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The Unitarian Conception of God

by

Harvey Clifford Merrill . 1910

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The Unitarian Conception of God.

He who would understand another's thought of God discovers that he is endeavoring to grasp and measure subtle and intangible emotions; he is seeking to penetrate and comprehend the mystery of a human soul. But to comprehend another's thought of God is little more difficult than to define our own. Our experience of God is not, in the main, of an intellectual, but of an emotional nature. We do not mentally measure, define, limit, but rather sense God; we have an inner experience which overreaches and transcends merely intellectual comprehension. In this experience definite thought shades off into a deep and subtle soul-emotion, which by its very nature must forever remain undefined even to ourselves.

Even he who is consumed by a great and impelling demand to give to others his own deep and rich experience of God, finds that the soul of his experience eludes his mental grasp. Even the outer fringe, as it were, of his experience which he is able to grasp and hold, cannot be adequately portrayed by the limiting medium of human speech. And again, though he

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may express with some skill that portion of his experience which is definable, he can only hope that words will awaken in some slight degree, corresponding emotions in the soul of the hearer -- but, of this he cannot be sure. Words have no infallible meaning and often convey but imperfectly the feelings which inspire them. Thus it is that the veil which separates soul from soul remains undrawn; what lies behind the veil can be only imperfectly imagined; and therefore our experience of God in its deep and vital form is almost wholly an individual possession.

The conclusions therefore relating to the Unitarian conception of God, drawn from the careful study of many sermons, can be only relatively valid; they can but express the response which is awakened within the reader, a response which must necessarily be colored by temperament and personal conceptions. It is possible, yet I believe, not probable, that one of different temperament might draw radically different conclusions. In this research, however, in so far as possible, all personal bias has been laid aside. The endeavor has been to understand the thought of God which inspired the expression.

The specific purpose of this research is to learn in what measure the Unitarian conception of God was absolu-

tistic or pragmatic before the publication of James' "Pragmatism" in 1908. The research has covered the sermons in the Christian Register for the years, 1892 to 1896 and 1902 to 1906, inclusive. It is not the purpose of this paper to express any opinion whatever regarding the merit of either view. In order that truth may exist there must be an invariant. It is necessary that the meaning of the terms, absolutistic, and pragmatic, be carefully defined, for upon a proper definition the validity of any conclusion must rest. It has seemed to the writer that their meaning as herein used should rest upon definitions as given by the leading exponents of the two schools, Prof. Royce, and Prof. James. Broadly defined absolutism implies the idea that God is necessarily eternal and in essential nature, changeless, "a Self-invariant and Eternal" (1) a God, who, though he does not cease at any and every point of time to be expressed in finite and practical activities" (2) yet by reason of his eternal nature cannot be like ourselves, "transient, passing and variable" (3) He is the necessarily eternal and invariable law, the "Ought", the one absolute, eternal, unchanging Truth, "(though without thereby ceasing at any and every point of time to be expressed in finite and practical activities)", in reality is ultimately and actually trans-

cent to the process of nature, and of human life. Human life is true only in so far as it corresponds to, and is in harmony with this invariable law of God. God may be and is immanent in man; yet man cannot actually alter this eternal changeless "Ought". Man's development is a development so far as it reaches up toward this great Reality. In order that truth may exist there must be an invariant by which truth can be measured. It is truth because it corresponds to this invariant, and is truth only in the degree of its correspondence. As Prof. Royce expresses it, "In order to conceive our judgements as true, we need to conceive them as partial functions of a Self (God) which is so inclusive of all possible points of view regarding our object as to remain **invariable** in the presence of all conceivable additional points of view, and so conscious of its own **finished** and invariable purpose as to define an ought that determines the truth or falsity of every possible judgement about the object". (6)

There being a complete and finished "Ought", an unchanging eternal lying back of all the transitory phases of universal life. The ultimate end therefore of all men and of the universe is subject to no variation. The "Ought" is equal to absolute certainty. One outcome only is possible, for the end, ^{or} as the eternal process, necessarily must

correspond to the "finished and invariable purpose". (6)

The great universal process, the process of nature and of human life in all its phases, contains within itself, by reason of the inherent "Ought", the must-be, the absolute surety of fruition. All risk and uncertainty, viewed in the light of the Eternal Invariant, is "non est". The struggle of human life is the process of development toward reality; and because of this invariant reality, human life can in no degree add anything unique to already existing reality, because reality is not "transient, passing and variable". (3)

God is immutable, transcending the possibility of accident or variation. Will you trust yourself and the other agents enough to face the risk? (8) Not all is yes in the universe. Pragmatism practically reverses the judgements of Absolutism. there is no Reality, which because of its inherent nature, is eternal and unchanging. There is nothing in the universe which necessarily is transcendent to change. Though God may and does have a purpose in view, this purpose might conceivably be altered during the long reaches of time: that is, this purpose is not necessarily invariant. The results of the process of nature is by no means fixed and certain. there is no absolute guarantee regarding the ultimate outcome of universal life: the outcome is conditional only. The process of creation from its beginning to the farthest reaches, is an actual creation, it

does not reach up toward a reality, it is in itself a reality. The process creates the unique, not something corresponding to an existing reality. God and man are literally agents in creative processes; they are mutually dependent factors. Perfection therefore is created not self-existent. We live in a world, says Prof. James, "The perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent 'does his level best' God 'offers you a chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety you see is unwarranted. It is a real adventure with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a scheme of cooperative work genuinely to be done. Will you trust yourself and the other agents enough to face the risk? (8) Not all is yes in the universe, for the no, no, stands equally at the core of life.(9)

God and man, therefore, are in the very heart of a great and world-wide struggle, the outcome of which is dependant, literally dependent upon the faithfulness of both God and man. There can be no eternal and changeless reality, for reality is but the outcome of the universal struggle up to date. Tomorrow reality will not be what it is today. The experiences of man and of God and the processes of nature add to reality the unique, that which before was non-existent. The only ultimate there can be for God and man is an ideal, (10) an

ideal which is not by necessity ultimate. God and man are in fullest degree colaborers, partners in labor and in risk. What the future is to be is in full measure contingent. Nothing human or divine is immutable by necessity. There is no must-be, there is but the will, the shall-be. What is has come by process, what shall be must yet be realized and made a reality. Truth, then, is a process, a reality still being formed; it is not in any degree necessarily ultimate, eternal, changeless Being. In a few words, the pragmatic conception is that in the universe, in God, and in man, there is not the completeness of perfection, but only the will, the purpose to bring harmony and righteousness to pass. Harmony and righteousness are relative terms not absolute realities. There is no perfection in an ultimate sense, only being-perfected.

The underlying conception of the absolutist^{is} that there is an inclusive, universal law, a law of God which in itself is pure, eternal and in its ultimate nature invariant. This law can not be defeated, for in it is all-inclusive reality and containing within itself all possible reality, there is now no limit to its content. God is not reaching out toward perfection, he is now perfection, not by process or achievement, but by nature. He is perfection "an sich".

only, and this in a manner not permissible in a strictly philosophical treatise where each word and term must have a clearly defined and absolute meaning.

Not infrequently expressions are found, which, if pressed to logical conclusions, would contradict and cancel ideas previously expressed in the same sermon. If we take the meanings of these expressions in a purely religious sense, devotionally, or in faith, for the value of the emotion they awaken, they are not, thus weighed, inconsistent, but valid.

Unitarians are not primarily theologians; the finesse and subtlety of speculative theology is therefore often lacking. It is not logic but life which the preacher seeks. The preacher seeks to contact vitally the varied emotions and experiences of life; but he also seeks to do this through the reason. Nevertheless, though the preacher evidently never forgets that his message must touch the heart and life through the reason, a critical examination often lays bare ideas which cannot be philosophically reconciled. A feeling arises that there is often confusion, or, at least, lack of clarity in thought and expression.

From expression it is often impossible to draw certain

conclusions. The pragmatic and the absolutistic views meet a different need. Without fear of illogical reasoning, the thought of God is expressed according to the dominant emotion of the preacher. Amid the ceaseless turmoil and struggle of life we may rest secure knowing that beneath are the everlasting arms of God; that God is in his heaven and all is well with the world; that evil is but seeming evil, could we but see it as God sees it. These are absolutistic ideas; but they may be used in a relative sense only, as matters of faith; they may be used by the pragmatist as well as by the absolutist.

On the other hand, the immanence of God in nature and in the affairs of men, tends to bring out the pragmatic conception of God, as vitally concerned in the struggle of life, with man as his colaborer, his **necessary** colaborer. Yet this expression of immanence, of struggle and uncertainty, may be but relative, and used by the absolutist as well as by the pragmatist.

It is not the bare statement, but the faith or the belief which inspire, the expression which must be sought. The context of the sermon also must be kept in view.

Notwithstanding the obvious difficulties which preclude any absolute conclusions regarding the Unitarian conception of God, I am persuaded that there can be little question regarding the general tendency, if measured by strictly philosophical definitions.

In this connection, it is legitimate to examine Channing's conception regarding the nature of God and man, for he as one of the founders and leaders of Unitarianism, sounded the keynote of the present conception. This thesis, I believe, can be amply proved.

Channing's great protest, as we know, was against the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God as opposed to the utter depravity of man, that is, the utter separation of the divine nature and the human. "It has been thought to ascribe anything to man, was to detract so much from God, and not to see and rejoice in any likeness between them". (11) "Man's place is in the dust. The entire prostration of his faculties is the true homage he is to offer God. He is not to exalt his reason or his sense of right against the decrees of the Almighty. He has but one lesson to learn, that he is nothing, that God is All in All." (12) "What then is the system against which the view of Christian Doctrines is directed? Calvinism

Calvinism teaches, that, in consequence of Adam's sin, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all that is spiritually good. That all men are under God's wrath. Out of his good pleasure God has elected some to be saved, the rest of mankind he is pleased to pass over and condemns them to most grievous torments without intermission in hell-fire forever." It is against this utter degradation of human nature, and against any such sovereignty of God, and their complete separation by nature that Channing protests.

His positive message is the opposite of his negation: that is, he asserts that God and man are not separate by inherent nature; they are alike in quality. He asserts the fatherhood of God and the divinity of man. "The only God, whom our thoughts can rest ^{on}, our hearts can cling to, and our consciences can recognize is the God whose image dwells in our own souls. The grand ideas of Power, Reason, Wisdom, Love, Rectitude, Holiness, Blessedness, that is, of all God's attributes, come from within, from the action of our own spiritual nature." (14) "These qualities, justice and goodness, are essentially the same in God and in man, though differing in degree, in purity, and in extent of operation". (15) We sustain a grander relation, that of rational

moral, free beings to a spiritual **Father.**" (16) "The glory of God is best promoted by awakening our highest faculties, by bringing out in ourselves and others the image of God in which we all are made." (17)

In all this we see the basis of our preaching today. The structure of our belief, reared year by year, rests upon the foundation laid by Channing. The necessity for negative preaching which confronted him, has seemed to lessen as the years pass, and our message has become increasingly positive. The message is the same, however, it has changed only to meet the needs of our own day.

Still further we can trace our belief in the immanence of God to Channing. We, however, lay more insistence upon this immanence. For us the proof of our divinity and the fatherhood of God lies largely in the belief in God's immanence. Though this thought was in Channing's mind, he did not fully develop it as it has been done since his time. "The glory of God," he says, "means the shining forth of his perfection **in his creation**, especially in his spiritual offspring." (18)

The point which I wish to emphasize is that Unitarian

preaching still rests upon Channing. This fact has great significance in considering the question before us. It is necessary to notice that Channing's preaching was directed against Calvinistic belief. He protested against a **cer-
tain kind** of sovereignty attributed to God; a sovereignty which carried as its necessary correlary the inherent and utter evil of human nature. He does not protest against the sovereignty of God as such, but only against this sovereignty as conceived by Calvinism. It is a protest against the **nature** of the sovereignty. His statements regarding this point are clear and emphatic. "That God is infinite we affirm as strongly as our Calvinistic brethren!" (19) "Let it not be imagined that I would turn the mind from God's infinity. This is the grand truth; but it must not stand alone in the mind. The finite is something real as well as the infinite. It is as dangerous to exclude the former as the latter. God's sovereignty is limitless; still man has his right. God's power is irresistible; still man is free. These antagonistic views, if so they may be called, are equally true, and neither can be spared." "In most religious systems the tendency has been to seize exclusively ^{this} on the idea of the Infinite, and to sacrifice to ^{the} finite, the created, the human!" (20) "To rob man of his dignity is as truly to subvert religion, as to strip God of his

perfection." (21) Such statements might easily be multiplied. Channing had no thought of lessening the sovereignty of God: no thought of modifying the infinity, or the absolute perfection of God, except that this thought of God as sovereign, infinite, perfect, might be [~]rationally conceived and be in accord with simple moral conceptions. He did not in any sense whatever subtract from an absolute Being: He but realized that a spark of this Divinity was inherent in human nature. He left God the Absolute the Perfect, but by, conceiving man to be in nature, in quality like this sovereign Being, he gave us the conception of God as our father, and man as divine by nature. He gave us our thought of the indwelling God.

Channing and Calvin conceive of precisely the same thing—the perfection and sovereignty of God: **their premise is identical**: their conclusions, adduced from this one premise are diametrically opposed. Channing and Calvin, philosophically judged are both absolutists. Though they differ greatly in their interpretation, their conception of God rests upon the same foundation. We have only to place side by side, Channing's conception of God, and the pragmatic conception, to see that the two conceptions of God are dissonant. While we may say that in a large degree, these two conceptions, the pragmatic and the absolutistic work out in practical

life to the same result, as did the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, yet they originate at opposite poles.

I have written at length upon Channing's views because these and those of today are practically the same. The doctrine which Channing sought to negate, have dropped out of sight, but the positive side of Channing's message, modernized, developed and more specifically applied, is the Unitarian message today. That this message is no longer called forth because of the doctrines to which it was at first opposed, because it has been developed, elaborated and applied to modern scientific conceptions, does not mean that its fundamental conception has changed. The message still remains the same.

The very immanence of God as conceived in Unitarian preaching, is not necessarily more pragmatic than Channing's statement that the "Glory of God means the shining forth of his perfection in his creation, especially in his spiritual offspring."

(18) God's sovereignty, perfection and omnipotence are not by the term immanence necessarily denied in their most absolute sense; the interpretation only is modern, not Calvinistic. God's immanence, his indwelling, his fatherhood, does not make God less absolute in essential nature. That hu-

man nature is divine in its essential nature does not necessarily imply that God has human nature, that he is subject to the risks and contingencies inherent in human life. God's sovereignty may remain as absolute as conceived by Calvin. That human nature is divinemay mean that within human nature is a spark from the necessarily eternal and perfect spirit of God: that because of this spark man may forever grow more nearly like this eternal perfection. In a word, the immanence of God in nature and in man, may not mean that God is involved in the practical problems and contingencies of life. He may still be an indwelling presence in every atom of nature; the laws of nature may be an expression of God, or his sustaining life, and yet he may be conceived of as perfect, eternal invarient in his person, or in his **essential nature**. So long as God is conceived of as a **necessary** perfection, so long as his attributes are not conceived of as **contingent** upon process, so long the conception is absolutistic and not pragmatic. Therefore I say that the term "Immanent" is not, **as emplyed^o by Unitarians**, necessarily a pragmatic term.

Again, although we may say that the immanence of God is pragmatic in its **results**, that Unitarian preaching is pragmatic in **aim**, that the immanence of God is **"practically"** pragmatic, yet this is or may be but a pragmatic **method**

of applying an absolutistic conception. The conception of God may still be absolutistic. So long as God is conceived as being necessarily infinite in perfection, so long as he is not an integral factor in a becoming universe, and dependent upon contingencies involved in all process, so long is the conception of him absolutistic. The absolutistic idea here is, "of necessity", the pragmatic idea, the "will to be," the purpose. Regarding the results of universal life, the absolutist asserts surety, progress is of necessity certain. The pragmatist may believe that the end is certain and good, but it is wholly a matter of faith, and not because of inherent necessity; he believes the end is sure because God and man purpose that it shall be. He has faith, and only faith; he asserts no inevitable result.

We cannot assert, therefore, that Channing's conception of the Divinity of man which is the present Unitarian conception also, necessarily carries any other implication than that there lies within man a germ of a perfect Divine Nature. Neither can the assertion be made that the immanence of God necessarily means, as conceived by Unitarians, more than the indwelling, a perfect, eternal, omnipotent Presence,

The answer to the question before us will find its prin-

cipal support in the Unitarian conception of the immanence of God, and the divinity of man.

Let us examine the conception of "the Divine Incarnation" (22) "There are two views of the Divine Incarnation. The one which limits it to Jesus alone, the other which sees God incarnate in all. The word Incarnation signifies God manifesting himself in the flesh. But is there any part of creation in which he does not manifest himself? Surely not; for Creation is just God -- the Infinite Power and Life and Goodness that is behind all nature objectifying himself, coming forth into manifestation. In the lowest objects he is present simply as force or energy. In the organic as force or energy and life; in man also as self-consciousness, will, moral nature and love." There is no question as to the immanence of God in all creation. "A man does not manifest God any more really than does a flower." The question before us is, what does this mean to the preacher? Does it mean that there is now in Creation a Perfection which is manifesting itself, a portion of itself in nature? Does it mean that God created the universe and then instead of leaving it and reigning over it from afar -- the calvinistic idea -- merely remains in it? "This is what evolution means. God did not come into the world one, and then leave it. There was never a time when God was not in his world

In this sermon there are many sentences, many ideas, the very life of all its life. But his manifestation grows in splendor, as the ages go on and the race advances and rises to still greater heights of moral and spiritual attainments, what will that be but the fuller and more perfect manifestation or incarnation of God in humanity? All life is his life. All beauty is his beauty. All right and goodness on earth are **finite** manifestations of **eternal realities**, whose fountain and whose fulness are in God. It removes the distance between us and God. It lifts the human up to the divine. It makes our life the life of God is us. Thus our limitations, finiteness, and poverty become **re-enforced** from the **Infinite and Eternal Fountain of all Power, Wisdom and Love.**"

The evidence here seems to justify the conclusion that there is now a perfection, a Reality which is being manifested in finite forms. That this Reality is not **dependent** upon the process, but that it in itself is **independent** of the process. God is in the world, is immanent, but were there no manifestation, God would still remain the same. The idea forces itself upon us that, "although all is his life", this life is a supporting medium, not vitally changing in its nature, but in itself, a permanent and **changless** Reality around which we build, or which we merely employ.

In this sermon there are many sentences, many ideas, which are pragmatic when taken by themselves. Philosophically considered there is, I believe lack of clarity in thought; or, at least, if not in thought in expression. "In man God is present as energy, as life, and also as **Self-consciousness**, Will, Moral Nature and Love." (22) Here is absolute **identity**, where is man? Man is God. This is not a **spark** of the divine spirit; it is God himself. "All life is his life." "Two great, illuminating and inspiring thoughts are rising in Christianity. One is the Humanness of God, the other the Divineness of Humanity." In the Humanness of God lies the whole pragmatic philosophy. But in view of the context, it carries little meaning ^{here} when philosophically considered. It means merely that God has the moral attributes of men: Justice, Love, Mercy, etc. Compare God's humanity with other statements." Our finiteness, our limitations and poverty are re-enforced from the Infinite and Eternal Fountain of All Power, Wisdom and Love." We lose the sense of humanness here; therefore the humanness as here used carries only a religious value, and God's humanness is limited to the belief that our higher attributes are not unlike God's. "Again," Because God has taken up his **abode** within us, the life of all our life! Literally considered each phrase excludes the other. In the first, "God has taken up his **abode** with us", is the idea of an absentee God, a person

absolutely independent of man, sufficient unto himself
In the other "The life of all our life", is identity
or mutual life; it is not **abode**, it is one life. Taken
in another sense it is absolutism, pure and simple, which
does not rhyme with the "Humanness of God". It means that
a Great God has given us his life to use. This carries no
sense of immanence in the way of the **mutual** dependence of
identity. It is the Absolute Being manifested in time. It
is the immanence of contiguity, or the using of a supporting
life. Pragmatically considered, the "Humanness of God"
and the "Life of all our life", would mean precisely what
it says; that God is in essential nature human, not infinite;
subject to the ^{same} laws of progress; not a **perfection** abiding
in utter independence of physical manifestations. The
very word "Incarnation" gives us the clew to the conception,
which is absolutistic. Notice the pragmatic implications
of such a thought as is expressed in the following, "Is there
any part of Creation in which God does not manifest himself?
Surely not; for **Creation is just God**". But does not so
positive and explicit a statement carry a meaning not warrant-
ed by the preacher's philosophy? Creation, judged by other
expressions is not God, but an **abode**, or a mere slight and
transient manifestation of God. Were the universe itself
God, then no **incarnation** were necessary or possible. God

could not be conceived as incarnating in himself. It is possible that we might get around difficulties by metaphysical reasoning, but the very fact that such reasoning is necessary takes it out of the realm of pragmatism.

It might be said perhaps that such a statement "Creation is just God" is figurative of a great truth, an illustration not to be carried out to an ultimate conclusion. But here is a very definite statement, perfectly plain and unmistakable, which if developed a single step, conveys an impression not in the preacher's mind. This seems not an inapt illustration of a certain looseness of preaching methods, if indeed, it does not indicate a confusion in conception regarding the immanence of God.

The sermon referred to is among those most pragmatic in tone, yet when analysed is absolutistic in fundamental conception. Sermons of this nature are by no means the exception.

As a further illustration of what seems to be an interweaving of absolutism and pragmatism, I quote the following, (23)
"The Revealing of the Sons of God". "What is God? God is the infinite energy of everything everywhere, revealing

himself in the unfolding of all things, the life of all life, dawning upon us in infinite possibilities." "Man discovers that, go where he will, trace the genesis of the ordinary functions of our organism, or the higher possibilities of conscious life, he always travels back to the primitive nebulous matter from which all terrestrial life has developed." "Your primitive state of things thus understood is but the storehouse of infinite possibilities. "That which is emerging lay latent in the beginning". The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now! Yes, progress is a **warfare**, a struggle for existence. Yet underneath the struggle, and in it and through it, quiet, irresistible, unceasing, is the revelation, the opening. Of what? Of life ever rising toward goodness and tenderness and strength. The making clear of the divinity of life as it moves toward fuller expression of what it really is, the growth of the capacity to claim as our own that finer manhood, of which all that we know is only the beginning." "Behind it all and in it all is the infinite energy we call God. **The story of it is the unfolding of God.**" "Each tomorrow is fraught with the infinite promise of ever fuller knowledge and discovery of life: for all is the unfolding of God."

In other words, God is absolute, we are merely using his

A. truer and more wonderful expression of pragmatism could hardly be found than is here set forth. The sermon as a whole is intense and real. The process of nature, the progress is real, it is a **battle**, and it is the unfolding of infinite **possibilities, not realities**, the very unfolding of God. Yet in the very beginning of the sermon there is a purely metaphysical speculation upon which the whole structure of the sermon rests; not only the structure of the sermon, but the very conception of the unfolding of the universe itself. This metaphysical statement cancels the otherwise logical and even scientific exposition. "Hegel, the philosopher, said that 'God, the **absolute** externalized himself in all the universe, in order that through the slow process of its development he might become conscious of himself in his children.' That is exactly the meaning of the text." Upon this foundation,, which is ultra-absolutistic, the preacher has built a purely pragmatic sermon. This quotation from Hegel, which is self-contradictory, is used as the basis of pragmatism. From this quotation then we must conclude that the writer either consciously or unconsciously conceived of God as ultimately outside the actual process of development: that is, it is a **portion** of his energy or life which is being manifested: **God as God** is ultimately transcendent to the process itself.

In other words, God is absolute, we are merely using his perfect life; we are participators, not integral factors. (In a letter from this preacher, he admits this quotation to be self-contradictory and asserts that the sermon is meant to be wholly pragmatic. While this shows the writer's judgment of the sermon to be wrong, it proves the claim of lack of clarity in expression and I believe that had the preacher's conceptions been perfectly clear, he would not have used this quotation.) Divine Energy. Using the only language, and the only mode of thought which possible to us, we must describe that this perfect life of God is but the substratum of transient life; that God himself, transcends all these processes that God himself, as such, is not subject to process and progress; that he transcends all actual manifestations; that he simply allows us to use his perfect life; all this I say is borne out by the following, which, the writer feels justified in asserting, is almost without exception the underlying Unitarian idea of "Immanence", and of the "Divinity of Man". "The power not ourselves which makes for righteousness does more than that. It makes for life, for all the impulses which enter into action, for the appetite, passions, and powers of the human soul. (24) This statement is not absurd, because there is no other statement that can be made concerning the supremacy of God and the moral ideal which

does not necessarily invoke the idea that all power and all the powers of every class and kind are forms of energy that pervades all things. If this power is not in the volcano, the earthquake, the pestilence, and the life that manifests itself in the wonderful deeds of men, then there is no such thing in the universe as omniscience and moral omnipotence. Something must be said here concerning the power of determination in man which affects the extent and quality of the manifestation of the Divine Energy. Using the only language, and the only mode of thought which possible to us, we must describe the Almighty Creator as patient and benevolent (not vitally concerned) "while the life he imparts to cannibals, drunkards, thieves, and other human creatures who are worse than brutes, is seemingly wasted, disgraced and defiled." The impression is clearly conveyed that God allows the energy which he sends forth to be used for good or for evil purposes, not that the very being of God is in a real process, but merely an animation which he freely gives us to employ as we see fit. Men's actions do not vitally affect the essential inner reality, they but wisely or unwisely employ the life sent forth from a perfect fountain of life. This is immanence. The following sentences might be purely pragmatic. "The noblest attributes that we now assign to Him who sits upon the throne of heaven were first manifested in

no impression of **one** great inclusive cosmic struggle. It **human life**, and by us then attributed to the Almighty Being in whom we live." "We have in this revelation of righteousness the manifestation of divine energy expressing itself through the form imposed upon it by our human will choice and conduct. We build up from the lowest and least expressive intake of energy successive forms of increasing fineness and beauty, until in rare persons, the virtue expressed become splendid and sublime. They are fitly described as God-like, and yet we know that they do not represent or even suggest the modes of being of that infinite and eternal life which surrounds us and waits to come to expression in human life consciousness and character. "But the writer here thinks of no **inclusive** cosmic unfoldment, but rather that the perfect and transcendent is waiting to be reflected in humanity. Let me quote James as a true pragmatic conception of the thought expressed in the foregoing. (50) "On the pragmatic side we have only **one** edition of the universe, unfinished, growing in all sorts of places, especially in places where human beings are at work." On the absolutistic side we have a universe in many editions, **one** real one, the **infinite** folio or edition de luxe, and then the various finite editions, full of false readings, distorted and mutilated, each in its own way." We can see that no matter how great the importance of this unfoldment may be to humanity, the sermon conveys

no impression of **one** great inclusive cosmic struggle. It is absolutistic.

We have spoken of the immanence of God as being a perfect presence, as not **himself** subject to process, as not becoming. (25) In the following quotations this idea is conveyed. "We are told that an Infinite Being can not be a personal being, because personality is a limit distinguishing one being from another. But to this we reply that we must distinguish God from the universe of created existence." (That is he is uncreated,)" but that does not destroy his infinite presence and power **around** and **within** and **above** all nature. The divine mind, conscious of itself, is at the same time **omniscient of the universe** which is not itself." "As our knowledge of the universe enlarges, we cease to apply to the Deity human limitations of caprice, wilfulness, anger, or earthly passions." (There is no humanness of God here). "He rests in the vast peace and order of the universe, an infinite serenity of perfect calm." God then in his infinite calm and passionless nature is present in the universe in the sense, that while he **absolutely transcends** it and all its processes, he still is not absent, but present.

Compare this statement, "We must distinguish God from the universe of created existence" (25) with the following,

(26) "Evolution is just God revealing himself in forms of matter and spirit. Nature and God are not two, but one. God began to be incarnate in the fire, mist and the star-dust, in the planet that came slowly into form amid the flame and cloud of the great Artist's foundry, in the uncouth shapes that haunted the twilight before man appeared, in the caves and the cavemen who foretold the coming of Michael Angelo and St. Peter's Church. It is God in the yearnings that rise unbidden in the soul. It was God in Socrates who calmly took the cup of death, in Jesus who laid down his life for a kingdom of God, in the soldiers dead at the post of duty, in the mother starved for her children, in all the nameless ones who kept faith with conscience and endured their trial to the lonely bitter end. God! God in all time! God in all events! God in all creatures! God in all souls! Emanuel God with us -- that is the interpretation of all history and the only interpretation that is not paltry and pitifully inadequate! That is the conclusion toward which philosophy and science seem inevitably moving. And on this interpretation of the world modern religion takes its stand."

God are not two but one? How then "with" and "in"?

In this we apparently see a scientific statement of a great universal process put in religious form and given a religious interpretation. A scientist would find little

difficulty in following the great unfoldment of universal life. A complete identity of God and creation is asserted. But does the preacher mean this, dispute his assertion that this is the conclusion to which science and philosophy is coming? Does he mean that there is for the first time a becoming of God, from fire-mist to the phenomena of the spirit life within man? God in all events, creatures, souls; this is the evolution of God. But what does "incarnate" and "revealing" mean? Does it mean that a great and perfect spirit incarnated itself in matter, that revealing means the becoming of a replica of this perfect incarnation? It gives one the sense of disappointment to find so apparently a clear, open statement shading off in the metaphysical realm. To find that behind words seemingly so straightforward, there lingers the hidden meaning. This is not a plea for pragmatism, nor a tirade against absolutism, but merely that the preacher should not convey wrong meanings; that statements should mean what they bear as face value, and not shade off into something which is not said. "The father who was with and in Jesus, was with and in them." Is this consonant with "Nature and God are not two but one? How then "with" and "in"? The Father "was with and in the grass, the lily, and the sparrows. With each was All of God; with each was all of God the soul or the life could contain." Think again, "Not

two but one". Here again is the outside God coming in. He is immanent because he is present. It is not he himself who is an integral portion of the process. "God being with them each was then and forever safe. God being in them, the being of each was dowered with infinite promise." Here is no real uncertain struggle, but because of this presence, this dower given by Another, each is forever safe. The universal becomes again not "one", but merely the abode of a Supreme Being. It seems to the writer that such sermons are misleading. That statements are made which are unwarranted by the preacher's own conviction. The climax of this sermon shows how minor a part man plays in the life of God. "We who claim as our heritage the last word of science and the divinest revelation of religion, - are held to the highest duty." (Why?) "That finds in each day another opportunity to realize and use the powers of our divine sonship! We are held to duty because a life in which this abounds is the only life that rises to the level of our privilege, as children of God." If "God and Nature are not two but one," there would seem to be a far greater call to duty than a mere privilege; and a far greater loss to universal life than unfaithfulness to this privilege would seem to indicate. Here there is no note of mutual dependence between God and man, and the sermon

ends in absolutism, though an attempt is made to use a pragmatic method of exposition which singularly fails when analysed. Other quotations of a similar nature might be given.

There is however a large class of sermons difficult to analyse. These sermons are pragmatic in tone. To this class I believe we can assign most of the sermons of Unitarian preachers. Unitarians use a pragmatic method of preaching; the truth as seen, whether originating from sources absolutistic or pragmatic, are set forth by the pragmatic method; that is, they find their basis, their proof, and their application from unquestioned facts of nature as they confront us. To this fact they owe their great value. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to evaluate, but to learn what the conception of God is.

(27)

As a pragmatic conception take the following: "The new faith carries with it a new law. The old law seemed to men wearisome, complicated, difficult, negative. It was the law for child life, with its 'thou shalt not'. The new law fits the conception of the universe. It is not so much a law as an attitude, or a spirit. It is not with reference to bare authority, as of a law-giver; it is not in view of a beautiful ideal to be brought to pass. The thought is that God **purposes** the well-being of his children. His

beneficence aims at this largest possible life. For this and all the processes of nature are found to work. Let man, then, as God's child, also work by the master's plan. To catch this new view, to catch the law and give one's self to its sway,-- this is salvation and blessedness." There are so many beautiful expressions of this character that it is difficult to pass them by without comment. To tell whether there is in the preachers mind the conception of an absolute God is difficult; we can but infer from incidental expressions. Even these may be merely the usual religious monenclature and carry no necessary single meaning. However the general tone seems absolutistic. There is the note of necessary and eternal progression, not of everlasting, universal struggle. The optimism is that of one who keenly feels the presence of an eternal presence which can never know defeat or even delay. The feeling is one of an eternal and inevitable onward sweep of mankind and nature. "The historian and the poet see Him the might, victorious "Forse that makes for righteousness." "No one knows the joy and peace of religion till he has caught this new and large sense of the real presence of the Eternal." "New experiences are still before him, as the soul rises on the great spiral lines of its untiring quest after the Infinite and Absolute."

It seems to me that the inner thought of the preacher is Absolutistic, though not what might be termed transcendental Absolutism. Nothing which is said leaves the experience of man behind, it all touches life. The sermon however, lacks the war-cry of the pragmatist. It is entirely the expression of a faith which in reality passes the realm of faith, and so can see no evil, or risk, or struggle, at the heart of things, but only absolute and transcendent good. Let the soul "never fear but that God has new joys in store, new visions of reality, higher experiences, fuller and more satisfying life." What is here asserted, I believe, may also be said of many of our preachers, notable instances of which are the Rev. E. E. Hale and Rev. W. C. Gannett.

Clearer expressions of this optimistic surety regarding the outcome of human life, because of a transcendent and perfect power, is here given. (28) God's way with human souls is always a wise and patient one. He lets us have the regal blessings of rigorous discipline, and he leaves us free to move onward as our own natures impel. "Each human soul is a seed of eternal life." "When he is fully aroused, he will of his own new-born energy, and with a heart full of gratitude to the God who made life stern and imperative, stride forth out of his low estate into a larger life." Here is the idea of God who made life stern and imperative. God is above

this necessity of meeting any such conditions of growth. The end for man is certain. "In one way or another the world of God is going to close in around every soul, and so entrap him with the necessity of action that in sheer despair of any further drifting, if for no nobler motive he will be obliged to defend himself in some way fine enough to life him out of the evil into the path of eternal progress." "Being immortal we cannot die." "Either here on the earth or somewhere in the beyond every soul has got to learn the full lesson of moral action." "Early or late, easy or difficult that victory is for all souls." All the above might be pragmatic, but it could only be said in **faith**. It could not be asserted as being **inevitable**, as here.

Such sentences as follow are not uncommon in Unitarian sermons and are, of course, absolutistic in tone although apparently they are supposed to rest upon science. "It is a God whose absolute and all-wise will is revealed in the absolute, never-varying laws of nature which have worked from eternity and will keep on eternally for the good of the cosmos as a whole as well as for the least particle of dust of which it is composed. All nature is absolutely determined by law, that God is at one with that law and cannot change if he would and would not if he could. Yes, any

change in the plan of nature upon the petition of man would prove the law of God imperfect and therefore himself not all-powerful, wise, and good." Whatever we may think of this logic, there is no question that the preacher's beliefs are absolutistic. There is an unchanging and immutable law. One is often impressed with the feeling that there is a desire, or a religious need, to believe in an absolute God.

(30) "Who is there that can understand the Almighty?

Faith in God is not to be identified with any sharp and definite belief. What is this faith indeed but the assurance of a divine reality in the universe? What is it but a sense of safety in the midst of immeasurable forces which surround us, and of joy in the presence of perfect existence? It is the trustful feeling underlying the song of the poet,

'God's in his heaven

All's right with the world.'

God is not an object to be singled out from and set above realities about us: he is the omnipresent life and hidden source of all that is fair and true and good." This expression may be either pragmatic or otherwise. If God is not to be set above the realities about us, then, that is pragmatic. If the meaning is that there is a perfect divine reality which assures us that all is a perfect exist-

ence, that there is not the no, no, in the universe as well as the eternal yes, then that is absolutistic. The writer can only express a personal opinion in such instances as this. It seems usually the case that a pragmatist uses care that his expressions are understood. The pragmatic stand is more radical and decided. It is, however, perhaps true that such expressions as these show a leaning toward a pragmatism as yet undefined in the preacher's mind, but which is in outward expression absolutistic.

No such uncertainty is expressed in the following: (30) It is asked how divinity can be predicated of humanity, how man can be man and yet divine. I do not know. Nobody knows, how Divinity this Power that swings the planets, that governs the universe, that orders all things; this infinite Will, this everlasting Reason, this supernal Goodness, this infinite and everlasting Love, this Holiness above all -- I do not know ^{how} these things come down and dwell in the human body; but they do." This is not the language of the pragmatist.

An absolutist view may be seen in the following quotation; even though God's power is limited, Creation itself is everlasting harmony. There is here no expression of the pragmatic "No, no", the ceaseless and uncertain struggle. Here is ne-

cessity: **all** is good. " A creator desiring to produce life at all had to create certain conditions which should result well for the whole, but might work temporary disaster to a part. In this view this, ^{is} the best possible world because it must be assumed that everything is just as it had to be, and therefore just as it ought to be. Nature is harmony at the core. Creation is music not discord, and in us wells up the old, old song of unflinching faith. 'The eternal God is thy refuge.' Underneath are the everlasting Arms." (32) Or take such expressions as these, "Beauty is of God. Say, rather, that flawless beauty is the visible perfection of God. Then fear not, faint not, falter not. The Infinite is not perplexed. The Eternal is not exhausted. The seeking love of God will not be denied." (33) "The work of life must be made wholesome and sweet though the sentiments of love to God and man, buoyed up by the assurance that we work not alone but have the sympathy and co-operation of Heaven." This is not vital partnership: **Sympathy** and co-operation do not have the ring of pragmatism. The process seems confined to humanity. Or again, (35) "By penalty, through suffering and above all by invitation of nobler delights mankind has been driven, persuaded and at last by its own nobility compelled to choose the better way." (36) "So also we may think of the Infinite One as patient, long-suffering, kind,

the Almighty world creators desiring for eternity. The giving himself to the unthankful and to the evil with the certainty that at last, through choice, aspiration, and in gladness, every recipient of this Holy Spirit will come to himself and recognize the Source and Giver of all good."

(37) "God is the same yesterday, today and evermore and everywhere. And he ^{is} ready to admit souls of men into fellowship with himself now. To them is a present Heaven and a present salvation graciously and freely offered. It is the mission of Unitarianism to help men see and feel fulfil the condition on which that fellowship of life can be entered upon and maintained, that the life men now live may be true, pure, heavenly, divine."

In the following most beautiful sermon we have the pragmatic method of absolutism, at least, so it seems to the writer.

"The faith of today and tomorrow must stand upon the conviction that our human race has illimitable possibilities of improvement, that the business of religion is to produce the finest sort of human life here in the earth. God works through nature. He still better works through intelligent human nature. It is our **privilege** to be like

the Almighty, world creators designing for Eternity. The earth for all its scars of cruelty and wickedness has for many years been steadily becoming a safer place for every manly grace. We can report that God is in man reconciling all things of matter and spirit to his perfect self."

Compare the preceding idea of man's **privilege** with the following. (39) "Why should I doubt the testimony of sincere souls that God dwells in man and is conscious **through** man and that man dwells in God and is conscious through God. This is science as well as experience. **God** may have his **problems as we have ours**. Perhaps it may be our high privilege to **help** and **gladden** God". In these expressions we detect an entirely different tone. Here is no absolute God, no absolute perfection or all-wisdom which precludes all sense of uncertainty for God. He may face great problems; there is a future unknown, problematic, before him. The privilege of man here is a very different privilege from those before quoted. Here is the privilege of **actually** working out the problems of universal life with God. It is not just the privilege of progression, and a certain progress sure, with God merely lending his life to man. Here is **real** partnership in progress. God and man mutual collaborators. Such an expression of pragmatism is so unmistakable a

form is very seldom found in Unitarian sermons. Let me set over against the above another sermon, -- one of the strongest and most intense, and one which should be pragmatic, but is not. The sermon fails in its last paragraph. Had the preacher really conceived of a vast world struggle, a struggle universal in its reaches, how different this appeal would have been. (40) "There is room in the earth today for a religion that regards nothing human as alien to it, a religion not too dainty to be planted in the heart of the world where the eternal struggle against misery and wrong and sin is going on. There is an opportunity worthy of a God. If we believe there in but one God, our first imperative is to live as children of one God in whom we believe that men seeing our good works shall glorify the Father." To me this appeal seems paltry and weak. Is there no greater reason to labor than to glorify our Father? I say this to show that the spirit or the tone is not pragmatic. The appeal is to glorify not to assist. The thought of man as God's child and therefore heirs of God is frequently expressed. This thought has as its correlary not the thought of God as having human qualities

but rather of man having **divine** qualities. We as heirs of a great and infinite God may therefore infinitely progress to be more like him, and partake of his fulness. In this form the thought of God is absolutistic.

(40 1/2)

"If we are children of God then two consequences follow; our inner life is capable of great development. We seem to be already partakers of infinity, and we can never be satisfied till we enter into the fulness of our inheritance. The other great consequence of our childhood to God is that he who puts us into this world meant that it should draw out of us all that we are capable of being." This is **privilege**, not responsibility, not **dependency** of God and man upon process.

Many sermons are found in which no specific expressions can be pointed out as being absolutistic, yet the sermon as a unit leaves the impression of absolutism. It will be of use to indicate a few of the expressions which would seem to the writer to show an absolutistic tendency. The sermons from which these illustrations are taken may be distinctly absolutistic or not. The purpose here is to vindicate the general basis from which the writer has drawn conclusions.

(41) "Religion is based upon the consciousness that man and the creation are at one with the Divine Father of all. Interpret God by his fatherhood says the preacher of today. No priest, no church is needed in this old but new-found revelation of Father and child. It is the consciousness of God in the soul; it is the divinity within. Christianity is not a system, but an ideal." Now in this instance the ideal is to feel the oneness of God and man, the divinity of man. The **pragmatic** implication of this oneness which draws **God** into a world struggle is absent. To be sure this knowledge of man's divinity draws men into a brotherhood and brings real charity into the world; it produces good works and peace and confidence. But the intense feeling of **universal responsibility**, that man should make his oneness with God mean mutual work, and mutual dependence between God and man, is not found here. Therefore we must say that the sermon has the **absolutistic** tone of man's **privilege**, rather than of his tremendous responsibility to work **with** God for the salvation of God and man.

(42) "God cannot do absurd and irrational things, can not commit injustice, or hate his creation. God's perfection is must be in order and harmony." There is immutable law here, all is perfection. God is perfection,

all is worked out for him. "God cannot hate his creation; this is not the expression of pragmatism, God is the process, the becoming. Of course, we cannot draw absolute conclusions here, these expressions are but straws which show the way the wind blows.

(43)"There is one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in you all. One God, the Father of whom are all things and we in him. He in whom we live and have our being. He is light and in him is no darkness at all. God is love, and his love can no more be frustrated in its purpose than the mighty rivers that flow down to the seas." This seems absolutistic.

In a sermon entitled "The Revival which we need" (45) the summary of a beautiful sermon is as follows. "The revival we need is that of faith which goes directly to the central things, and finding them is strong for all the varied service of life. Rooted in a sense of the worth of the soul, its flowers and fruit are seen in all gracious humanities. Conscious of a divine reality it breaks forth naturally into thanksgiving and worship." This could hardly be a pragmatic ending or summary. Perhaps the spirit it breathes is more Hindu, than Zoroastrian. The pragmatic would have a deeper

note of warfare and struggle, and less of the divine reality of the soul. Much the same spirit breathes in the following, although in some respects it might be considered to go a step beyond pragmatism. "We must think of him not only as over us, but around us, as above and below us, as with us and without, not two bodies, two individualities apart -- God and I -- each standing up for his own rights with negotiations and contracts between us, as you deal with the man in the next street. God is not an alien, or even a neighbor to you, but a spirit about and within you, the Goodness, Wisdom, and Power in which you can never escape if you would; more friendly to your interests than you can possibly be, more ready to give than we to have. "In thee enfolded, gathered,

comprehended,

As holds the sea his waves, Thou hold'st us all!"

He is in every place. My last thought is that all religion and, indeed, all of true life, is a walking with the Divine One, an incessant unfolding of his mind and character to us."

Let us believe that God has planned for no such dismal a fate that we should ever come to the end of truth and beauty and goodness." This sermon breathes a wonderful and beautiful

faith, but it is not that of pragmatism. It is all the sweetness of life present and eternal; the love God and his near presence, but it does not speak pragmatically to us

of the actual and eternal need of loyalty which devolves upon the man or rather upon the pragmatist who feels that reality consists only of present attainment won by God and man, and with the future contingent.

"I and my Father are one. A wonderfully high word that; and yet not one which meant that Jesus felt himself in any sense God." The idea here is "that all might be and feel as he, feeling the constant indwelling forever." It is the emphatic note which shows the tendency. A pragmatist could not well avoid carrying out to other conclusions the consequences of a vital indwelling. I do not mean that the pragmatist could not be optimistic, but he could not easily dwell upon that note, to the exclusion of the necessity of mutual labor for all the results which must necessarily follow a union of the Divine and the human.

(46) God "is no longer to the believing soul mere will, intellect, or holiness; he is not force, power, or law. He is one like ourselves, a Friend we can lean upon, a master who teaches us the word of life, a Loving Heart that trusts^s us and is trusted by us. He turns not from us when we forget him, but grows ever more anxious for our good, if that is possible. Though we forget him and revile him, and will have none of his love, yet he loves on and will never forsake us." It is here

as elsewhere that we see the insistence placed upon God's love to man, rather than ^{upon} God's love and need of man. These are the indications which at least point to an absolutist conception of God.

(49) "Accept the imperfect as their grandest opportunity, their dearest blessing, since it enables them to be coworkers with God in the fashioning of that toward which all creation moves, -- a pure, a perfect soul and I believe we ought to accept ourselves even in our wickedness in the same spirit. If we believe with the universe, if we believe in God, we must believe there was some good reason for planting men in this world in their imperfect state. Why not accept this much-to-be-bettered self with gladness? Surely, God knew whether or not this was the best self to give us." These are not the words of a pragmatist. Such examples might easily be multiplied.

The question may come to mind, why are there no more quotations from pragmatic sermons? The answer must be, so it seems to the writer, that there are practically no sermons which can be taken to be true pragmatic sermons. Many approach in various measure the pragmatic position; but few, so few that they cannot be taken into account, are in any definite sense truly pragmatic. In defense of this statement

the results of this research will here be stated.

The conception of God which inspires Unitarian preaching is decidedly absolutistic.

There has been no radical change in the fundamentals of Unitarian preaching since the days of Channing. Channing's conception of God was absolutistic: he did not protest against the absolutistic conception of God as such, but against the **nature** of that conception, **and the conclusions drawn from that conception.** Though the protest is no longer prominent, the positive side of this conception has not altered, it is basically identical with that of Channing. This is true notwithstanding development, modern terms and application. God is an infinitely fulfilled perfect Presence. Omnipotent, Omniscient, All-wise, Immutable and Eternal.

God is immanent. This immanence of God does not imply that God is dependent upon the processes of nature in time and space. He ultimately transcends contingencies and accidents inherent in all process, holding nature's processes within his all-powerful Hand.

The immanence of God is conceived of in two ways. He is

not a sovereign away from the world, but present in all times and places. Or, all life, energy, and all manifestations, are the life, the actual manifestations of God. This life, this emanation of God is employed according to the nature of the recipient. This identify or unity is not conceived of as a mutual dependency between God and man. God gives graciously, lovingly, and freely, of this abundant life.

The Divinity of man implies that as all is of God, so is man; or, more specifically, man is the highest manifestation of God. Therefore man is in essence of God, so the relation of Father and child. This conception does not subtract from the absolute perfection of God, rather it gives man a nature corresponding in moral quality to that of God who now fully objectified the perfection toward which man, by reason of essential Divine nature, may forever progress.

Man advances toward a present spiritual perfection. The future, though due to natural unfoldment or evolution, is not in the ultimate sense contingent or problematic, for God purposes the ultimate salvation of all.

The universe, including man, is in one stage of development or progression. This change or progression, though taking

place within the life of God, since all life is his, does not imply process or change in God himself, for he, as God cannot be subject to and dependant upon the processes of nature. He is transcendent to process.

Mankind, therefore, can rest secure knowing that the all-loving, all-wise, and all-powerful Father holds all things in his hand, and that all is well with the world. His purposes are true and righteous and his will can know no defeat. All the manifestations of nature are manifestations or revelations of God, and in their ultimate sense, as seen by God, are necessary and good.

On the other hand, while the Unitarian conception of God is absolutistic, the **basis** of this absolutism is pragmatic. Unitarian conceptions and preaching do not rest upon any metaphysics or theology; do not rest upon thin air or abstract speculations, but as far as any theory of God can rest, it rests upon the ground of fact, experience and science. **In this sense** Unitarian preaching is pragmatic. The faith in human nature and religious faith, and above all, the optimism of the Unitarian, however, carries him beyond pragmatism into an intellectual absolutism.

Man finds his warrant for the nature of God within himself. He finds desires and aspirations and real goodness worthy to be eternal with ⁱⁿ himself. but he also finds weakness and inability to bring to fruition his better part, Yet weaknesses and propensities to evil, when measured by eternity, seem but transient and unreal; it is the good which is eternal. He cannot impute to the great God weakness and inability, but rather he images his own deepest nature in a Supreme Being who is but the perfect fulfilment of his own highest conceptions.

The Unitarian conception of the sure and noble destiny of man, his eternal progression, arise, in large measure, from the fact that he, with his human nature, could not, were it in his power, allow any frail human creature to utterly fail and perish. How then can God permit so terrible a calamity! The end therefore must be certain and good. This is not a metaphysical reason, he finds the reason within himself. Then too, history points the same way. We measure the past with the present and we see evolution and progress. ^{evolution} He is a law; shall this law cease? No, it is God's plan that we shall progress forever.

Man feels that God is in his own soul; he sees him in the manifestations of nature. God holds all within his

hand; he is immanent in his creation, and therefore transcendent to it. It is a religious need that places God beyond the change of process; it is the need for that, which, amidst the perplexing changes of life shall remain forever the same and dependable. It is because this need is actual in the human heart, that he conceives God as that to which he may forever cling, feeling sure that his God is forever the same. The Unitarian does not create an absolute God for theological or metaphysical reasons. It is an objectification of his own inner and real need. It is a value judgement.

Then too the Unitarian is pragmatic in regard to belief. He does not preach the absolute necessity of believing in an absolute God, or even any God at all. He himself, the preacher, feels that there is a God, it is an actual fact to him, but yet, ^{it} is faith; he does not claim any absolute scientific, or even a transcendent unquestionable proof of God. He believes in God, and in a certain kind of God, because it works for him; it meets and answers problems and facts, - therefore he believes. He does not assert the necessity of another man's believing as he does. The Unitarian allows each to conceive of God as he sees fit; he may worship the great mystery of life, law, force or energy; so long as it makes man a better man and fits him for life, his worship is good

and true. Therefore the Unitarian value judgement is pragmatic.

The **basis** of Unitarian belief then is pragmatic; it does not grow out of metaphysical speculations, but finds its source and support in nature and in man. It must be said however that the prevailing tendency is to carry it **ultimately into an intellectual absolutism**. The conception of God which arises within ^{and is} ~~and is~~ translated in terms of self, and ~~this~~ is a real experience of God, develops into intellect abstractions, and God becomes in reality the very antithesis of man and alien to him. That is, God becomes all that man is not; God is absolute and infinite, man, limited and finite; God perfect, man imperfect; God divine, man human; God fulfilled, man in process; man in time, God in eternity; man needy, God knowing no need; man sinful, troubled and afraid, God infinite holiness, ^{peace} and bliss; man ignorant, God pure wisdom.

The experience of God at first, or in its basis a real **experience** of God as touching man and being like man, loses its touch with reality and shades off into assertions regarding that which transcends all human knowledge and experience.

Notwithstanding all this, however, no better summary

of Unitarian preaching

of belief

Philosophical Review, Mar. 1874, Jas. Payne, page 122
could be found, and none more pragmatic than the words of
Rev. Richard Boynton: (50) "Whatever our reasoning may come
to, faith in God consists practically in just facing our daily
tasks as if God were what we believe him to be, facing our daily
tasks, and doing all that we do as in the light of his countenance."

May 1st 1910.

Harvey Merrill.

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12 VIII

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1	Philosophical Review,	Mar. 1904,	Jas. Royce.	page 142
2	142	1896	248	C. P. St. John
3	141	1899	279	Geo. B. DeWaver
4	141	1893	616	Austin T. Carter
5	142	1894	480	G. F. Clark
6	142	1903	769	W. F. Eas
7	51	Pragmatism :	Wm. James	
8	290	1896	378	W. D. Sizonds
9	295	1906	1018	L. F. Porter
10	295	1898	1073	Geo. Fatchelor
11	VII	Works of Channing	vol. 1 of the six vol. edit.	Tract
12	VIII	188	711	Geo. Thayer
13	223 - 223		789	J. G. Townsend
14	XVII	186	128	E. E. Board
15	239	1895	125	W. B. Byer
16	XVII - XVII		87	G. W. Stone
17	XVI	1898	650	G. M. Dole
18	XV	1893	651	Robt. Collyer
19	225	1898	201	E. P. Powell
20	LX	1893	438	S. Crothers
21	X	1893	504	S. C. Pease
22	1904 - page 936	Christian Register.	J. T. Sunderland	oke
23	"	881	440	W. H. Pulsford
24	1906	1015	210	Geo. Fatchelor
25	1894	136	257	J. F. Clarke.

26	1896	- page 72	Christian Register.	W. H. Savage
27	1896	448		G. T. Dole
28	1896	248		C. E. St. John
29	1902	279		Geo. B. Gebauer
30	1893	616		Austin T. Garver
31	1894	480		C. W. Clark
32	1906	769		M. F. Ham
33	1906	993		W. D. Simonds
34	1906	378		I. E. Porter
35	1906	1015		Geo. Batchelor
36	1896	1073		" "
37	1905	488		John B. Green
38	1908	711		Geo. Thayer
39	1905	737		J. G. Townsend
40	1906	125		B. E. Howard
40 1/2	1905	125		W. H. Lyon
41	1905	39		G. W. Stone
42	1902	67		C. E. Dole
43	1902	550		Robt. Collyer
44	1902	951		E. P. Powell
45	1893	201		S. Crothers
46	1893	448		S. C. Beane
47	1893	504		B. Herford
48	1894	201		G. W. Cooke
49	1895	440		A. M. Judy
50	1906	210		Richard Boynton.