature of their work, for residence. The Centre had a vacant apartment. There could be no legitimate excuse for not approving their application. Without consultation with the Board of Trustees or the residents, I told them that we would be happy to have them join our family; and, to my great delight, when they moved into the Centre not a resident and not a member of the Board of Trustees made the slightest issue of their coming to live at the Centre. Later there were other mixed couples who became residents, including Jewish and Gentile couples as well as Negro and white. Our common dining room was a miniature League of Nations. There were Negroes and whites, Jews and Gentiles, Nisei, Catholics and Protestants, and every variety of white Gentiles. At the long common table in the residents' dining room on the fifth floor, I presided at one end of the table

and Mrs. Reese at the other. There were informed and enlightening discussions on just about every subject under the sun. It is now a great satisfaction to Mrs. Reese and to me when I contemplate and subsequent careers of residents and staff members. Several have become Head Residents of other settlements, others have become prominent in governmental services, and still others are pursuing professional careers as teachers in various universities.

Among the usual features of the Centre program were a Birth Control Clinic and the first Child Guidance Clinic in Chicago, conducted by a renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs.

The Adult Education program of the Centre was guided by the following marks of an educated person, which I drafted for this purpose:

1. An educated person has a wholesome respect for facts and realizes the importance of accuracy in the mastery of them.
2. An educated person has a broad understanding of diverse values and a keen appreciation of their relative significance.
3. An educated person has a disciplined sense of history and of his relation to future events.
4. An educated person has a basic knowledge of techniques and is effective in the use of them.
5. An educated person has a sensitive conscience in his relations with other persons and a responsible awareness of his relations to society.

While Dean of the Centre I had an opportunity to become acquainted with some of the great personalities of the last half-century. Jane Addams and I became good friends as well as

professional associates in the settlement movement in Chicago. I once received a letter from Dr. Louis C. Cornish, President of the American Unitarian Association, enclosing a letter addressed to Miss Addams inviting her to deliver the Ware Lecture at the May Meetings in Boston. He asked me to make an appointment with Miss Addams and read the letter of invitation to her before delivering it into her hands and to use my influence to induce her to accept the invitation. I called Miss Addams over the telephone and told her that I had a function to perform which I could easily perform in two minutes over the telephone but that I had been requested to do it up in proper style, and when could I see her. She said, "Of course! Come right on over at your convenience." We sat in the lobby of Hull House on a sofa, I read this formal communication deliberately and, I hope, with proper dignity, whereupon Miss Addams said that she had not felt like speaking in Boston since the Sacco and Vanzetti execution; but, she added, the Unitarians were not responsible for this and that she would accept the invitation. I did not have the courage to tell her that Judge Thayer was a Unitarian layman.

On the form which was conducted at the Centre on Friday forenoons for many years, we had as speakers some of the greatest lecturers and outstanding scholars of the time, including Bertrand Russell, Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, Eugene V. Debs, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, Max Otto, John Haynes Holmes, Norman Thomas, and a host of other persons of similar caliber.

When Bertrand Russell came to America following World War I, the only platform in Chicago that was open to him was that of the Centre. The last public address delivered anywhere by Eugene V. Debs was at Abraham Lincoln Centre. Among the many famous guests that we were privileged to entertain at the Centre were Zona Gale, Mary Austin, Bishop Aglipay of the Philippines, Scott Nearing, Jerome Davis, Anna Louise Strong, Professor and Mrs. Harry

Overstreet, and Mary McDowell, the famed founder of the University of Chicago Settlement—now called the Mary McDowell Settlement.

Among the staff members and former residents who went on to greater things were Louis Hosch, now personnel director for the United Nations staff in Panama; Melville Hosch, now director of Region 5 of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Edna Hansen, who served for fourteen years as Head Resident of Henry Booth House, Chicago; Walter Kindelsperger, now head of the Group Work Division of the School of Social Work at Tulane University, New Orleans; George Schermer, now director of the Commission on Human Rights of Philadelphia; Arthur McDowell, now first assistant to the President of the Upholsterers International Union, with headquarters in Philadelphia, where he and George Schermer are both active in the Germantown Unitarian church; St. Clair Drake who collaborator with Horace Cayton in writing *Black Metropolis*, a good part of which was written on the fifth floor of Abraham Lincoln Centre; and Julia Abrahamson, an author and recognized authority on community integration.

When Emma Goldman, after having been ordered from Russia and having married a British citizen, came to Canada and got a temporary visa to lecture in the United States on literary subjects, she spoke on our forum to a crowded house. Also, I introduced her to a large audience in the Loop and presided at a dinner in her honor at a downtown hotel. Emma Goldman, although known as an anarchist, should not be confused with the popular conception of an anarchist. She, like Prince Kropotkin, believed in freedom and free associations without the interference of governments or ecclesiastical organizations, and she was one of the most effective public speakers I have ever heard. When she died in Canada, her body was brought to Chicago to be buried near the victims of the Haymarket Riots. I was asked to deliver an oration

at her funeral. Due to the controversies that raged around Miss Goldman throughout her life and to my somewhat unique relationship with her, I want at this point to insert copies of the brief orations that I delivered at her funeral and also, along with Roger Baldwin, at the dedication of the Jo Davidson plaque that was placed at her tomb.

Oration at the Funeral of Emma Goldman

Chicago, May 17, 1940

We are gathered in solemn reverence about the bier of an immortal. As in life no prison wall could restrain, so in death no grave can contain, her spirit. Now and henceforth Emma Goldman dwells in the corridors of affectionate memory, walking with stately tread the halls reserved for the great of all the ages; a status well beyond the reach of earthly powers.

By all the valid tests of greatness, Emma Goldman was a great personality. In simplicity and clarity of thought, in vision and courage, in power of self-sacrifice and in daring deeds, in great hope for human good and in immeasurable loyalty to her ideals, Emma Goldman stands undimmed by the great men and women of all time. The true tests of immortal greatness are not defined in terms of the ideological content of any person or time or place. Great personalities rise above the specific and concrete, and must be measured in terms of qualities and purposes and transcend the conventional and ephemeral. By the standard of greatness of mind and purpose, of depth of feeling and passionate loyalty, of grand conceptions and unfaltering devotion, Emma Goldman was a great personality.

Emma Goldman was the world's outstanding advocate of liberty. If in the short run, hers was an over-belief, none who believe in the long-run triumph of the human spirit can doubt the ultimate validity of her belief in liberty. She trusted liberty, and she condemned restraints on liberty other than those imposed by the inner discipline of civilized intelligence. To her, liberty was a touchstone by which to test all systems, all religions, and all governments. Failure to meet this test was to her unanswerable evidence of an essentially defective heart at the center of any social order, whatever its claims might be. At a time like this, when liberty of thought, speech, and press, liberty of person and of life itself are violated by tyrants, and betrayed by the very elect, lovers of liberty everywhere will mourn the loss of the last great advocate of a genuinely free society of free men, by free men, and for free men.

Emma Goldman was a great friend and lover of humanity. Whatever men and women suffered from oppression and wherever they struggled for freedom, in her they found a champion and a spokesman. In behalf of the rights and liberties of people everywhere, her pen was liquid and her tongue was a flame of fire. For her comrades of whatever race or nation, languishing in whatever prisons and concentration camps, she poured out her message of appeal in words of eloquence second to none yet uttered by any lips. Loving humanity as she did, she refused to close her eyes to the inequalities and the inequities of the world. No person and no power was too great to come under the withering blast of her scorn for oppression, and no one was too humble to come within the reach of her outreached hand. The generosity of her heart encompassed the race, and she knew no stranger in the outpouring of her zeal for human betterment.

In all these ways and in innumerable other ways, Emma Goldman was a power in behalf of the deeper and the finer things of life. All who walked with her in the general

direction of her goal of freedom, even amid differences on the strategy of the journey, felt the power of her will and experienced her understanding heart. She knew human frailties, but she had confidence in the essential thrust-worthiness of the children of Mother Earth. While she no longer walks with us the crowded ways of life, the things she did, the feelings she had, and the thoughts she held will live forever to enrich and ennoble the world that she loved.

Oration at the Dedication of the Jo Davidson Plaque of
Emma Goldman in Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, May 30, 1945

It is especially appropriate that the Jo Davidson plaque of Emma Goldman should be dedicated at a time when the spirit of liberty, weakened but yet strong, is rising from a victorious battle with totalitarian tyranny.

We have all too little regard for even our most prized possessions until the danger of their loss is imminent. So it is with liberty. Having sauntered with reckless abandon too near the abyss of arbitrary and irresponsible government, and having narrowly escaped a plunge into a black age of savagery, we now have greater appreciation than formerly of those who have looked with a clear eye into the face of liberty and who have been alert to the call of liberty. Among such persons, no name stands out more grandly than that of Emma Goldman. And despite the calumnies of Church and State, of bigot and tyrant, the lustre of her name grows brighter with the passing of the years.

In her life Emma Goldman believed in liberty, and she is the supreme symbol of liberty today. She believed in the free interplay of free minds as a means to the intelligent voluntary association of free citizens in a free world. Coercion was abhorrent to her very nature. To the

extent that belief in liberty and opposition to compulsion do not square with the actualities of human experience, it should be remembered that liberty is in an area where over-belief is infinitely preferable to under-belief. While we live according to necessity, we can believe according to the ideal and we can widen the areas of necessity according to the pattern of the ideal. The very thought of liberty generates a divine impatience with restrictions, inhibitions, and the forbidden.

Emma Goldman loved liberty and was instant in her reactions against all attempts to encroach upon its sacred soil. When we think of liberty unrestricted, yet guided by free choice; when we think of liberty as a means to a full life and a goal of human organization, we shall forever think of Emma Goldman as its flaming symbol.

In her life Emma Goldman practiced intellectual integrity, and she is the unsurpassed example of intellectual integrity today. She did not inquire what the authorities of Church and State, or the still more rigid authority of custom, wanted her to think and speak. Never did she seek to conform to the conventional and the expedient; and never did she give weight to what others might think of her thought. Her experience and her observations were put through the fires of her own mind and heart, and were forged into beliefs that were her very own.

And having arrived at conclusions which to her seemed sound and good, she unhesitatingly announced them to the world in words that were understandable and that were understood. Camouflage was alien to her nature. She had no traffic with intellectual deceit, or with the evasions of convenience. Having taken counsel with her innermost self, she let the counsels of her heart stand. Her intellectual integrity is an example that all the world should note and heed.

In her life Emma Goldman was courageously devoted to her convictions, and she is an inspiration to such living today. Her beliefs were convictions, and her convictions demanded devotion. She acted upon her convictions, and she did not count the cost. She was no “pink-tea” revolutionist. She translated convictions into actions, and was willing to take the consequences.

There was nothing half-hearted about Emma Goldman. She knew full well to what she was fully committed, and she ordered her life accordingly. Neighbors might scorn her, friends might turn from her, the whole world might doubt her, but she did not doubt herself. She could no more turn from her convictions than she could turn against her own soul. In a world where honor is all too often hidden in necessity, it is an inspiration to remember one who knew no compromise with what she believed to be real and true and good.

In her life Emma Goldman challenged authority, and she is an incitement to vigilance against the arrogance of authority today. No one knew better than Emma Goldman how arrogant and ruthless and brutal irresponsible authority can become. She experienced it in courts of law and within prison walls. She knew how authority poisons the wellsprings of decent sentiments and dries up the streams of remorse. She pitted the volition of the free against the authority of the mighty. She trusted the unspoiled mind and heart of the common man, and she doubted the wisdom of men in high places. And when in her encounters with authority she suffered physical defeat, her head was still unbowed. Her spirit could not be broken, for in it was the strength of a free person freely committed to the cause of freedom.

Today liberty needs leaders who understand that they are servants and not masters of the people; leaders who cannot be spoiled by authority and who cannot be bought at any price. But the officious officials whose authority is derived not from reason and evidence but

from title only are a menace to any land. It will be a sad day for humanity when there are no more Emma Goldmans to fling a challenge into the teeth of those who usurp authority or who misuse authority that is delegated to them.

In her life Emma Goldman was loyal to her comrades, and she binds together a fellowship of the free in all lands today. Her comrades were of all nations and races and colors. She followed their fortunes with an eagle eye, and she spoke in their defense when they could no longer be heard. Her comrades were not limited to those in exact agreement with her general philosophy of life. If they loved liberty and opposed tyranny, she was their friend and co-worker. If they suffered from oppression, she understood their sorrow, and if they resisted oppression she flew to their aid. There was nothing narrow about her circle of comrades. It was open to all who believed in free speech, free press, and free assembly.

And today hers is an ever-widening circle of comrades who, though differing in details, are one in behalf of the larger revolution that is directed toward the liberation and broadening of mankind's understanding and sympathy, thoughts and feelings, plans and hopes, until all people are one in the world-wide fraternity of the free.

Although the body of Emma Goldman mingles here with the soil of Mother Earth, the thoughts that she had, the hopes that she possessed, the goals that she proclaimed can never die. Out from the soil that covers her, out over the earth that she loved, there comes, and will come, hope for the oppressed, relief for those who toil, and renewal of faith for all who catch her vision of a grand design for a free society in an unfettered world.

While Dean of Abraham Lincoln Centre, I served on innumerable boards and committees, including three terms as President of the Chicago Federation of Settlements; some ten years as President of the Chicago Adult Education Council; and some fourteen years as President of the American Humanist Association, which awarded me the 1956 Plaque as a Humanist Pioneer. Also, I was a special lecturer for five years on the Philosophy Administration at George Williams College, Chicago.

Abraham Lincoln Centre was our home from 1923 to February 19, 1957. There our children were reared. When we moved into the Centre in 1923 our daughter, Marie Walker, was just nine years old. Our second daughter, Rachel Elizabeth, was only four years old, and our son, Curtis Williford, Jr., was only three years old—and the experience of living in such a liberal Centre was a part of their general education. On the occasion of the last annual dinner of my administration of the Centre, our daughter, Marie Reese Wilson, spoke for all three of our children when she said, “I would not exchange growing up at the Center for any other children and youth I ever heard of.”

Marie is married to Donald V. Wilson, Secretary-General of the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples. Their two daughters are Donna Lynn and Fay Elizabeth. Rachel is married to Emil J. Sady, on the staff of the United Nations. Their three sons are Daniel John, Stephen Reese, and Nathan Emil. Curtis W. Reese, Jr., is married to Lois York. Curtis is on the Man-power Survey Team of the U. S. Army Ordnance Weapons Command.

When I tendered by resignation as the Dean of the Centre and determined to retire to Florida, due to a rather severe heart attack, I was deeply concerned about a suitable successor, one who could maintain the liberal tradition and the Unitarian connections of the Centre. My wife suggested that perhaps Randall and Gladys Hilton might be willing to take over the

operation of the Centre. I doubted this possibility but agreed to discuss the matter with the Hiltons and to my utmost delight they were both willing to undertake the responsibility of the management and direction of the Centre, a decision which was most fortunate for the Centre.

My last annual meeting of February 12, 1957, was both a sad and a glorious occasion. I conducted the business meeting from a wheel chair, and my annual report and message were delivered from a tape recording which Randall Hilton had patiently made, for I was able to record only for brief periods of time. There were greetings and expressions of appreciation of our work at the Centre, presented to the annual meeting from the numerous civic organizations that I had served both in Chicago and throughout the country; and the letters from prominent individuals that were read are now among my most prized possessions. So ended one of the most exciting and satisfying experiences over a period of thirty-four years that I can imagine, and I am profoundly grateful for the freedom that Abraham Lincoln Centre afforded me to put into concrete practice the liberal and democratic ideals that I had long professed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I RECORD DRAMATIC EPISODES

I want to record three dramatic episodes: (1) an annual meeting of the Chicago Adult Education Council; (2) a celebration of the recognition of Russia; and (3) a security trial in my family.

1. While I was Dean of Abraham Lincoln Centre I served for many years as President Chicago Adult Education Council. I recommended as the Executive Director of the Council Mr. Ralph McCallister, Now Educational Director of the famed Chautauqua Institution. I had known Ralph since before he became a Meadville Theological School student, and felt confident in his ability. He had courted one of my Centre staff members in the living room of our apartment, and later married her.

As President of the Council I considered it my duty to back up the Director, and leave him free to pursue his own policies. Hence in planning the program for an annual meeting of the Council in a downtown hotel, Mr. McCallister suggested, as the main speaker for the occasion, the world-renowned physiologist, Dr. A. J. Carlson, and I agreed. But I did not feel too comfortable about the selection, for I had read a report of a speech that Dr. Carlson had recently delivered in which he had argued against the United States taking any part in World War II. This was a subject on which I have very strong feelings. I had delivered an address on the same platform with Adlai Stevenson in which I

praised Great Britain for resisting German aggression, an address that was widely publicized by the William Allen White Committee.

So I determined to take precaution against Dr. Carlson's turning the annual meeting of the Chicago Adult Education Council into a pro-neutrality meeting. In my presidential address I made it plain that I favored the United States taking her place beside Great Britain and her allies in the war against Germany.

When I had finished my address amid enthusiastic applause, I introduced Dr. Carlson with appropriate words of appreciation for his scholarship and great abilities. Whereupon Dr. Carlson arose, and with his voice quivering with emotion and rage said he did not know that this was a pro-war meeting, and that he would not speak. He then sat down. I said that the Council stood for free discussion and that Dr. Carlson could say whatever he pleased. I asked him if he would not reconsider and deliver his address. His reply was to arise from the speakers table and stride from the room in great indignation. There being no further business to transact, I adjourned the meeting.

The Chicago Press was giving the meeting good coverage, and this was a situation made to order for big headlines. One Chicago Daily likened the meeting to two truck drivers fighting at the scene of an accident involving the collision of their trucks. As a result of the publicity, it seemed to me that all the pro-Nazi and K.K.K. forces in Chicago turned their batteries on me. I received threatening letters, calling me a Jew-lover and a warmonger, among other derisive terms. But I had reversed Dr. Carlson's evident intention to make of the occasion a pro-neutrality gathering.

2. When President Roosevelt negotiated the recognition of Russia, the Communists of Chicago arranged for a huge celebration at a united front type of gathering, and I was asked to deliver the closing address of the evening. Having on a previous similar occasion brought a gathering of 3,500 people to its feet three times in a ten-minute address, I felt confident that I could save that meeting from becoming a typical Communist anti-Roosevelt celebration.

At the proper time in my address I remarked that there was one more point I wanted to make and I was going to make it at the risk of being carried out on a stretcher. I then outlined the forces that were opposed to the recognition of Russia, including the Catholic Church, the Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Labor, and the American Legion. This brought great applause. Then I said that in my opinion the man who had the courage to face this opposition and negotiate recognition of Russia—Franklin Delano Roosevelt—deserved great honor and praise. By their response I judged the audience of some 4,000 people agreed with me.

I also noticed a sudden scurrying about by the inner clique of Communists who had organized the meeting; and the chairman announced that one more speaker would be heard. He then introduced an old-time Communist rabble rouser who proceeded to skin President Roosevelt alive. But he got little response from the audience. From the Communist point of view, the damage had been done beyond repair.

As a result of this meeting I won the reputation of being the only man in Chicago who could wear a cutaway coat, striped trousers, and a wing collar, and make a Communist-sponsored meeting applaud a capitalist President. But I got no further invitations to speak at Communist-sponsored meetings.

3. My son Curtis W. Reese, Jr., who had been graduated from George Williams College after serving three years in the Air Force during World War II, was a member of my staff at Lincoln Center. One day he saw a bulletin on the announcement board at George Williams College stating that a civil service examination was to be given for Junior Administrators. He took the examination, both the written and the oral, and was one of some two hundred and fifty who passed the examination out of several thousand who took it. He was assigned to the Joliet Arsenal, where he recommended, after study, a reorganization of one of the departments. The reorganization plan was accepted, and he was told that he would be made director of the department

So when he was called to the office of the Colonel he thought it was for the purpose of receiving the new assignment, but instead was told that he was suspended as a security risk. The Colonel told him he had three choices: To accept dismissal, to resign, or to fight the situation. He immediately replied that he would fight it. The colonel said that was what he hoped he would say.

There were no charges against my son, except that of allegedly belonging to an organization which neither he nor I had ever heard of before. Upon diligent inquiry, this organization turned out to be a splinter Trotsky group, which a much later Washington ruling said should not have been on the Attorney General's list in the first place. The real charge against my son was that of "close association with his father," which father had nine connections with subversive organizations or persons. Curtis' wife, Lois, who was also a civil service employ at the Joliet Arsenal, was suspended for "close association with her husband, who had close association with his father." This was guilt by association with a vengeance.

We secured an attorney of experience with the American Civil Liberties Union, and demanded a hearing before a properly constituted panel, representing the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force. Meantime, I wrote to Washington and got a copy of the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. To my great surprise I had never been a member of a single organization on the list, nor had I ever contributed a penny to any of them. What I had done, however, was to speak before several of these organizations in the early days, long before there was an Attorney General's list.

My son was on the witness stand for three and one-half hours, and I was on the stand for three hours and forty-five minutes. My wife was a witness, as were my secretary, Mrs. Ann cook, a former Lincoln Centre staff member, Mrs. Edna Hansen, Dr. Wallace Robbins, a host of my son's old-time friends and neighbors, as well as his associates and superiors at the Arsenal.

My wife testified that Curtis was the most politically conservative member of our family, and that she had often referred to him as the Republican of the family, although when he got alone with his conscience in the voting booth he had always voted Democratic. Dr. Robbins told the panel that if the Communists were to take over in the country, one of the first men they would have to shoot would be Curtis Reese. All of my son's lifelong friends and neighbors testified in his behalf, as did every one of his associates and superiors at the Arsenal.

But there was still the basic charge of close association with his father. So it was I who was really on trial, and it was I who had to establish my patriotism. I submitted as part of my testimony photostatic copies of my writings, going back to the mid-twenties, in some of which I had gone further than Senator McCarthy ever went, even to the extent

of expressing a doubt whether the Soviet system and the American way of life could coexist on the same planet. One of the charges against me was that in 1932 I had given a reception for William Z. Foster when he was a candidate for President on the Communist ticket. The fact was that I had presided over a discussion between Foster and a number of liberals from the University of Chicago and others, during which Foster lost his voice and was unable to deliver another speech during the campaign. I told the panel that I thought I deserved a gold medal instead of being charged with subversion. I filed a photostatic copy of a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois commending me and the Abraham Lincoln Centre for service in behalf of democracy. To cut short a very lengthy story of a two-day hearing, the panel adjourned.

Then came the long agony of waiting for the disposition of the case. Finally, after some eight months of waiting, the word came from Washington that Curtis and Lois were both exonerated and restored to their jobs. When Curtis had been promoted to the position much to his liking, he applied for high clearance, much to my dismay, and he got high clearance. The nightmare was over, and our son and his wife were secure and happy once again. The Unitarian belief in integrity and independence was vindicated.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

IN UNITARIANISM TODAY

The object of this chapter on controversial issues in Unitarianism is to state as clearly as possible, in the light of my experience among Unitarians, what the issues are, to sketch their backgrounds, to weigh various attitudes toward them, and to indicate possible solutions.

It is difficult to select the issues that are more significant than many others that confront us. For example:

(1) there is the issue of membership in a Unitarian church. There is no commonly accepted condition or standard of membership, no generally practiced form of initiation, no agreement on obligations involved in membership, and no known method of getting out once you are in. But this is not an issue chosen for discussion.

(2) there is the issue of purpose in relation to corporate pattern. Purposes grow and change; corporate patterns tend to stay fixed. But this issue, too, must be left out of our consideration.

(3) There is the issue of congregational autonomy. Does it mean chaos, or intelligent and voluntary cooperation, from a denominational point of view?

(4) There is the issue of the coordination of denominational agencies. Which agency is responsible for what and where, and how can overlapping and duplication be avoided?

(5) there is the issue of regional areas. What are the minimum and the maximum areas that should be treated as regional areas? Should they be autonomous regions or only administrative units?

(6) There is the issue of recruiting for the ministry. Should we grow our ministers or recruit them from outside?

(7) There is the issue of theological education. Should we continue in the general pattern of Biblical and Christian-centered theological education or branch out along anthropological lines?

(8) there is the problem of religious education. Should we let the desires of a few Bible-center-minded people wreck plans for life-centered curricular materials and sound pedagogical procedures?

(9) There is the problem of the form, content, and purpose of public worship. Are we to forever swing back and forth between unaesthetic informality on the one hand and, on the other, archaic artificiality?

(10) there is the issue of race. Are we to continue violating our basic doctrine of brotherhood?

I merely mention these issues on which we have no common agreement so that we shall not oversimplify our problems. After all, we do have some problems that are more acute, and more important for our corporate life than the issues that currently agitate us.

For my purpose in this volume, I have selected (1) the issue of Unitarian Advance, (2) the issue of the *Unitarian Register*, (3) the issue of social action, and (4) the issue of Humanism.

Now, let us first center attention on the issue of Unitarian Advance.

I. UNITARIAN ADVANCE

In 1943, Mr. Hamilton M. Warren proposed plans for Unitarian Advance, and upon recommendation of an Advisory council of the Association, the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association authorized the appointment of two committees to be now respectively as Committee A and Committee B. Later, Committee C was authorized. Rev. a. Powell Davies, then of Summit, New Jersey, later of Washington, D. C., was named chairman of Committee A; Mr. Hamilton M. Warren of Summit, New Jersey, chairman of Committee B; and Rev. Raymond B. Bragg, then of Minneapolis, later director of the Unitarian Service Committee, and now minister of the Kansas City, Missouri, Unitarian church, chairman of Committee C.

In general, the function of Committee A was to draft a statement of the Unitarian position; the function of Committee B was to recommend procedures and techniques for advancing Unitarianism as interpreted by Committee A; and the function of Committee C was to recommend changes in the organizational structure of the Association that appeared necessary in a campaign of Advance.

Mr. Warren, chairman of Committee B, made the first report of the Committee at the January meeting of the Board in 1944. Mr. Warren is a professional expert in public relations. His committee had proceeded along sound lines. Representative opinion polls were made, and

the tests showed the prevalence of the free mind principles in Unitarian circles. By “the free mind principle” was meant enquiry, and complete freedom to stand by one’s own conclusions.

Committee B recommended that Committee A be charged with the responsibility of formulating a brief statement of the Unitarian position based on the free mind principle and of devising means of showing the uniqueness of such statement of the Unitarian position as compared with the authoritarian creeds; and that this statement and elaboration of it be tested among non-Unitarians, both as a Unitarian statement and as a new statement by a new group.

In subsequent reports Committee B recommended far-reaching plans and procedures for publicizing and extending Unitarianism, which fired the imagination and which might well have revolutionized our movement had the recommendations been adopted in their complete form. The central idea of the recommendation involved a Department of Public Relations charged with far-reaching duties and given powers unusual in ecclesiastical organizations. Without getting us hopelessly lost in details, let me merely say that the plan submitted by Committee B was whittled down to a point where it represented merely minor changes in the Department of Publications—changes which, however, have had good results from a publicity and publications point of view. But the larger vision of a Public Relations Department with its various ramifications was largely lost in the shuffle. Before Committee C had completed its work, controversy over the purpose of Unitarianism had reach such a point that suggestions for organizational changes could not receive the consideration that they merited. It is only fair to say, however, that there was honest difference of opinion as to the wisdom of such far-reaching shifts in organizational structure as were contemplated by Committees B. and C.

Let us now return to the work of Committee A which was the heart of the controversy. Committee A proceeded on two assumptions, viz., that the “situation in the country and the

world invited liberal religious advance” and “that the Unitarian movement could lead in that advance.” The Committee then faced the problem as to whether Unitarianism as then existing was equal to the challenge or whether Unitarianism should redefine itself in terms of a gospel larger and broader than any hitherto defined by us. The committee was intrigued by the thought of the larger and broader gospel. It became evident that Committee A thought of Advance not merely in terms of extension but also in ideological terms. The Committee felt that we must go beyond the free mind principle. Nothing short of the free mind principle, but also something beyond it.

The Board of Directors of the Association was called upon to give to Committee A a statement indicating the direction in which it should move in formulating a statement of the Unitarian position.

VOTED that, recognizing our natural Christian heritage, it is the sense of this Board that our program of Advance should be based on the principle of the free mind which inescapably involves a conception of Unitarianism as a cooperative spiritual movement beyond the limitations of any historic religion and a utilization for spiritual purposes of all available knowledge derived from the various cultures of mankind and of the world-unifying fields of modern knowledge.

The original motion had been mine; it did not include the statement, “recognizing our natural Christian heritage.” But when Dr. Dana Greeley moved this as an amendment, I accepted it, believing it to be a harmless statement of fact.

With this indication of direction, Committee A proceeded to draft a provisional statement and to promote wide discussion of it in the various Ministers' Institutes during the following summer.

In October of 1944 Committee A presented to the Board of the Association a statement of position which it proposed should become the basis of the entire Advance program in all of its ramifications.

After a great deal of discussion, the Board of Directors approved, not as an official statement but as a basis of an Advance program, the following statement:

The Unitarian churches are founded upon individual freedom of belief; discipleship to advancing truth; the democratic process in human relations; universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed; and allegiance to the cause of a united world community.

Unitarian faith grows with the mind's increasing freedom in the search for the essential truth. Within this freedom it calls upon the noble and enduring elements in Christianity and their counterparts in all the great religions. In freedom, also, it draws upon the insights and ideals of men of vision in all ages, renewed and tested in experience, in which the call to conscience is combined with deepening reverence for the power within the life of man which gives him moral stature and awakens spiritual awareness.

In the search for knowledge, Unitarians accept the disciplines and evidence of science, willing to share its methods and humility. To this they add the ageless truth of

prophets, poets and exemplars, the truth confirmed in life and history, which blends with rational faith the joy of beauty and the moral force of passionate conviction.

To Unitarians, the church must be the most honest and advanced of human institutions, knowing no higher loyalty than truth, no compromise with conscience, no motive stronger than love, no purpose greater than the service of mankind.

In freedom of belief and breadth of purpose, the Unitarian churches mark a departure from authoritarian churches, but in love and brotherhood they know no separation. They proclaim the free and universal church from which no man is excluded save by the death of goodness in his own breast, the church of undivided brotherhood based upon the growing common faith of all mankind.

By the time, and during subsequent months, it was evident that on the real issue—the definition of Unitarianism—there was lacking the real unanimity of opinion that was requisite to concerted and enthusiastic Advance. There were still three major positions on the nature of Unitarianism:

1. That Unitarianism is a distinctly Christian movement.
2. That Unitarianism is a bridge between Christian and non-Christian religions.
3. That Unitarianism is a religion beyond the limitations of any ethnic faith, including Christianity.

Finally, the controversy became heated, personalities became involved, and the chairmen of all three Committees resigned. The resignations were read by Rev. Raymond B. Bragg, and were a devastating indictment of the Administration.

I will never forget that scene: All seats at the Directors' table were occupied. All the other Directors' chairs in the Board room were occupied, with backs toward the windows on the Beacon Street side of the room. Dr. Bragg addressed the chairman quietly, and in measured tones began to read a carefully prepared statement in behalf of Dr. A. Powell Davies, Mr. Hamilton Warren, and himself. The room was deadily silent. The statement signed by Dr. Davies, Chairman of Committee A, Mr. Warren, Chairman of Committee B, and Dr. Bragg, Chairman of Committee C was a joint resignation of all three chairmen. The chairmen elaborate their reasons for resigning, chief among them being their resentment of the interference and hostility of the President of the Association, whom they accused of opposing their proposals for no better reason than that they had not originated in his own mind. Those of us who had our eyes fixed on President Eliot noticed first a twitching of his facial muscles; then his head began to shake like that of a man with palsy. We were genuinely concerned lest he drop dead on the spot. However, the dreadful moment passed silently into history. This marked the end of a great and promising vision of Unitarian Advance. The only concrete result salvaged was the appointment of Melvin Arnold as Director of the Department of Publications. Mr. Arnold revived the Department and launched it on a truly great and successful publishing adventure. Melvin Arnold was a courageous and wise, thoroughgoing liberal. He was largely responsible for the publication of the Blanshard books, which was opposed among others by Judge Brooks and Mrs. Pieksen, both of whom were usually found on the liberal side of controversial issues. I bet Mrs. Pieksen \$10 that the sales of the first Blanshard book would pass the 100,000 mark. Moreover, I was

ungallant enough to collect when I won. Incidentally, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* is now in its 30th printing, and has sold nearly a third of a million copies in the clothbound edition and many thousands additional in the new paperback edition.

As a result of all this we have become more conscious of Advance, and also more conscious of the divisions among us that hold back Advance.

But the times are still ripe for a program of advance for liberal religion—one hopes that the potential will be realized with the new Unitarian Universalist Association. The soil of the world has grown a rich harvest of free minds. Never before was there such an opportunity for a movement committed to the principle of the free mind and dedicated to global community. But advance will not be made unless certain definite conditions are fully met.

Among these conditions, and of first importance, is that we must be clear and bold in our interpretation of Unitarian Universalism as a spiritual movement beyond the limitations of any historic religion. We must proclaim a world-unifying gospel derived from the wisdom of all cultures and the knowledge in all fields of modern thought. As an esoteric Christian cult, we have no future and should have none. Such service as can be rendered today by a liberal interpretation of Christianity can best be done by the ecumenical movement within the mainstream of Christian theology. Our place is out upon the high seas of the world, where the winds of thought and aspiration blow from many directions. This is not to deny the Christian influence in our history, but it is to say that Christianity is not enough. We must proclaim proudly that we hail from many sources, and that within our portals there is room for free minds from whatever cultural heritage they may come.

A second condition that must be met if the Unitarian Universalist movement is to fulfill its mission is that leadership must be unqualified in its devotion to the principle of the free mind and to a world program of advance toward new goals. To cherish the black shroud of tradition when we need a shining banner of new goals is to court death. We do not need leadership that merely tolerates the principle of freedom; we need leadership that will risk its official life for freedom. We do not need the leadership of political manipulation; we need leadership out in the wide open—and out in front.

A third condition of Advance is that of democratic collaboration on the part of the ministry. Free ministers want full and free discussion of matters that concern the future of the movement to which they are devoting their very lives. They need the confidence that comes from intimate knowledge of the problems that confront the church in its larger relationships and programs, and they want the inspiration that comes from the free interplay of free minds. No program of Advance can hope to succeed without having passed through the fiery test of ministerial consideration and criticism.

Let these conditions be met, and we have nothing to fear. All smaller problems that concern us will be resolved in the vigor that comes from a clear purpose, the confidence that comes from courageous leadership, and the loyalty that comes from democratic participation.

II. The Unitarian Register

The *Christian Register* was founded in 1821. It is four years older than the American Unitarian Association itself. From 1821 through 1939—as period of 118 years—the *Register* was an independent journal in the sense that it was controlled by a self-perpetuating

authority. I do not know what various forms this self-perpetuating authority or ownership took during various periods of the 118 years. But in modern times, until the end of 1939, the authority rested with a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. During this 118-year period the *Register* was independent of denominational control, but it was not independent of control by a small group of persons who possessed the authority to determine its policies and to name their successors. So much for the period of alleged independence, a subject to which I shall revert in another connection.

The problem of publishing the *Register*, including the lack of a full-time editor of finances, became so acute that in May of 1937 the Board of the American Unitarian Association received a communication from the Clerk of the *Register* Trustees, which resulted in the appointment of a Committee of the Association to confer with the Trustees of the *Register* on the problems involved.

Dr. Frederick R. Griffin was made chairman of this Committee, and in October of 1937, he reported on the need for a full-time editor and suggested various ways of increasing the circulation.

This matter rested until April of 1938, when the Board of the *Register* advised the Board of the Association that they desired to appoint Mr. Llewellyn Jones as editor. The Board of the American Unitarian Association at the time authorized \$4,700 for the use of the *Register* during the first six months of the fiscal year beginning May 1, 1938, with an indication that an additional appropriation might be requested later for the second half of the fiscal year.

By the fall of 1939 it became evident to the Boards of both the *Register* and the Association that a financial crisis was at hand. The subsidy for the year ending April 30, 1940, had already been spent and nothing was left for running expenses.

After full discussion, including information to the effect that the *Register* was about to suspend publication, the Board of directors of the American Unitarian Association adopted a vote offering to take over the *Register* with its assets and liabilities, and to continue the *Register* under the authority of the Association. This proposal was accepted by the Board of the *Register*, and the formal transfer was effected as of January 1, 1940.

Since January 1, 1940, the *Register* has been published as an official organ of the American Unitarian Association and has been administered under the Division of Promotion and Publications—now known as the Department of Publications.

At the meeting of the Board of the American Unitarian Association in January of 1940, a vote was passed “to establish within the Division of Promotion and Publication an Advisory Board for the *Christian Register* . . . to be associated with the editor in the conduct of the paper.” This Advisory Board consisted of a widely representative group—one each from the Unitarian Ministerial Union, the General Alliance, the Laymen’s League, the Young People’s Religious Union, and the Board of the Association.

During the next four months, 1,000 new subscribers were secured and at the May meetings in 1940 the Annual Meeting of the Association adopted a vote urging all hands to support the *Register*.

But the financial troubles continued to worry the Board of the Association as they had the Board of the *Register*. Hence in March of 1941 a special committee recommended that

the *Register* be issued monthly instead of weekly; that the supervisory editorship be assumed by the Division of Publications; and that an Editorial Advisory Board consist of the divisional heads of the Association.

The Board voted to authorize the policy of monthly publication and charged the Executive Committee with power to make such changes in editorial personnel and costs as would reduce and deficit for the fiscal year 1941-42 to a sum not to exceed \$2,500.

Thus, beginning in June of 1941, after the resignation of Llewellyn Jones, the *Register* was published for the next eighteen months under an Editorial Board composed of the divisional heads, with the President of the Association as chairman, and Miss Mildred Boie as editor. At the May Meetings of 1942 this general policy was commended by vote of the Annual Meeting.

In November of 1942 Mr. Stephen H. Fritchman was made acting editor, and in January of 1943 he was confirmed as editor by vote of the Board of the Association.

During the period following June, 1941, through the joint editorships of Miss Boie and of Mr. Fritchman, the *Register* was issued under the Division of Publications and an Editorial board consisting of the President of the Association and the divisional directors.

During the period subscriptions increased, and there was a minimum of criticism until 1946.

At the January, 1946, meeting of the Board, after full discussion of criticisms brought against the editor, it was voted that "it is the sense of this Board that the editor of the *Register* is following along sound lines."

Charges of communistic influence and infiltration were directed at the editor of Mr. Larry S. Davidow of Detroit, at the May, 1946, meeting of the Board. During the following months formal hearings were had, and at the meeting of the board in October of 1946 the Board voted 29 to 2 to exonerate Mr. Fritchman from the charges brought against him by Mr. Davidow, and 25 to 6 to retain Mr. Fritchman as editor.

It then appeared that the new arrangement for publishing the *Register* by the Association, in the Department of Publications, under the editorial direction of the President and the divisional heads in consultation with the editor, met with a decided majority approval. The Administration had given Mr. Fritchman full support. It was expected that the situation would settle down to normal operation.

But early in May of 1947 an entirely new situation arose, which shook the denomination from coast to coast.

In a controversy between the editor and the Editorial Board over the proposed publication of an editorial on American Policy in Greece, Mr. Fritchman made it plain that he could no longer continue operating under the arrangement that had been in effect for five years, and that he regarded the issue as one of editorial freedom. The editor was then suspended by the Executive Committee of the Association on May 8, 1947, and on May 20, the Board of the Association approved his dismissal. This whole matter was publicly discussed at the Annual Meeting of the Association, and the Administration's position was sustained by vote of the Annual Meeting.

A resolution presented to the General conference in Washington in October of 1947, together with a recommendation from the Commission on Policy and Review, resulted in the

creation of a special committee to study and report on the *Christian Register* at the Annual Meeting of the Association in May of 1948. This committee was created, with Dilworth Lupton, formerly of Cleveland and then of Waltham, Massachusetts, as chairman.

This Committee reported to the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association in May of 1948. The report recommended that, except for two editorial pages, the present status of the *Register* be continued; that a managing editor, serving in the department of Publications of the Association and having charge of the general preparation and production of the *Register*, be elected by the Board of the Association; and that a rotating Board of three editors be elected by the American Unitarian Association Board from a panel nominated by the American Ministers' Association, the General Alliance, the Laymen's League, and the American Unitarian Youth. The report recommended that the Board of Editors should, in addition to having complete responsibility for the two editorial pages, serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of Publications in the general makeup of the *Register*, and as a *Register* Board of Planning and Review. It was also recommended that the Board of Editors deal with unsolicited articles having to do with denominational affairs. The Committee went into some detail regarding the composition of the Editorial Board, with a view to securing fair representation of varying points of view and like matters.

The recommendations were approved by the Annual Meeting of the Association, the nominations were made by the agencies involved, and the Board of the Association elected Harry C. Meserve for a period of three years, Gerald F. Weary for a period of two years, and Warren B. Walsh for a period of one year. And so the new plan went into effect.

However, the fundamental issues still remained, for there were many who did not believe that the present plan would prove satisfactory. Indeed, the special committee itself

recommended that in 1950 a new committee be created to review the whole matter and report in 1951.

In 1957 at the Annual Meeting it was voted to change the name of the *Register* from *The Christian Register* to *The Unitarian Register*. I had advocated this change for a quarter of a century, but at the first of May Meetings I failed to attend, the perverse and unpredictable Unitarians finally voted to make it.

The possibilities for the publication of the *Register* appear to be five in number:

1. The *Register* could be published by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. In this case the problem of finance would be a major one. The *Register* cannot be supported by subscriptions alone. Private subsidy of a self-perpetuating Board would hardly be expected to provide the additional independence desired by some of our fellowship and it would certainly not guarantee a journal representative of our complex relationship. It would hardly be good policy or good democracy for the Association to subsidize and independent self-perpetuating Board of Trustees.
2. The *Register* could be published by a Board elected by the Annual Meeting of the Association and financed by the Association. This method would have the alleged advantage of providing a Board independent of the Board of the Association and of the Administration. There would seem, however, no reason to suppose that a Board thus elected would be different in ideological composition from the regular Board of the Association elected by the same body.

3. The *Register* could be published by a Board appointed by the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association. This would be an Administration-created Board and would appear to have no advantage over the former plan of an Editorial Board created by the Administration.
4. The *Register* could be published by a Board created jointly by the major denominational agencies and regional areas, and financed through the United Unitarian Appeal. There would be much to say for this plan. Although it should be added that the major denominational agencies and the regional areas are not represented on the Board of the American Unitarian Association, and there is no reason to suppose that the suggested Board would be strikingly different in attitude from the Board of the Association itself. And there would naturally be the additional charge that the bureaucracy of five major agencies had been substituted for the bureaucracy of one agency and might reasonably be expected to be five times as objectionable.
5. The *Register* could continue to be published as in recent years by the Association through the regularly established publication and administrative channels

There is, of course, the possibility that the plan most recently in effect will be found to work satisfactorily; or than plans discussed for the new denomination will prove acceptable. Since the question of the freedom of the press has entered considerably into the discussion of the *Unitarian Register*, I should like to close my remarks on this subject with a few observations.

There are few subjects on which there is more confused thinking than on that of the freedom of the press as applied to journals of opinion. The right of persons or groups of persons, of institutions or movements, to own, publish, and distribute journals representing their

respective points of view is inherent in democracy and is essential to a healthy and vigorous society. This right should be restricted only when its exercise presents clear and immediate danger to the process of democracy itself. But there is no obligation whatever on the part of a publication to violate its own purpose by becoming a vehicle for the fostering of other, and often contradictory, purposes.

A journal is not violating the freedom of the press by deliberately excluding propaganda in behalf of purposes other than that for which it exists. The *Daily Worker* and the *Wall Street Journal* are well within their rights when they fit their editorial policy to the framework of their purpose. Similarly, a liberal journal may properly insist that the editorial page conform to liberal purposes. There are innumerable issues within the framework of a purpose on which there should be editorial freedom. But there is no inalienable right of editors to use the editorial columns for the fostering of personal purposes contrary to those of the publishers. Elijah P. Lovejoy died in defense of his right to publish an abolitionist paper. He did not die for the right of slaveholders to use his paper to foster slavery.

III. SOCIAL ACTION

In the very nature of Unitarianism as a religion concerned in a major way with the good life in this world, it has always taken a keen interest in the social scene. Humanitarian reforms have been at home in our movement. But owing to our emphasis on individual liberty of opinion in all matters, action in relation to reforms has been largely through individual Unitarians rather than through corporate structures.

Larger even than action by individuals in specific instances has been the social influence of the teachings of William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, and Francis G. Peabody, and of the example of Joseph Tuckerman, Susan B. Anthony, and Henry W. Bellows. I could multiply these names indefinitely; but I merely want to make the point that loyalty to our corporate doctrine of liberty of opinion has not frustrated the work or the influence of social prophets among us.

But corporate action in social matters has not been entirely lacking. Some fifty or more years ago the American Unitarian Association set up a Department of Social Service under the leadership of Elmer S. Forbes. Pamphlets dealing with social problems were issued by this department of the Association. Mr. Forbes went about among the churches interesting them in social issues. Forty years ago when, in Iowa, I was in the midst of a battle which resulted in the enactment of the first statewide Housing Law in the United States, Elmer Forbes gave me encouraging counsel and sympathetic understanding.

In the early twenties the General conference created a Commission, widely representative, of which I was chairman. The Commission drafted and circulated a program of Social Reconstruction which was at least as thoroughgoing as that of any other denominational pronouncements in the period following the First World War.

In the twenties also, the American Unitarian Associations created a department of Social Relations, with Robert Dexter as director, a department which exists to this day in modified form in the Division of Education.

Contemporaneously with the Department of Social Service, the Department of Social Relations, and the Division of Education, there has existed the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, to which special reference should be made.

The Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice was founded as an independent agency under the inspiration of Arthur L. Weatherly and John Haynes Holmes. From the first it was considerably to the left of the social liberals of the fellowship. While the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice was sound in conception, it was never able to become other than a left-wing minority. The Commission of Appraisal in 1936 suggested that the Fellowship be officially recognized as potentially one of the major Unitarian agencies in order that there might be an outlet for the more radical conscience in our midst. But the Fellowship has not been so recognized; and it was at first unable to secure inclusion in the United Unitarian Appeal. Apparently the prevailing opinion was that the radical position of the Fellowship would interfere with the securing of funds through the Appeal for general purposes. It should be said also that there are persons, both in and out of the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, who sincerely believe that its liberty of action would be hampered should it receive major support from the United Unitarian Appeal.

It should also be said that beginning with the Presidency of Edwin H. Wilson, the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice has steadily grown in membership and influence. It now maintains an adequately equipped office in Washington, D.C. It has the active support of Mrs. Paul Beorishard, Senator and Mrs. Paul Douglas, Mrs. A. Powell Davies, and a list of other well-known Unitarian liberals. If the developments of the last several years continues, the U.F.S.J. can become the liberal conscience of the Unitarian and Universalists movements.

The Unitarian Temperance Society and the Unitarian Pacifist Fellowship are examples of Unitarian groups in the field of social action organized for limited objections. But their sails do not catch the prevailing winds of Unitarian social thought.

The Unitarian Service Committee is social action of a high order.

A catalogue of the positions taken on social issues by the Annual Meetings of the Association itself and by the Regional Conferences would be enlightening to those who at times feel that Unitarians have been corporately neglectful in this field. Such a catalogue would range all the way from birth control through child labor and collective bargaining to a Federation of the World.

The unanimity with which Unitarians agree on incorporating social content into the body of religion is indicated by the widespread reaction from all shades of Unitarian theological opinion against such groups as the so-called Committee of Free Unitarians who appeared to be hostile to any progressive social interpretation of religion.

There is nothing surer than that the Unitarian movement is by its nature, by its history, and by its prophets committed to socialized medicine.

And there is nothing surer than that the Unitarian movement is by its nature, by its history, and by its prophets committed to freedom of individual opinion.

Our difficulties in connection with social action come in connection with the problem of reconciling these equally valid values.

I suggest that solution of this dilemma requires that we distinguish between liberty of opinion and anarchy of opinion; and that we distinguish between social action and social dogmatism.

Liberty to opinion in our tradition operates within the framework of a historical movement committed to a liberal philosophy of life. It does not mean freedom to be in opposition to a structure of freedom. Social action in our tradition means the use of ideas and organized instrumentalities in the fostering of the larger liberal revolution in which inquiry shall be free, and in which social values shall prevail. It does not mean the insistence on a set scheme of social organization to which all others must belong.

We must learn how to distinguish between social action that supports and broadens liberty and human well-being, and action, however camouflaged, nevertheless leads toward slavery and human degradation.

We must learn how to avoid being used in the name of social action by rightist liberty leagues whose aim is the preservation of the status quo, or by leftist totalitarian groups whose aim is state control of thought and action and cultural development.

In the local church, where most of our difficulties come, there are various devices that may be used to reconcile individual freedom with social action, these devices include study groups, forums, and special committees for action in connection with limited objectives that are obviously integral to our gospel—and there are any such, including racial equality; social responsibility for meeting and preventing human ills; freedom of press and speech and assembly; fostering cooperation in the use of opportunity; development of world community; and others of like nature.

The church is the supreme instrument for the effective fostering of love for and loyalty to the highest, the best, and the most effective goods that man knows, and for the cultivation of moods that give strength and energy in the search for still higher, better, and more effective goals.

What I have said is in general applicable to churches of all sorts but it is especially applicable to liberal churches. Such churches are committed to the fostering of certain general goods, such as the importance of free inquiry, the integrity of reason, the worth of personality, and the goal of commonweal. These and other similar values are very general but they give significance to human living and to whatever techniques are found useful in human living. In the fostering of these values there is general unanimity among all sorts of liberals, but when one tries to transfer this unanimity to specific programs such as religion in the public schools, wide divergence immediately appears. Peace this effort beyond very moderate grounds and the church ceases to be a source of inspiration and confidence, and becomes a center of animosity, suspicion, and ill will; the preacher ceases to be a prophet of the most high, and becomes a partisan of one among many more or less effective methods of doing good.

From a somewhat more practical point of view, let me suggest reasons why the church should not allow itself to become the instrument of community propaganda agencies:

- (1) No one institution can be active in every social issue and still do anything well. The church is no exception to this rule. The church will find ample scope for its energies if it will do a good job of propagandizing in behalf of the love of that which is good, of loyalty to that which is true, of justice and fellowship. But once let the church

begin to duplicate the work of other agencies in the more narrow specialized fields of good works, or let it become the instrument of such agencies, and its energies will disappear, its influences wane, and its glory pass away. The church should apply to itself the principle of limited liability.

- (2) Disproportionate emphasis on the program of any particular good cause will, if it is successful, and if it is unsuccessful it will develop a state of disharmony that will make fellowship impossible. In either event, it will denude the church of its larger souls who want to see life as a whole from the vantage point of the highest ideals. This is just as true of radical churches as it is of conservative ones. A radical church may maintain unity when centering attention upon the general thesis that the social order should be remade, but let it begin to specify the 'Middle Way' or the 'Soviet way' or the 'Technocratic Way,' or what have you, and it will develop more schisms than you can count. A church may maintain a certain unity in the advocacy of peace but let it specify the 'enforcement of peace' or the plan of 'outlawry' or 'Union Now' or 'nonresistance,' and you will see the dove of peace take speedy flight from the steeple top.
- (3) Any church that thinks it will gain in members or secure financial support or fulfill its highest purpose by identifying itself with a specific propaganda group is doomed to disappointment. I have seen this tried. It simply never works longer than for a temporary period. The zealots of some good cause may rally for a while about the church that adopts their baby, but not for long. They are versatile in their affections and highly prolific, and so soon there are other babies to be put out in other homes. These zealots have a way of forgetting that they ever knew the baby at all and may

even later suggest that a home that would house such an imp should be burned to the ground and its ashes scattered to the four winds. Witness the united front for collective security—later the united point of isolation, next the united front for war, and then the united front for peace. No, you cannot build into a liberal church the orthodoxy of the Stalinists any more than you can that of any other group of dogmatists.

- (4) The real sympathy that the church must feel for many propaganda agencies, such as those devoted to civil liberties, to interracial good will, and the like, can be most effectively expressed by a church that is free from entangling alliances, and so is able to speak free from fear and without hope of favor. A mere side remark in a free pulpit in behalf of some good cause, by a minister known for his independence and fairness of judgment, is far more effective than the longest discussion by a clergyman known to be in the grip of the partisans of that same good cause. A reputation for temperance in the use of propaganda is not less important than a reputation for temperance in the use of other kinds of intoxicants.

Let it be noted that I have not said that a matter as an individual should not affiliate with specific partisan groups. I have not even said that he should refrain from preaching sermons of a particular propaganda nature. What I have said, or at least meant to say, is that the church as such should devote itself chiefly to the grand task of super-propaganda; and by the same token the minister who wants to be anything more than a glorified office boy of a reform society had best do the same thing.

IV. HUMANISM

Throughout Unitarian history there have been many Unitarians who have taken seriously the Unitarian principles of freedom, reason, and tolerance. In the Western Unitarian Conference, the motto has long been ‘Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion.’ In the latter part of the last century the battle over the so-called Western Issue was fought and won for the freedom of the pew. In the twenties of this century the battle over Humanism which centered largely in the West was fought and won to give to the pulpit the same freedom previously won for the pew.

But after these years of relatively peaceful cooperation on the part of Humanists and theists in the Unitarian Fellowship, there still bob up from time to time persons who either do not understand the nature of the Unitarian movement or who cannot accept the fact of freedom, reason, and tolerance as abiding principles, and who want to make of the Unitarian movement, a Christian or theistic sect. I have no fear that the Unitarian movement will establish a norm of orthodoxy but I do fear that discussion of the issues involved will not be carried on at a level that will do credit to our reputation for intellectual competence.

For example, in a mimeographed sermon distributed by Rev. Paul Chapman, the minister tries to tie up Humanism and Communism in one neat little package, with these words:

This new Humanism accepts economic determinism as the key to the history of man; it proclaims: “The charts were drawn long ago—man passes from feudalism through capitalism and industrialism and on to communism.”

The last part of this statement is quoted from my book, *the Meaning of Humanism*, but it is taken completely out of context and made to mean exactly the opposite of what I said. In the context it is perfectly plain that I was contrasting Humanism with both economic determinism and laissez-faire. There is no excuse for such garbling.

Again, in much of the discussion now going on, the frame of reference is rarely made plain. It is one thing to discuss Humanism and theism in reference to organized Unitarianism. It is quite another to engage in speculative discussion of the relative merits of various theological and philosophical points of view. If the frame of reference is the organized Unitarian movement, then the appeal is to history, to the validity of Wilbur's statement of basic Unitarian principles, to the documents that govern Unitarian organizations, or to the spirit that constitutes the genius of the movement.

The contention of the Humanist, along with that of most theists, is that no particular theological or philosophical point of view has priority in the Unitarian Fellowship. If this be granted, as I am sure it is by the overwhelming majority of Unitarianism, then diversity of theological and philosophical positions become a matter of personal conviction or of intellectual speculation and has no corporate significance.

But even in speculative discussion argument should be carried on in the context of current meaning. No Humanist is justified in discussing the position of Unitarian theists in terms that might be applicable to old-fashioned anthropomorphism, to the supernaturalism of the prescientific era, or to primitive animism; and by the same token, no theist should discuss Humanism in terms that would be appropriate only in discussing atheism, agnosticism, or old-fashioned naturalism. A sound principle of discussion is that one should distinguish between schools of thought that have superficial resemblance or even peripheral agreements.

In a recent statement by one of our ministers, Humanists are divided into three groups, described as atheistic, agnostic, and naturalistic. This leaves some of us who are commonly known as Humanists without a categorical home. If the term atheism still has any meaning, it is an attitude of denial that the various types of theism account for the basic nature of the universe. In a sense each school of theism is atheistic in regard to other schools of theism. Specifically, Unitarian theists are atheists in regard to anthropomorphism. But my principal argument with the use of the term atheism in our theological discussions is that it has no relevance. The basic attitude of Humanism, as with all intelligent modern thought, is that of inquiry. In the course of inquiry there are tentative judgments and there are suspended judgments, but even these are incidental—the quest is the thing of central importance. Saying “atheistic Humanist” is comparable to saying “animistic theist” and is equally meaningless. The term atheism will doubtless continue to be hurled for emotive purposes at all sorts of Unitarians by archaic-minded people, but it has no place in a discussion of the brethren in a free Fellowship.

Agnosticism as a school of thought should not be equated with the tentative attitude of mind that is characteristic of the scientific method. In reality agnosticism is highly dogmatic. It knows so much about the nature of the universe that it knows the universe cannot be known. The only people today with whom we are concerned, to whom the term agnostic might possibly be appropriately applied, are the Neo-Calvinists and their Unitarian fellow-travelers who appear to know so much about the nature of both man and God that they know man can never fully know God. It is one thing to say that we do not know. It is quite another to say that we can never know. I have much faith in the ability of man in the understandable nature of the universe that I am unwilling to set any limits to inquiry.

Even the term naturalism has ceased to have much distinctive significance in Unitarian circles. The term supernatural is taboo among us and all things are natural. It is only in the realm of emotional or aesthetic attitudes that some Humanists might be called naturalists and others not. All Humanists are at home in the 'natural' world but some feel a bit more cozy than others.

Humanism centers attention on man and it does not regard any particular cosmology as essential to religious living. Doubtless various cosmologies are religiously helpful to various people but the point is that no special one of them, such as theism, is essential. To believe that one particular interpretation of the nature of the universe is essential to religion is to foster bigotry and promote religious isolationism. Religion today must be larger than the patterns of any tribal or ethnic faith. The soul of man has many windows looking out upon varying scenes, but no one of them gives a view of the total landscape.

But this is not to say that we are a group in which theists are Humanists, and Humanists are theists—that both proceed from the same presupposition. There are basic differences that should not be ignored. A minimum statement of the theistic position is that the nature of the universe is such that values are cosmically guaranteed despite hostile human forces. A maximum statement of Humanism is that the nature of the universe is such that human values may be progressively realized on the human level even in the face of hostile cosmic forces. Between these two positions there is a world of difference, and efforts to smooth over this difference do not enhance the clear thinking that is necessary for a virile philosophical position. Let us be fair with one another. Let us carry on our discussions in terms that are relevant today and let us welcome diversity, but let us not assume that we all mean the same thing when we say different things, nor should we assume that we mean the same thing even when we say the same thing. If only the term God is used it seems to satisfy many people, no matter what meaning is attached to

it. Good theists would be well advised to be wary of persons who used the word but know not the meaning. Clear thinking is a virtue that we should not neglect.

A good statement on Unitarianism was made years ago by Ephraim Emerton of Harvard University in a volume titled *Unitarian Thought*. He said the Unitarian's "religious thinking begins with and centers about the idea of man himself as an independent self-determining being. His religion is a religion of humanity, starting from human impulses, limited by human capacities, working by human methods and expressing itself in human ways."

Let me now state briefly what appears to be involved in the Humanist position so that we can see how native it is to the Unitarian tradition and spirit.

The Humanist position involves, short, the centering of attention on man as man and for mankind's sake. This implies belief in man's inherent worth and capabilities, and the testing of all things by their contribution to the life of man. There is a sense in which all religions give attention to man, but not man as man. Their major interest has been centered on things cosmic and on man only as he is related to, or is a reflected of, an over-world. The logical conclusion of this attitude found expression in the classic creedal statement: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

Humanism is interested in man as man, with worth that is inherent and not derived, with value that is in and of his nature and not conferred. Too much emphasis could hardly be placed on this point. A program of fellowship based on the family pattern wherein men are brothers only because they are children of a common Father can hardly stand the strain of sibling rivalry in the complexity of international life.

The Humanist position involves, in the second place, an attitude of inquiry toward the mystery that envelops man and his world. I am increasingly convinced that for most people religion is basically a pious attitude toward mystery. And that as mystery disappears, religion tends to disappear with it. This is unfortunate, for religious attitudes are most needed in the areas where inquiry has pushed back the veils of mystery and revealed possibilities of controlling and directing events toward desired ends.

The Humanist is convinced that as a result of inquiry the areas of knowledge can be expanded without set limits, and he is cautious that no particular fund of knowledge be regarded as final. In this the Humanist is in accord with the whole liberal tradition, for the one thing which above all others distinguishes the liberal is the attitude of inquiry. The Humanist, like the liberal, may get unsatisfactory replies, he may be baffled by the mystery that envelops us all, but he will never cease to inquire, and he will find little comfort in a peace that passes understanding.

In the third place, the Humanist position involves the conviction that the purposes of man can be built into his world with the result that an increasingly satisfactory life can be effected on this planet for all men. In this respect, at least, Humanism is in agreement with existentialism, a cardinal doctrine of which is that man can build his values into this universe.

The Humanist feels reasonably sure that in building the world he is not dependent on plans drawn long ago, nor on a pattern kept on some external mount, nor on the cyclic swing of the epochs of history, nor on an immutable cosmic will. He is persuaded that by taking thought he can add stature to the measure of man.

There is no good reason why Humanists, theists, and others should not get along together without undue friction in the Unitarian Fellowship, but this requires sympathetic understanding

of differing points of view. It requires mutual respect on the part of those who differ, and especially it requires integrity in thought and clarity in discussion.

A movement such as ours, claiming no corner on knowledge about the ultimate nature of the universe, maintaining an attitude of inquiry toward all the affairs that concern man, and devoted to the well-being of all people should move into the future with great confidence and high hope.

CHAPTER TEN

MY APPRAISAL OF THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT

On the basis of a half-century of Unitarian experience during which I have preached in Unitarian churches in practically every state where there is a Unitarian church, and during which I have a record of serving the Board of the Western Unitarian Conference, the American Unitarian Association, and the Meadville Theological School longer than any other living Unitarian, and of having received in 1959 the Unitarian Award for Distinguished Service to Liberal Religion, I can say in the utmost confidence that I regard the Unitarian movement as the freest and the noblest religious fellowship that has yet to come to birth on this planet. With our merger with Universalism, the outlook for the Unitarian Universalist movement is bright with hope, for the soil of the world is rich with possibilities of growth. But this is not a time for Unitarians of the genteel tradition who are frightened in the presence of explosive issues that blast their world and shake the earth. It is not a time for Unitarians of the pious tradition who believe that all is right with the world and that all things work together for good. It is not a time for confused Unitarians who move simultaneously in all directions without arriving anywhere in particular.

This is a time for Unitarians who believe that the only form of society worth building and perpetuating is one grounded in respect for the integrity of persons, committed to critical inquiry, and devoted to abundant freedom.

The confusion of thought in all areas of life, together with the revival of tyranny in politics and of bigotry in religion, make it especially necessary that Unitarians understand clearly

what the liberal position means, and that they take the offensive against totalitarian control of the human spirit, and in behalf of expanding liberty and a free world.

Sweeping aside the accidental accretions of history, the main framework of the Unitarian position may be briefly but, I think, accurately, stated as (1) belief in the inherent worth of persons, involving their right to freedom; (2) devotion to objective inquiry, involving respect for facts and integrity in dealing with them; (3) loyalty to the conception of justice, involving fairness to all without regard to differences in origin or affiliation; (4) the supremacy of intelligence, involving the reappraisal of institutions and customs in accord with the growing life of man; and (5) the relative nature of liberty itself, involving the relativity of liberty both as principle and method to framework of purpose.

Underneath these Unitarian and principles is the bedrock presupposition that the universe is so constituted that on the human level and within the limitations of the natural scene human intelligence is determinative; that we are not mere spokes in a cosmic spinning wheel.

I find it difficult to imagine a form of society, whether secular or ecclesiastical, that denies these principles and still deserves the respect and loyalty of a free soul. They are permanent and not transient values. They are positive and not negative principles, which when practiced become virtues of the first order and which when violated make all else of little importance. They condition the worth of all other values and without them no other goods can constitute the good life. They are essential to the expansion of knowledge and the development of persons. To the extent that any form of society neglects them, whether that form of society is individualistic or collectivistic, primitive or atomic, it is to that extent a tyranny.

It would appear than a position and a movement representing such significant principles would have caught the imagination of at least the best minds and won the loyalty of the many who have felt the pressures of authoritarian controls, but such has not been the case. There are clergymen who have caught the vision but who have succumbed to the invitation of convenience or the pull of convention. There are statesmen who have seen the light but who have been maneuvered into the shadow or pressured into the darkness. There are men of letters and men of labor who have set their feet on the liberal way but who have stumbled into the abyss of totalitarianism.

There are reasons why this is so; and the Unitarian movement itself must bear a large share of the blame. It is not enough to point out the areas of illiberalism and to chasten the illiberal. We must look within the liberal tradition itself for the causes of its weakness. And the chief causes seem to be these: The liberal movement has allowed itself to be identified with historically passing social theories; it has neglected the areas of economic well-being; and it has treated motivation as if it were sensitive only to the ring of a cash register.

The accidental historical association of the liberal position with a competitive economy need not be considered as divinely appointed and forever binding. The liberal position has functioned in a laissez-faire society and there is no inherent reason why it cannot function in a cooperative society. Much of the present-day criticism of the liberal position is due to the fact that it is identified in the minds of the proletariat as an upper-class system designed to perpetuate privilege and hold back the movement of democracy. That liberals and liberal movements have given ground for such appraisal is beyond dispute; but in so doing they themselves have violated the liberal spirit and temper.

Any economic system must be judged by the extent to which it equitably supplies plentiful goods and services to all the people. Judged by this standard, no system yet devised—either capitalism or Communism—is good enough to meet the requirements of a really liberal society; and there is no reason why the liberal movement should identify itself with any particular system of economy and be sensitive to attacks upon it. A liberal who knows what the implications of his position are should know that he cannot commit himself to either Adam Smith or Karl Marx, or to any particular economic system. The future must be kept upon for experiments in scientific and intelligent developments in social theory and practice.

But there is no denying the fact that in general Unitarians, being in the main from the more privileged areas of society, have been averse to dealing radically with social problems. We have said equality of opportunity, but we have not said mutual aid in the use of opportunity. We have temporized where decisive action was called for, and this has not endeared us to the great multitude who live constantly on the brink of economic disaster. There is justice to the charge that we have been silent when we should have been heard; that we have been absent from scenes of conflict when we should have been present; and that we have excused wrongs when we should have blasted them with condemnation. It is difficult for persons whose weekly paycheck stands between them and utter destitution to appreciate the virtues of free inquiry. The principle of the free mind gives little satisfaction to victims of discrimination. It is difficult to hear the quiet voice of reason above the crackling flames of a lynching bee or the hiss of a blowtorch!

Moreover, the Unitarian movement has not appealed sufficiently to the venturesome and heroic motivations. There has been a too-ready acceptance of the individualistic notion that man is motivated by personal gain and a too-easy capitulation to the collectivist notion that economic forces determine the trend of events. From the point of view of ethical motivation there is little

choice between the theory that private gain is man's chief incentive and the theory that the patterns of history are of economic derivation. There are numerous categories of motivation, from personal glory to sacrificial death, that dwarf the claims of the hypothetical economic man and challenge all rhythmic theories of historical processes. The love of little children the affection of comrades, the appeal of the afflicted, the claim of mercy, and the call of justice have not yet lost their power; and no cold, calculating abstraction can ever take their place as moving forces in the souls of men. Such sources of power the Unitarian would do well to cultivate more deeply.

But a more fruitful line of procedure for making the Unitarian movement effective in the world today is the building of positive attitudes, based on liberal principles, and relating concretely to specific problems and pressing issues that occupy the attention of men and nations.

First, and perhaps most important of all, we must be alert to encroachments on the freedom of persons. The stealth, the intrigue, and the wicked designs of the illiberal are a constant menace. They creep upon us from the right clothed in the most innocent garb of "American first," or they leap at us from the left waving the most inviting anti-Fascist banners. Only the most vigorous alertness can avail to keep us oriented toward liberty.

A second attitude that we need to cultivate is that of unfaltering resistance to limitations of the area of inquiry and communication. It is not alone in the field of religion that dogmas tend to set limits beyond which one is not supposed to venture. In politics and in social arrangements dogmas limit thought and stifle inquiry. In education in industry one must constantly fight against dogmas and fixed processes. In every field of life sacred cows block the highways, lounge in front of public buildings, and consume sustenance needed for creative purposes. Laws

and committee procedures, supervisory regulations and censorship, prohibitions and conventions, habits and arched brows—all lay restrictions on freedom of inquiry and communication.

The liberal must be alert to such encroachments and limitations. The very fact that any portal is closed should arouse his suspicion and nerve him for ventures beyond the sacred limits. The fact that any dogma is considered certain should stir the liberal to rebellion. I dislike to see the liberal accepting as certainty even the theory of evolution, or the law of relativity. All special preserves should be invaded and all curtains torn asunder. The quest for uncertainty has its virtues.

The invasion of the public schools by sectarian instruction with accompanying ecclesiastical raids on the exchequer of the public, the imposition of authoritarian discipline, and the operation of governmental commissions checking on the thoughts of the people, are encroachments upon freedom and should be condemned as such. It is forever true that liberty is maintained by vigilance and extended by pressure.

From an organizational point of view, the Unitarian movement needs to be more active in the protection of its lines of purpose and more vigorous and effective on the offensive. The traditional amorphous liberal and democratic movements are easy victims of intrigue. Liberals themselves are sometimes ensnared in the sophistry that it is illiberal for a liberal movement to protest its liberty and that it is undemocratic for a democratic movement to protect its democracy. Such sophistry grows out of failure to understand that liberty does not exist in vacuo but that it is related to a framework of purpose. The purposes of organized movements are not arbitrarily determined by individual caprice. They grow out of history, they are organic to the genius of a movement, and they may not be violated with impunity. Liberal movements are no exception. They may of right and must of necessity protect themselves from invasion by the

enemies of liberty, and failure to do so means organizational impotence, which has too often characterized liberal movements in our time.

But defensive tactics alone do not win victories. We need to challenge to open combat the intolerant and the bigoted, the unjust and the vicious. Timidity will not do. Being too proud to fight will not do. Fear of contamination by contact with unpopular causes will not do. The liberal offensive must challenge the forces of orthodoxy, including the superstition-ridden Vatican, the dialectically encrusted Kremlin, and all other forms of totalitarianism.

It is not enough to be a respected but harmless minority. We must aim to be a force to be reckoned with and to be feared by forces that hold back the movement of mankind toward a free, a fair, and a just world.

Liberty's framework of purpose grows out of a history of concern for the well-being of persons. The framework is there, but content must be built into the framework in accord with the needs of succeeding generations. In our time the great need is for the building of social content into the framework of liberal principles. Liberty to be hungry and cold, liberty to live in rags and die in despair, is not meaningful liberty. No one who has tested poverty and felt the pinch of insecurity, and no one who has heard the tramping feet of the unemployed and the wail of the dispossessed, can regard liberty as a mere framework of abstractions. The liberal movement needs to move into the areas where men toil and sweat, where bread is made and ore is melted; where discrimination is felt, and where lingering hope fades into death. Ivory towers, church towers, and towers of commerce are not suitable dwelling places for an awakened liberal spirit.

A final attitude that the Unitarian movement must maintain if it is to win leadership in our day is that of keeping oriented toward the idea of a community of the world. The one world

toward which we move with atomic speed could be a world enforced by tyrants and managed by bigots. We want it to be a beloved community motivated by regard for persons and peoples, and managed by intelligence for ends that are honorable and just. I fear one world unless it is possessed with a liberal spirit and temper.

We must not think of one world merely in terms of rocket planes and atomic power. These and other projects of inventive minds will not save the world unless principles of liberty, of democracy, and of religion dominate things and make them serve the spirit of man. We must arouse in the souls of the citizens of one world love of liberty, respect for truth, and devotion to justice.

I crave and I claim this position of influence and power for the Unitarian movement.

EPILOGUE

Now that the story of “My Life Among the Unitarians” has been told, it remains only to say that Mrs. Reese and I have enjoyed every minute of that life. And we have no regrets for anything said or done, nor for things left unsaid or undone. In our retirement we are content for history to record our place, if any, in the permanent life of Unitarianism. We rejoice in our memories, we are happy with the careers of our children and our in-laws, and we bask in the affection of our grandchildren—two girls and three boys.

As we walk together toward the sunset, noting the rapidly lengthening shadows, we do so with heads erect, with spirits undaunted, and with the utmost confidence in the future of the movement to which we have devoted our lives. As we bid farewell to the past, we salute the future with a triumphant hallelujah!

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