WILLIAM CHANNING GANNETT.

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WILLIAM CHANNING GANNETT

- I -

His Life

The Gannetts had been attached to the New England soil for four of five generations prior to the time of Caleb Gannett, the grandfather of William Channing Gannett. Caleb was the first of the family to depart from the farmer tradition and enjoy the distinction of a Harvard education. Tradition has it that a certain Mary Chilton, an ancestor, was the first woman to set foot on American soil at the general landing of the Pilgrims. (1)

Caleb Gannett firmly established the new academic status of the family. In his earlier years a preacher of liberal tendencies (he was said to be "Hopkinsian" in his theology throughout his life) he later became a teacher of mathematics in Harvard College. His grandson describes him as "intellectual by balance of faculties rather than by intellect." (2) Ruth Stiles, his second wife, was the daughter of the president of Yale College, like himself a product of sturdy Puritan-

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(1) William Channing Gannett, "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 11

(2) Ibid. p. 10

Pilgrim stock. She was a firm believer in "that noble savagery" known as Calvinism.(3) Ezra Stiles Gannett, the fruit of this union, was the father of William Channing Gannett.

The colleague of William Ellery Channing, among the founders of the American Unitarian Association and its first secretary, an outstanding radical of the childhood of Unitarianism though later counted among the conservatives, Ezra Stiles Gannett was to the day of his death one of the best beloved pastors of his time. He was instrumental in founding the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches in Boston and helped also to found the Christian Register. (4) For forty-seven years the misister of Federal Street Meeting House and Arlington Street Church, he was at his death counted among the saints of the Unitarian movement. The most self-effacing of men, he placed the lowest estimate on his own work, however highly it might be praised by others, a characteristic that he passed on to his distinguished son.

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(3) Dr. Gannett's own expression, see "One Hundred Years of the Unitarian Movement in America," p. 9

(4) "Ezra Stiles Gannett, " p. 138 and P.p. 371-372.

(5) Ibid, p. 348

Ezra Stiles Gannett was a Biblical Unitarian holding that Jesus was a special manifestation of God and the means of a special revelation of the Divine Power. (5) He took with him some strange Calvinistic traits into his new religious outlook, though denying Calvinism itself, most striking of which was his painful sense of his own unworthiness and ineffectiveness. The real basis of these fits of depression was undoubtedly overwork, his body being unequal to the terrific demands he put upon it. He He was thoroughly tolerant and meticulously conscientious in his judgment of others. Though remaining a stout advocate of the Unitarianism of his early days, and though greatly perturbed by the radical tendencies of the followers of Theordore Parker, he called upon the younger men to be true to themselves. It was his firm conviction that the genius of Unitarianism was Christian, Biblical Christianity, and that those who had ceased to base their theology on the Biblical revelation had forfeited the right to the name of Christian. His son's radical views caused him much uneasiness. "I do wish you held different religious opinions," he wrote in 1870, the year after William Gannett had graduated from Divinity School, "For my conviction of the Divine origin and special efficacy of Christianity grows stronger as my consciousness of moral defect and

spiritual need increase. I need Christ as both teacher and a Savior. I need the super-natural in the Gospel to give me an arm of help or a ground of hope. Human nature is not sufficient of itself, and God's interposition is man's salvation. I long for you to see this." (6) And again, "There must be truth somewhere, and I do not know where to look for it if not in the Bible," this in 1861, when his son was in his first year in the Divinity School. (7)

His conscienciousness put him into some very difficult and anomolous situations during the anti-slave agitations. He was a peace man to the core, and became reconciled to the Civil War very slowly. Furthermore, he believed that law should be obeyed as long as it is in force, be it a good or a bad law, or else the consequences of disobedience faced openly. Thus, though firmly opposed to the institution of slavery, he made public statements to the effect that he would not approve of general disobedience to the fugitive slave law, unless the law were vindicated by the punishment of the guilty person. He, himself, would help the slave and then give himself up. Furthermore he could not approve of the blistering denunciations by the abolitionists of the slave holders, recognizing as he did that they were almost as much victims of the system as were the slaves

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(6) Ibid, p. 349

(7) Ibid, p. 346

themselves. Such a well balanced viewpoint is rare today, and at that time was beyond the understanding of the majority of even the enlightened. Notwithstanding his convictions, however, he was known to raise his voice in behalf of the rights of free speech of these same abolitionists in the times at the beginning of their agitation when they were considered unwelcome extremists by most people. (8)

The click of his canes was often heard as he sped on his many errands of mercy. His own comfort and convenience always gave place to the emergencies or misfortunes of others. Professor Frederic H. Hedge, in a famous humorous characterization of the arrival of different eminent Unitarian divines in Heaven thus described the advent of Dr. Ezra S. Gannett:

"Finally Dr. Ezra S. Gannett would arrive late, as usual, and soon turn away disconsolately from the felicitude of the redeemed. Hobbling over as fast as his two canes would carry him to the battlements of heaven, he would look down with pity and tenderness on the tormented sould below, crying impatiently to the enraptured saints about the throne, 'Oh, cease your harping, cease your singing! Can't something be done for those poor creatures down yonder?'" (9)

He was a firm peace man, believing that "reason, religion, the whole spirit as well as the letter of the

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(8) Ibid. p. 291

(9) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," v.1, p. 183

Gospel united in forbidding war." (10) Peace and temperance were the causes nearest his heart. (10) This noble heritage he handed down to his son.

Such was the father of William Channing Gannett.

William Channing Gannett was born in Boston on March 13, 1840, the second of the children of Ezra and Anna Tilden Gannett. There were three children, a sister older and a brother younger than himself. When he was but six years old his mother died on Christmas Eve, 1846, her place being filled thenceforth by a maternal aunt. Anna Tilden Gannett was a woman of elevated character and marked ability. The memory of her lingered in the mind of her son William - a faint fragrant recollection - throughout his whole life. The following poem written in middle life recalls from the dim mists of the past the sacred memories of her whom he has lost so long ago:

"So early lost, I cannot tell the lift
Of mother-arms! A toy or two her gift
A small white gown, a needle in its seam;
And dim as is a dream within a dream
A little figure at a shadows feet,
Or walking hand in hand upon the street -
A gentle shadow with an unseen face -
No smile, no tone, no foot-fall mine for trace:
That is my unknown mother!.

"Yet I know
The inmost currents of my being flow
From her high springs; the faiths that in me rise
Have once made happy lights within her eyes;
The gardens of my heart are seeded thick
With border blooms that first in her were quick;
My very thought of God is her bequest,
Sealed mine before I lay upon her breast!

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(10) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 138

"O Mother, could an earthly smile suffice,
And these not serve me well to recognize?
Inwrought and deathless tokens pledge us joy
What day my Mother meets her grateful boy." (11)

Ever afterwards her husband kept the sad anniversary.

"Thenceforth Christmas was a still and shadowed day in the household life.....Towards nightfall the children used to gather round him and talk of their mother and say the hymns which she had taught them, till by and by all knelt in prayer and kissed good-night." (12)

Piety, kindliness, thoughtfulness, unselfishness - these were the characteristics of the home life of the Gannetts. Even before she had taken to the bed from which she never rose, the thoughtful mother had carefully wrapped and labelled the parcels which were to be distributed on New Year's Day, 1847, with careful directions as to delivery of those destined for people outside the family. Let the son himself describe the home life:

"It was a minister's house. You would have known that notmore by the books in the study than by the pictures in the parlor. The latter, gifts of friends, were carefully ecclesiastical or scriptural in subject - Madonnas of Raphael, Christs of Ary Scheffer. The owner liked it so. He would have his house denote his work, as the pulpit gown or the black coat denoted it. In all things the furnishing was plain. No minister should be over-comfortable was his theory. Exceeding peace would seem to disfellowship the little ones of the flock. In the study, the couch and the great table, the little desk where the sermons came, - it had been his wife's

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(11) W. C. Gannett and F. L. Hosmer, "The Thought of God," Series II, p. 87. This poem was written in 1894.

(12) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 241

school desk -and the booklined wall, left small place for more. Few new books were bought even in the favorite department of Bible-work. Those on the shelves in the rusty leather covers, were the standard commentaries and metaphysics of his youth. Friends' faces made the pictures here, - Channing and Tuckerman, Henry Ware and William Furness. Judge Davis's bust looked down from a corner. The judge had been one of the old parishoners.

"No less a minister's house than his house. The morning greetings were given Bible in hand, the children reading their verses round in turn and kneeling with the father in his prayer ..... Sickness, late rising, company seldom interfered with this service, even if it were held with his children alone in the study.....

"And all days looked toward Sunday ..... It began on Saturday evening. For the children, no party-going then, no noisy game nor novel after nine o'clock: even sewing after nine was mild sacrilege, against which feeling brought down from childhood made a protest.....

"Twice always the children went to church besides Sunday School. No household task that could be spared was done, that all the family might share the Sabbath rest. Year in, year out, the cold corn beef and Indian pudding, prepared the day before, appeared at dinner, - until a revolution happened and a plum pudding dynasty succeeded. Grave books were read, - Paradise Lost, Butler's Analogy or smaller reading to match. In the twilight, as the father rested on the couch or in the great arm-chair, the children had their best hour with him: in younger days reciting Dr. Channings little catechism; when older giving memories of the sermons or telling what they had read, and saying favorite hymns, among which the mother's never were forgotten.....

"It was a home of principles rather than of rules and strict exactitudes. Life seemed to shape itself as a matter of course to the father's standard and his necessary work. Not his convenience, but his work, -

that was the centre around which all revolved. There might have been more careless grace in household ways; for the mother-aunt and the older children felt the presence of his tired mood and learned to watch and wait upon his sensitiveness..... There was always in the house a presence that stood for perfect truthfulness, for hourly self-denials, and active thoughtfulness for others, for frank humility in confessing wrong or ignorance or failure. The children saw a grown-up man, their father, trying like a child with them to be and do just right. To live with him and doubt that there were such things in the world as supreme sincerity and unselfishness, would have been to doubt that the sun shone in the windows.

"Great was the respect for anniversaries, and great the children's corresponding expectation.

"Throughtout the household life there was the healthy pinch that keeps one braced with the sense of having just enough, and mindful, therefore, of the many who have less." (13)

In this home Dr. Gannett spent his youth as a Boston Latin School boy. Later, when at Harvard, he lived in Cambridge, spending his Sundays at home. A year intervened between his graduation from Harvard and his entrance to the Divinity School, during which he taught at Newport, Rhode Island. Shortly after he entered the Divinity School, the Civil War broke out. (14) True to his heritage, he did not serve in a fighting unit, but answered a humanitarian call to help the newly emancipated blacks in the Sea Island of South Carolina, known in the North under the general

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(13) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p.p. 258-264

(14) Appendix II

name of Port Royal. The work of the Freedman's Bureau, as the organization with which he worked was called, was carried on in a region emancipated in effect, even if not officially, early in the war. On November 7, 1861, Commodore Dupont captured Hilton Head and Bay Point in the Sea Islands, and the Union fell heir to a large cotton crop the effects of the resident planters who had fled precipitately, and several hundred destitute, demoralized slaves whose number increased daily as refugees from other quarters arrived. The first problem, that of salvaging the cotton crop and giving some sort of employment to the negroes, was early solved. The next problem which was of the same nature, but concerned the following year was also early dealt with. The Secretary of the Treasury, Edward L. Pierce of Milton, Massachusetts was sent down commissioned to take steps to meet these emergencies. He made certain recommendations to the Government, and wrote to friends in Boston pleading for assistance in clothing and teaching the Negroes. Willaim Gannett was one of those who responded to this call.

"There was a good deal of courage in what these people did. The climate of the Sea Islands is unwholesome; the rebels were more than likely, from across the narrow Coosaw River, to invade the territory held by the Northern troops; it was not improbable that the negroes might utterly refuse to work; it was not impossible that they might wreak vengeance for their wrongs on every white man who should try to control them. Furthermore, as a rule these men and women knew little of any kind of agriculture, and still less of local conditions under which they were to do their work, or of the people with whom they were to deal. They had, in fact, no other guides to action than enthusiasm and good sense, and of the latter, particularly, they carried widely differing amounts. Some who went supplied with too little of either were back in their Northern homes before summer was under way; the majority making what they could of the means or lack of means at their disposal, had within the same period of time got about thirty-eight hundred laborers at steady work on fifteen thousand acres of corn, potatoes

and cotton. For the first time in our history, educated Northern men had taken charge of the Southern negro, had learned to know his status, his nature, his history, first hand, in the cabin and in the field. And though subsequently other Southern territory was put into the hands of other Northern men and women to manage in much the same fashion, it was not in the nature of things that these conditions should ever be exactly reproduced." (15)

It is quite evident by the number of references to Gannett in the "Letters from Port Royal" that he was an important figure in this work for three years, finally being made assistant in Colonization under General Saxton at Savannah. (16) According to his own word he filled many posts during these years, being alternately teacher (17) labor superintendent, (18) house carpenter and chief justice (19) according to the exigencies of the moment. But through all the grilling and often discouraging work he carried a high purpose in mind, the ultimate developement of the negro into a self-dependent, self-respecting citizen. His comments on the conditions among the negroes, and his observations concerning their capabilities and potentialities exhibit an insight and discrimination remarkable when the obstacles under which the Bureau worked are borne in mind. The work was poorly paid, the salary being but $50 per month, (20) and the ordinary obstacles were often complicated by official blundering and interfer-

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(15) "Letters from Port Royal," edited by Elizabeth Ware Pearson, p.p. vieand vii.
(16) Ibid, p. 308
(17) Ibid, p. 60
(18) Ibid, p. 137
(19) Ibid, p. 210
(20) Ibid, p. 116

ence and suspicion voiced by those who looked on at a distance. When in 1863 the possibility of evacuating the population to Haiti or elsewhere was suggested, he would have gone with them, had the move been made. (21) The negroes of the Sea Islands were more ignorant and of a lower type than the other slaves (22) and the maintaining of order was often difficult.

The government apparently had no set policy in regard to the colored population under its regime, a condition which did not facilitate the efforts of the workers. Gannett fairly soon became convinced that whatever action was taken, paternalism should be avoided, and "charity" eschewed.

"I am satisfied," he says. (23) That the sooner the people are thrown upon themselves, the speedier will be their salvation. Let all the natural laws of labor, wages, competition, etc., come into play, - and the sooner will habits of responsibility, industry and self-dependence and manliness be developed. Very little, very little should be given them; now in the first moments of freedom is the time to influence their notion of it."

Again referring to some sort of land allotment proposed in 1863,

"I pray it (the allotment) may not be by gift. I used to dread the effects of immediate emancipation and think it was the duty of a Christian nation to ease the

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(21) Ibid, p. 116
(22) Ibid, p. 84
(23) Ibid, p. 147 - 148

passage from slavery to freedom with all kinds of assistance; but I am nearly satisfied that the best thing our Government can do, for the good of these people themselves, is simply to offer and enforce their acceptance of the advantages of civil law and education." (24)

About the same time (1863) estimating the character and capabilities of the ex-slaves he says, (25)

"I hardly feel like writing anything at length, my opinion as far as it is made up, is so short and undecided .....I have no doubt that, under conditions of peace, three years would find these people, with but few exceptions, a self-respecting, self-supporting population. Almost everything about them, even to their distrust and occasional turbulence, has that in it which suggests to me the idea of capacity and power of developement. Their principle vices,- dishonesty, indolence, unchastity, their dislike of responsibility and unmanly willingness to be dependent on others for what their own effort might bring, - their want of forethought and inability to organize and combine operations for mutual benefit, - nearly all their moral and mental weaknesses can be traced naturally and directly to slavery, - while on the other hand the fact that at my close view I cannnt make them out to be characteristic traits confirms that opinion as to their origin."

The following, written in 1865, represents a still more mature judgment:

"It is painful to hear how humbly the men recognize the superiority of 'white sense;' and believing as they do that the secret of it lies in reading and writing they fully apprecaite the advantages of education." (26)

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(25) Ibid, p. 178

(26) The Freedmen at Port Royal," North American Review, vol. 101, 1865, p. 4.

Many indifferent Northerners, as well as the Southerners anxious to justify the slave system, claimed that the capacities and morals of the Negroes were not sufficiently high to warrant any other condition than slavery. To them he replies:

"Ignorance and vice necessitate servitude (they argue) but (they) omit the other half of the circle, - slavery produces vice and maintains ignorance." (27)

The poem, "Aunt Phillis's Guest" comes from this period, as does "The Negro Burying Ground." (28) Each of these is the product of an experience elsewhere reported, the former in his article in the North American Review (26 and 27) and the latter in "Letters from Port Royal." (29)

In June of 1865, he returned home, to find his father in very poor health. (30) A trip to Europe followed for about a year, during which time he did "the Grand Tour," and he returned to America and the Harvard Divinity School in 1867.

Many and deep-going had been the changes which had been veritably shaking the theological world for the

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(27) Ibid, p. 13

(28) W. C. Gannett and F. L. Hosmer, "The Thought of God," Series I, p.p. 119 and 123

(29) "Letters from Port Royal," p. 65

(30) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 319 and Appendix II

decade or so previous to 1860. Emerson and Transcendentalism had caused one upheaval, only to be followed and largely superseded by Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis. To add insult to injury, "higher criticism" and comparative religions attained the dignity of recognition, and the young man who entered the Harvard Divinity School in those days might well look forward to an interesting time. While the Faculty of the School did not openly admit the Darwinian theory, it nevertheless sensibly affected their teaching. (31) "The students were for the most part radical," says Dr. Wendte, (32) adding that " a conservative young man leaves little to be hoped for." The new theories caused much stir among the students.

Of the teachers in the Divinity School who exercised an important influence in the direction of radicalism, Professor George Rapall Noyes probably occupies the foremost place. A pioneer of higher criticism he had been threatened with indictment for blasphemy in 1834 when he published his conclusions regarding the messianic prophesies. He had little patience with the efforts of the Biblical apologists to account for the super-natural interventions by

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(31) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 1,p. 175

(32) Ibid, p. 168

means of superficially plausible, but highly improbable natural occurrences. John White Chadwick once asked him whether a wind might not have providentially parted the waters of the Red Sea, and thus allowed the Israelites to escape the avenging hosts of Egypt. Professor Noyes replied, "Any wind strong enough to so part the Red Sea would have blown the Children of Israel to Jericho." This great scholar was much beloved by his students. At his death in 1868, William Gannett wrote a memorial poem:

"A light upon the harvest field,
A 'Well-done!' in the air,
'Rest angel, only weary yield!'
Rose up his eager prayer.

"Again in work went by the day,
Till working hands grew thin;
Once more the restful shining lay, -
The old man entered in.

"A teacher he, in white-haired youth;
The body's cloister old, -
The spirit growing young with Truth
Through birthdays manifold.

A teacher he of oracles,
And one his life did sing:
The field lies always harvest-white,
If inly lies the Spring." (33)

Another great innovation in theological instruction at this time was the study of comparative religions. For the first time in the history of theological education

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(33) "The Thought of God," p. 99 Series I

in the United States, if not, indeed, in the world, the great world religions were presented to the students in an unprejudiced way. James Freeman Clarke, minister of the Church of the Disciples, and famous for his insistence on the spirit of Jesus' teachings rather than the letter of his actual reported words, was the man who taught this greatly broadening and vastly important subject. A pair of students was assigned to the intensive study of each great religion. To William Gannett and Charles W. Wendte fell the task of studying Buddhism.(34) Undoubtedly to this instruction from Dr. Clarke the two men owed in a large measure their later interest in world religion.

Then there was Dr. Frederick H. Hedge, Professor of Church History, of whom Jenkin Lloyd Jones wrote in 1886, "No man in the East now living has done me more good in his time and way than Dr. Hedge." (34) And C. W. Wendte adds his own testimony, "For sheer intellectual power combined with scholarship Dr. Hedge was the greatest man with whom I have been personally acquainted." (34) At his death in 1890, Dr. Gannett paid his old teacher an affectionate tribute. (35)

In Harvard College Professor Louis Agassiz was wielding a tremendous influence. James Russell Lowell and Jeffries Wyman, the latter of the Scientific Depart-

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(34) C. W. Wendte, op cit., p. 181

(35) Unity, vol. 26, p. 10

ment of the University and "a supporter, though not of a strenous kind, of the evolutionary hypothesis," (36) were other voices supporting the decidedly liberal trend of thought.

Not least of the innovations at Harvard at this time was a course of lectures by experts in various social reforms, instituted not by the action of the faculty but by the students themselves. Edward Everett Hale, Frank B. Sanborn, Charles H. Dall of Calcutta, Samuel H. Winkley, Mr. & Mrs. C. K. Whipple, and a special policeman named Cluer were among the lecturers who addressed the students in these courses.

"(Cluer) was a man of moving eloquence," writes Dr. Wendte,(36A) "whose description of the unfortunate denizens of the lower world so stirred William Gannett and myself that we 'went slumming' with him one never-to-be-forgotten night in Boston, and later attempted some uplift work of our own. Our attempts, honestly and tenderly meant, were ill-advised and futile. We soon realized that such endeavor by young inexperienced workers like ourselves was like beating against a stone wall with a wisp of straw. We gained, however, from this contact with the coarser forms of vice not only a deeper insight into the lower strata of society, but an understanding of the difference between the prevention and the cure of social evils, between seeking to remedy their consequences and abolishing them at their source, a distinction not always clear to amateur philanthropists."

Thus, early in their careers these men learned one

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(36) C. W. Wendte, op. cit. p. 186

(36A) C. W. Wendte, op. cit., p.p. 204 & 205

of the fundamental principles upon which modern social work bases its program.

William Channing Gannett was considered one of the most promising men in his class.

"Tall, well knit of figure and handsome of countenance he was the most gifted and cultivated among (my fellow students)." (37) Dr. Wendte continues, "Serious in disposition, exquisitely sensitive to beauty in nature and goodness in man, a mystic in religion, controlled by a conscience that was imperious in its demands upon himself and others, a remorseless questioner of facts and motives, but the gentlest of critics, humble to the verge of self depreciation loyal and affectionate.....His religious point of view was summed up in his notable sentence, 'Ethics carried far enough becomes religion.'" (37)

A hint or too of his radical views at this time may be found in his father's letters. One such letter has been quoted already. (6) Apparently he had given up the idea of a special revelation of absolute truth in the Bible or other specific source as early as 1861, for at that time his father wrote,

"I do not quite agree with you about the progress of Unitarianism or the constant march of thought. There must be truth somewhere, and I do no know where to look for it if not in the Bible." (38)

He appears to have been assailed with recurring doubts as to his fitness for the ministry. Dr. Wendte remembers him as a student teacher in the Federal Street Meeting

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(37) C. W. Wendte, op. cit., p. 186

(38) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 346. This letter was written 1861.

House, at which time "It was rumored among us that he wanted to become a minister, but feared he was not good enough. As we gazed upon him we wondered what seraphic attainments might be required for that vocation."(39) In 1866, his father again writes him that he was pained by his "Distaste for a 'life of preaching and praying.'" (40) Again the elder Gannett refers to giving up the authority of the Bible "on grounds which seem to you untenable." (40) Once more,

> "I agree with you in holding indefinite rather than precise views on Christ's nature and rank. I probably differ from you in supposing his peculiar spiritual consciousness to have been in part the result of an inspiration or influence specially communicated, and for a purpose by God, and not purely a consequence of his own intellectual integrity and moral inspiration." (41)

Dr. Gannett graduated from the Harvard Divinity School in 1869. Subsequently he held pastorates in East Lexington (from 1871 to 1872), St. Paul (from 1877 to 1883), Hinsdale, Illinois (from 1887 to 1889), Milwaukee (from 1868 to 1870) and Rochester, N. Y. where he went in 1889, retiring from active work in 1909 and remaining the beloved Pastor Emeritus and patriachal citizen until his death in 1923.

As a pastor he was greatly loved by his own people as well as in the community at large. His views were broad, his sympathies catholic. In no sense a denomin-

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(39) C. W. Wendte, op cit., p. 188

(40) "Ezra Stiles Gannett," p. 347

(41) Ibid, p. 348

ationalist, his work was always for the community at large --- especially "at large" for he would include all humanity. It was this very breadth of outlook that enlisted him in what became known as the "Western Issue." He had been identified with the "ethical men" from the start.

He was ordained at St. Paul on March 7, 1879, two years after being settled there, though he had been a minister for ten years. The occasion is thus described in Unity: (42)

"He asked his people to ordain him and to unite in doing so by renewing their bond of fellowship with each other. Accordingly, one Sunday after sermon, he explained the agreement with a three times reading, that none might lightly act. Then the president of the board of trustees said an ordaining word, Mr. Jones* welcomed him to the band of workers, and after the service the friends, about a hundred, came up one by one and signed their names below these words:

'As those who believe in Religion;
'As those who believe in Freedom, Fellowship and Character in religion:
'As those who believe that the religious life means the thankful, trustful, loyal and helpful life;
'And as those who believe that the church is a brotherhood of helpers wherein it is made easier to lead such a life;
'We join ourselves together, name, hand and heart as members of Unity Church.'

"In his explanation Mr. Gannett said that this was

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(42) UNITY, v. 3, p. 28

* i.e., Jenkin Lloyd Jones

a 'creed,' but one made up, not of intellectual beliefs, but of the principles and ideals of our religion - a much deeper and wider and more lasting ground of sympathy. To those who had signed any previous statement, this was supplemental, not doing away with that; but new friends signing this were in no way committed to any older statement. Nor was the signing a pledge of support to Unity Church; but it was a pledge or real and deep interest in the church. No stranger, for instance, attracted for two or three Sundays, no friend, even, who merely cared once in a while to drop in, heartily welcome as their presence was, should feel invited thus to join our fellowship. He thought it would be our family book, the register of those who felt that this was their church home. The signing was, and should be regarded as a solemn act; it was our way of 'joining the church,' but the 'church' joined was open to each and all whose life ideals and principles these words expressed, and who cared to find their home with us. Once in three months he proposed that the book should be opened on the table by the pulpit and new signatures were invited and that an age be set, not younger probably than 16 or 17 years, at which our children should be encouraged to join their names to ours.

"It was all simple, natural and almost too tender and impressive to be told about in this way." (42)

At the Western Unitarian Conference held in 1878, he read a paper on "Destructive and Constructive Liberalism"(43) Here he upheld the necessity of both kinds of liberalism, for if everyone affirmed we should soon have the orthodoxy of the moment lengthening into a century. And from where would come new truth? On the other hand, if all denied there would be no stablility to organize the truth and steady the generation. The liberal, he says, should first try to construct a certain temper of mind, not certain contents of mind. The sort of temper to be cultivated is

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(43) Unity, vol. 1, p. 203

that "which is afraid only of fear, and of ignorance and of blindness to thoughts good and beautiful." Courage to stand for what he believes and sympathy for the point of view of others must characterize the liberal. Secondly, the liberal must be an apostle of religious feeling to the new universe which science has revealed so startlingly. (A strangely modern idea, that!) And thirdly he must be an apostle of religious ideas.

That touch about science is characteristic. He was always intensely interested in scientific progress and developement, some books on science in his library being dated 1871. Though not a specialist in any field of science, news appertaining thereto in the daily papers were sure to catch his attention, and the evolution idea caught his imagination immensely. It is to be found throughout his writing, tinged with a transcendentalism which also is characteristic of him. (44)

He had the spirit of the missionary. Time and again his articles appear in Unity setting forth the Western basis of fellowship, and the liberal's position and com-

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(44) Appendix II

mission. In an article entitled "The Liberal's Mission" (45) he says that the liberal's part is to stand for freedom, fellowship and character and to represent them as the essentials of religion. And he produced results himself. As a specific example, his church in St. Paul in 1879 was assessed $50 by the Western Conference. But they raised $125 and pledged another $100 before the first of the next year. (46)

Though the Unity Tracts, which were initiated in 1882, were propagating the Unity faith, Gannett was also anxious that the Unitarian Association should issue some new literature setting forth the more advanced position of Unitarianism. The tracts then in use represented the earlier stage of the Unitarian movement, "the pale affirmations," the morning battle of the Bible-texts," as he called it.(47) "But still the day keeps coming," he said. His contributions to the Unity Mission, Unity Church Door Pulpit and Unity Short Tracts were numerous.*

Integral to the movement which eventuated eight years later in the open breach between the "Unity" men and the

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(45) UNITY, vol. 1 p.v

(46) UNITY, vol. 3 p.66

(47) UNITY, vol.13 p.5, "New Tracts"

* For his contributions, see bibliography.

representatives of the older Unitarianism, was the founding of the periodical "Unity" in 1878. The first issue appeared on March 1, of that year under the title "The Pamphlet Mission." A replica of the title page of this first issue appears in every number of Unity today. The name was changed to "Unity" with the issue of September 1, 1878. The rechristening of the paper took place at Milton Junction, Wisconsin on June 11, 1878.*

Meanwhile events were leading up to the clash between the radicals and conservatives which came to a head in 1886. Its basis was

"the problem of the relation of the individual to religious institutions and traditions. The conservative party maintained that Unitarians are Christians, and gave recognition to that continuity of human developement by which every generation is connected with and draws its life from those which precede it, anf is consciously dependent on them. On the other hand, the radical party was not willing to accept institutions as having a binding authority over individuals. Some of them were reluctant to call themselves Christians, not because they rejected the more important of the Christian beliefs, but because they were not willing to bind any individual by the action of his fellows. It was their claim that religion best serves its own ends when it is free to act upon the individual without compulsion of any kind from others, and that its actions should be without any basis of external authority." (48)

The Western Unitarian Conference was incorporated in Cleveland in 1882, adopting as its motto "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion." Mr. Gannett regretted

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* A description of this event may be found in UNITY, vol. 43, (1898) p. 286

(48) G. W. Cooke, "Unitarianism in America," p. 225

that this motto was not included in the legal document incorporating the conference,* but it was placed on the conference seal. The issues were pressed by the conservatives again at the meeting in St. Louis, and so great a breach was created that the parties separated, the conservatives being represented by the "Unitarian," edited by J. T. Sunderland and Brooke Herford, and the radicals by Unity. In 1886, at Cincinnati, the issue came to a head. Dr. Sunderland's famous pamphlet contending for the theistic and Christian character of the conference had been issued just before the meeting convened. Oscar Chute offered a resolution that "the primary object of this conference is to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity." This was defeated as was one offered by Dr. Sunderland that "while rejecting all creeds and creed limitations, the conference hereby expresses its purpose as a body to be the promotion of a religion of love to God and love to man." Mr. Gannett's resolution that "the Western Conference conditions its fellowship on no dogmatic tests but welcomes all who wish to join to establish truth righteousness and love in the world" was passed by a majority fo 34 to 6. (49)

By virtue of his recognised ability, his historical grasp of Unitarianism and his equanimity of mind, Mr. Gannett became the champion of the "Unity" men. That journal in

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* Unity - vol. 9, p.168, "Creeds that never grow Old."
(49) Ibid, p.p. 225-226

the years from 1882 to 1890 was the medium of his defence, and many are the articles from his pen. The first thing that impresses the reader in all of this controversial writing is the restraint, the fairness, the gentleness, but with it all the fearlessness of this knight of religious freedom. Even when the issue was at its bitterest he did not stoop to invective, but pleaded for mutual restraint and toleration. When the "Unitarian" appeared he greeted the occasion, saying that now there would be one more medium for disseminating the Unitarian gospel, even if it did differ from the sort that UNITY espoused. The greeting was extended to include "Our Best Words," Jasper Douthit's periodical, which had just become a fortnightly journal instead of a monthly. "Greetings, too, to Mr. Douthit's "Best Words," just new-winged to be a fortnightly instead of a monthly. New-winged and new beaked, too! To judge by the beginning, twice as often as before - and that was once a month - Unity may expect to play Prometheus to this beak and the spectacle will cost but seventy-five cents a year; which will be very cheap for so much good nature as we shall try to show. We only half-laugh,- the thing tends to heart-ache. For the best justification of Unity's general positions we commend our readers to become acquainted with Mr. Douthit's unanswered attacks.

"'Our Best Words' are the words of a quite conservative Unitarian; the 'Unitarian' occupies a broad middle ground, where, probably, the majority of our body stand today; Unity speaks for a more radical prophetic sort of

Unitarianism, occupying ground where many stand already and toward which the general body moves.

"While some of us care little to claim, none of us care to disclaim, their name, Christianity, provided it be not made either openly or by implication the test-word of Unitarian fellowship, - to make it that or to make any other doctrine that, however grand it be, is what spoils name and doctrine for us." (50)

This point of view is emphasized in the following issue of Unity. (51) The difference was "not as to beliefs themselves, but as to the necessity of holding certain beliefs to entitle one to the name 'Unitarian.'" (50)

Again discussing the question of how wide the Unitarian fellowship should be, he would include non-theists as well as theists, and this was in 1885!

"To be Unitarians who worship is one thing, - to say that none are Unitarians unless they worship is an absolutely different thing.

"When comes the moment to decide between the Name or Form and the Spirit, and in the choice a church decides for the Name, that church buys its present at the cost of its future." (52)

Answering Dr. James Freeman Clarke, who had offered some criticism regarding the lack of any platform of for the Western Conference, he writes:

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(50) UNITY, vol. 16, "The Unitarian," p. 248

(51) Ibid, p. 259

(52) Ibid, vol. 15, "How Wide," p. 295.

"Worship is not our main business as Unitarians, nor is it that part of our business which shall confer our name. We have printed over our Conference doors a welcome to all who wish to join us to help establish truth and righteousness and love in the world. That is our main business, we think, as Unitarians. That shall confer our name as far as we have a right to indicate conditions. We like not Dr. Clarke's implication that to establish truth and righteousness and love in the world is not a sufficiently noble or definite purpose and work for a Unitarian church to announce as the work it has to do. To actually help do this is to live the life of God and to do his work, whether we call our motive 'love of man' or 'love of God' and the living of his life and the doing of his work, and not the naming of his name, will sometime be sufficient test for name sharing among all Unitarians, we hope - nay we believe it." (53)

Nevertheless, he did not fear what he termed "The Twin Unitarian Superstitions," i.e., a platform and a creed, providing the ethical basis of fellowship was maintained. He submits the following as a statement of Unitarian beliefs, no doubt a summary of his own point of view:

"We believe that to love the Good and live the Good is the substance of religion.

"We believe that Reason and Conscience are final authorities in matters of religious belief

"And therefore

"We believe in the nobility of human nature,

"We revere Jesus and all holy souls, as prophets of religion,

"We honor the Bible and all inspiring scripture old or new,

"We trust the Universe as beautiful, beneficent, unchanging Order; to know this order is Truth; to obey it is Right and Liberty and stronger Life.

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(53) UNITY vol. 17, "Our Twin Unitarian Superstitions," p. 357

"We believe that good and evil inevitable carry their own recompense, no good thing being failure and no evil thing success; that no evil can befall the good man in either life or death; that all things work together for the victory of God.

"We believe that we ought to join hands and work to make the good things better and the worst good, counting nothing good for self that is not good for all.

"We believe that this self forgetting life awakes in man the sense of union here and now, with things eternal, - the sense of deathlessness; and this sense is to us an earnest of life to come.

"We worship One in All - that Life, whence suns and stars derive their orbits and the sould of man its Ought. This one we name the Eternal God, Our Father.

"We trust free though; we trust it everywhere and only fear thought bound.

"Therefore our beliefs are deepening and widening as science, history and life reveal new truth; while our increaseing emphasis is still on the right life and the great Faith to which the right life leads, - faith in the Moral Order of the Universe, faith in All-Ruling Righteousness.

"All names that divide 'Religion' are to us of little consequence compared with it. Whoever loves Truth and lives the Good is, in a broad sense, of our religious fellowship; whoever loves the one or lives the other better than ourselves is our teacher, whatever church or age he may belong to. So our church is wide, our teachers many and our holy writings large." (54)

"We are now in the thick of the Western Issue, the doing and writings and statments that were to eventuate in 1890 in the sending of a special missionary out to the west by the A. U. A. who should work distinctly separately from the Western Conference. The conservatives accused the"Unity" men of being innovators, of course, but that Sunderland and his friends

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(54) Ibid.

were the real innovators because they were going contrary to the Western emphasis of the past ten years. (55) Ironically enough, Brooke Herford, then minister of the church of Channing and Ezra Stiles Gannett, joined with the Sunderlands and Oscar Chute in demanding a doctrinal test for Unitarian fellowship. William C. Gannett pointed out that this was going counter to the Unitarian tradition and emphasis, which even now, and inconsistently enough, raised the cry of "no creeds!" The whole trend of Unitarian history was toward principles and away from beliefs.

"By fellowship we mean full right to our common name. We do not mean church hospitalities; we do not mean right to teach a Sunday-school class; we do not mean right to be Unitarian layman; we do not mean right to be ordained as Unitarian minister without previously defining one's belief; we mean none of thes things merely, though all of them, of course, where no personal objections enter. We mean <u>fellowship</u>, unquestioned and coequal right to the Unitarian name, the same for non-Christians as for Christians, the same for non-theist as for theist." (56)

Brooke Herford in the July, 1886 "Unitarian" accused "Unity" men and "especially one Gannett" as being responsible for the whole Western difficulty.

"Mr. Hefford," replies the accused "ring leader" of the "Unity" men, "Assigns to Mr. Gannett a place in this movement much larger than belongs to him. Were the blame merely one of obloquy to those concerned in it, how cheerfully would we let him sweep the discredit into that name!"

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(55) Ibid, "Which is the Innovating Side?" p. 245

(56) UNITY, vol. 17, "Not in Ill-Will," p. 32

Unity men "marked" rather than "made" the movement, said Mr. Gannett. "We know the movers, especially Mr. H.'s worst one, better than Mr. H.," he adds with a touch of his delightful humor. (57) Some day the Unitarian body will accept the Unity position, he prophesied, and the day did come when he saw his principles officially adopted by the movement.

He saw clearly the limitations of the A. U. A. as a missionary body, especially in the West. Its point of view controlled by the overwhelming mass of opinion in New England, it could not really understand the emphasis of the Western men, conscientiously though it tried, and Mr. Gannett gave it every credit for trying. Hence it was necessary for those who believed in the faith of the Unity men to "help <u>nationalize</u> Unitarianism by <u>de-Bostonizing</u> it." (58) He continues in the same article:

> 4 This Unitarianism of the 'ethical basis' which some think so hazardous, foolish and illogical, is precisely the Unitarianism we are going to uphold and promote by word and deed; for it is the only Unitarianism which we think fully worthy of the name, - the only kind, therefore, for which we greatly care. This at whatever risk or whatever loss of personal friendship we shall do. No longing for peace, no wish for the old and dear united comradeship so needlessly broken, as we think, no honor

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(57) Ibid, "How they Captured the Western Conference," p. 274.

(58) Ibid, vol. 26, "Peace with Distinctness; Distinctness and yet Peace" p. 146

that we feel for the noble side of eastern Unitarianism and the A. U. A., should suffice to keep us silent, until a better than the Western Conference rise to speak this word and do this work." (59)

Noble words, these, and tinged with sadness in their firmness. The controversy continued with considerable vigor until 1894. Both sides were sincere and each attempted to be unbiassed in its judgment. True, at times the conservatives made it pretty plain that they considered it the moral duty of the Unity men to withdraw, and at times their inconsistency is hard for the observer to understand. Thus, in almost parallel columns, there would be a statement in the "Unitarian" eschewing all creeds, and another telling the ethical men that they ought to subscribe to a Christian basis of fellowship or withdraw. Nevertheless, no attempt was made to disfellowship nor to put restriction upon any one by either party. The Saratoga Conference of 1894 finally ended the conflict by revising the preamble to the National Conference to such an extent that while retaining the Christian name, Unitarianism "construed nothing in this constitution as an authoritative test," and invited

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(59) Ibid, p. 148

all those to work with them "who while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims." (60)

It is very interesting in view of the prominent part that Dr. Gannett played in these events to compare two letters, one written before he went to the West, and the other when they had long been memories. In 1875 he wrote to his friend C. W. Wendte, then actively engaged in the Western Conference, after resolutions had been introduced deploring the insistence of the A. U. A. on a clear definition of Christianity and also protesting against the removal of William J. Potter's name from the Year Book:

"It's too early, is it not, to tell what effect your resolution may have? Of course the opposition of the inside A. U. A. people was to be counted on. But it is mainly, I think, a kind of sectarian policy (I mean a policy in the interest of firmer organization to the end of larger funds and usefulness) which has produced the attitude of the last four or five years, and if you Westerners, or the Time-Spirit, or any other agency can make them see that policy points to a change of attitude, they will probably be felt through the next year or two, and will help to clear eyes and define positions. Your tendency out West will cost you much of Eastern money now spent there. Are you willing and ready to face that? What do you mean to do if you have to? Is there no chance for the Broad Church movements our West to unite in something that shall cover Orthodox, Unitarian, and Free Religious seekers, or is it too early yet by twenty years? I know too early organization often hinders evolution, and only at certain points helps it. And I dread the content with the idea of a Free Christian Union - because that is precisely the limit of the A. U. A. folk, and produces an unintellectual if not unmanly attitude, conditioning fellowhip on a name and not on a though or a spirit.

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(60) G. W. Cooke, "Unitarianism in America," p. 329

"It is disappointing that such clashes come all round. I suppose the only way is for each to be first himself by thinking as clearly as he can and matching his thought with the simplest, clearest words, and then most earnestly a fellow, just so far as this clear thought and honest expression will allow. That makes the fellowship very large and deep, for it is a fellowship in vitals; but because in vitals, it is close only to those who are really determined that religion shall stand to them for vitals, nothing less." (61)

This letter written in 1910 represents Dr. Gannett's ripened judgment:

"The only important thing about the 'Western Issue,' I think is to have it recognized as simply the continuation and outcropping of the 'Theodore Parker' issue in the West, the final - I hope the final - episode in a 60-year long growth-strain within 'Unitarianism.' That view of it puts things in right relations, tells the whole story in essence, and relieves all parties from 'blame!' Growth strains can't be helped; they are all in the course of Nature, for all parts can't grow at equal rates. But that recognition ought to be distinctly made for understanding of history. The details are not worth telling, even if anyone knew them. I suppose I have the biggest collection of letters and articles and papers, etc., about the 'Western Issue' that exists - and have wondered what to do with it. The big question lies not behind, but in front - the relation of Unitarianism to Liberal Orthodoxy." (61)

Of Dr. Gannett's ministry at Rochester, his longest as it was his last, what can be said here must be by inference rather than by explicit facts. It has been termed "a ministry of reconciliation" by his friend C. W. Wendte. (62) When the National Federation of Religious Liberals met in Rochester in 1913, the event was due to Dr. Gannett's long ministry in that city, during which he had won the esteem of the community both because of his character and his distinguished services. Without the

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(61) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 1 p. 333 & 334

(62) Ibid, vol. 8, p. 499

work of reconciliation carried on by Dr. Gannett during his years there, this meeting would not have been possible, says Dr. Wendte. (63) His influence extended beyond the limits of his own immediate community. This was only natural in view of the breadth of his interests. These included peace, anti-imperialism, woman's sufferage, temperance and always, of course, liberal religion. So in 1901 we find him making a pleas through the columns of UNITY for co-operation in setting up a tent at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo which would be devoted to religion. The enterprise was in charge of a Presbyterian woman, but the co-operation was forthcoming. (64) In 1901 he addressed the Congress of Religion at Rochester and at that time Unitarians were apt to be non grata in mixed religious company. (65) But the best estimate of the place which he held in the Rochester community is gained by the universal sorrow at his death. These tributes will be dealt with separately in another chapter.

But probably the most significant part of his service lay in his personal relations and contacts with his people, old and young. "He used to say," writes Mrs. Gannett, "That he did not see how a man could preach life helping sermons without knowing the life experiences and problems

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(63) Ibid, p. 500

(64) UNITY, vol. 47, "The 'Tent Evangelist' at Buffalo," p. 165

(65) Ibid, p. 391

of his people." (66) Another field of endeavor little known, perhaps, apart from those whom it touched, was the "Unity Club," a group of church and non-church people who met a fortnight for study, for reading of papers written by the members and for discussion.

"Emerson and Browning each held them for more than a winter. Other subjects were: the Elder New England Poets, Dante, Wordsworth, Shelley, Novels Laureate, the Soul's Life, the Bible, Christ and the Church - these last two prepared for confirmation classes that met around the dining room table. The last few meetings each spring were usually spent on some social topic: Ruskin, Altrurian Ideals, Living Day Questions, Rauschenbusch's 'Christianity and the Social Crisis.'" (67)

The breadth of Dr. Gannett's interests, their variety and the thought he gave each, deserve special, though it must be brief, mention.

He was always interested in the Free Religious Association, though he recognized its limitations and characterized it as "a voice without a hand," (68) referring of course, to the few practical endeavors made by the Association. Nevertheless, he recognized that he belonged among these "outlaws" and his name appears very early in the annual reports of their doings. He delivered an address at the Sixth Annual Meeting in 1873, (69) and his poems of commemoration appear in many of the bound

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(66) Appendix I

(67) Appendix II

(68) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol.1, p. 219

(69) Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Free Religious Association. p. 43.

"proceedings." All of these appear also in "The Thought of God." He was on the Board of Directors in 1874, on the advisary Committee of the F. R. A. convention at the World's Fair in 1893, and a vice-president in 1911 and 1912.

At the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting in 1911, he was called upon in the discussion regarding the "Next Step in Religion." He recalled the earlier meetings of the Association and commented upon the similarity of the problems which were discussed then and now. What the "next step" was to be he had not decided for himself.

"But it seems to me there is a great, broad march all along the line, in which many different groups are keeping step together under different names. I like to think of it that way. But one word has somehow been singing through my mind as I have listened here; it is simply this; 'Where freedom is it is always May.' -Always a time of growth, of advance. Is not that enough to think over? 'Where freedom is, it is always May.' But it must be freedom, not only from what we call tradition an and authority; it must be freedom from personal prejudice as well; it must be freedom from hasty judgment; it must be freedom from denunciation; it must be largely freedom from denials, even of the old and the past. Where freedom is - true freedom - it is always May!" (70)

"The Wider Fellowship," as Dr. Wendte calls World Religion was very close to the heart of William Channing Gannett. In his teachings and writings he emphasized the basic oneness of all religions and pleaded for a general recognition of that fact. It was this very conviction which involved him in the Western controversy on the side

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(70) Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Free Religions Association. p. 123.

of the men who stood for no barriers in religious fellowship. Dr. Wendte, himself a tireless worker for world fellowship refers frequently to the part played by his colleague in the various conferences of the International Congress of Religious Liberals.

"His personal presence and word at free - religious and liberal Christian convocations were deemed a privilege and a benediction." (71)

A corollarly to this universality of religious sympathy was his hope and endeavor for better understanding between orthodox and liberals. The promotion of sympathy and good will between the differing shades of religious beliefs, a juster appreciation of orthodox believers by religious radicals were ends for which he toiled unceasingly and with considerable effectiveness. His closing word at the Fourth Congress of Religious Liberals at Rochester in 1913 expresses his belief and endeavor admirably.

"If Orthodoxy and the Liberal Faith are coming together today in a common emphasis on Freedom and Fellowship and Character and Service; if Evolution is revealing their kinship in doctrines today; and if today both doctrines are becoming symbols rather than definitions of truth, then ought either beliefs or phrases which try to express them to have much separating force as they have had in the past? Is it religiousness or irreligiousness in our churches, -- is it spirituality or unspirituality in ourselves, - is it truthfulness or untruthfulness to facts as we see them today, that we still keep so far and so carefully apart from each other as we do? Peace and respect, and hearty good will and earnest sympathy and active co-operation in social endeavors, -- thus far at

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(71) C. W. Wendte, op. cit. p. 190

least should we enter into church unity. For this today is the appointed time. Then if we pray deeply enough in our separate temples and our hearts, we shall probably find ourselves some day praying together, and the angels will rejoice in the heavens." (72)

In a letter to C. W. Wendte (one of those delightfully affectionate personal letters of his) he says in regard to the proposed formation of a Liberal Federation in this country, the body which became The National Federation of Religious Liberals:

"I am glad you have had so many favoring Amens to your Liberal Alliance suggestion. Of course count me in as an individual member, when it comes to the organizing moment. For forty years, ever since the first Religious Association days, we have been together, have we not? in almost every movement of this kind around us, and if that very experience makes me doubt the success, or at least the wide influence, of this specific new effort, it certainly makes me want to join in it also even if I cannot help much. The time is riper now than ever before in the forty years for such efforts, and you have had much experience and the prestige of your work in the International Congress. I think I wrote you it seemed to me the great thing to strive for in these days was <u>not so much the organization of Liberals as the liberalizing of organized orthodoxies</u>."

And again:

"The main thing to do is to liberalize orthodoxy --- not defy it." (73)

It has been mentioned that he was a firm peace man. In 1886 he wrote a protest in Unity against "Blair's Subsequent Tooth-Ache Bill" in which he deplored the Mexican War as "one which was essentially a war of conquest, brought on us by the South to extend the powers of slavery." (74)

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(72) C. W. Wendte - vol. 2 p. 505

(73) Ibid -- p.p. 583-584

(74) Unity - Vol, 17, 1886, p. 229, "Blair's Subsequent Tooth-Ache Bill"

Again in 1901, speaking on the subject, "The Professional Warrior," before the Women's Peace Meeting in Rochester the day the International Court of Arbitration was opened at the Hague,* he said,

"It is not to the credit of an American home, but rather to its discredit, another sign of the lower survival, when its boy wants to go to West Point, that is wants to select war, in either its defensive or aggressive form as his occupation for life, -- the thing he was sent on earth to do.

"It is not to the credit of a community, but a sign of the lower survival, that the statues and monuments set in its public places silently proclaiming, 'These are our ideals of manhood and patriotism -- these the makers of our nation,' -- not to a community's credit, I say, that these should be mainly monuments to men of the sword." (75)

It seems difficult on the face ot it to reconcile Dr. Gannett's support of the World War with his earlier statements and attitude. Yet, perhaps there is not the inconsistency or discrepancy exhibited that appears on the face of it. It was ever his belief that good would come out of evil -- witness such poems as "God ploughed one day with an earthquake." Given his convection that Germany was truly a "Brother Gone Wrong" and it is not so hard to understand his view point. There was no hatred nor vindictiveness in his attitude towards Germany. On the contrary, he pleaded for a just estimate of Germany's real worth and the purging of our own hearts of hatred. We would lose the war though we won

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* May 8, 1901

(75) Unity-Vol.47,1901,p. 212, "The Professional Warrior"

it on the field, if we ended by hating Germany. His faith in ultimate good was strong enough to reconcile him to the necessity of passing evil.

The subject of temperance was one of lasting interest to him. In 1885, he wrote supporting the idea of prohibition by the buying out of the whiskey interests. We must be prepared to pay for justice, he said. Justice always costs. (76)

His humanitarian efforts were

"Tenacious rather than choleric, persuasive rather than magisterial, executive rather than doctrinaire, conserving charity with zeal and never lapsing after a set back into misanthropy. In a Retrospect at Eighty Years, which he dispatched on that birthday to all his friends, Dr. Gannett gave an inspiring list of the social betterments effected in his life time, and one of the most touching elements of this backward look was its perfect modesty, for in each of the reforms cited, Dr. Gannett had played a pretty prominent part." (77)

In 1908, his Alma Mater conferred upon him the highest honor in her power - the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, a fitting recognition of the significant career of her distinguished alumnus.

Though his sphere was large and the centers of action in which he worked many, one does not find his name among the prominent ones. But his influence is seen and those who held the prominent positions were unanimous in their tribute to him as a useful and an inspiring fellow worker.

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(76) Unity - vol. 15, p. 283, "High License"

(77) Unity - vol. 93, p. 15 "William Channing Gannett Memorial Number" C. H. Lyttle.

He retired from the active minstry in 1908, but not from action. On the contrary some of his most significant work was done in the years that followed, articles, addresses, poetry. But this will more naturally fall under the later discussion of his literary work. On December 15, 1923, he died, after a series of paralytic strokes which crippled his body, but could not subdue his spirit.

"He had long been withdrawn from the world because of almost complete deafness, and toward the close of his career by successive strokes of destiny, which drippled him in body but could not conquer his mind, or totally arrest his brave endeavors .... On May 17, 1922, he wrote me:

'I am glad you are enjoying your "Indian Summer." You write serenier, happier, lovinger letters. Keep it up to the end. That is the way we ought to drowse off. Yet you are still able to do so much work. Does it take you longer that it used to do as good work as before? It does me, a great deal longer. But, for aught I see, I know as well as ever poor work. So if I keep patiently on I am able to make it good. Yet I am always under my own suspicion that I don't see; most old men don't. Why should we? It's pleasantly funny work - this watching your own sunset.'

"His next letters, written faintly with his left hand in pencil, a stroke having disabled his right, displayed the same heroic and affectionate spirit. One received from him, written November 8, 1923, dealt chiefly with theological and ethical topics, showing no diminution of his intellectual faculties. It's closing words brought tears to my eyes:

'Almost four pages - but almost two days work. Goodbye and love to you. W. C. Gannett.'" (78)

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(78) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 2 p.p. 671-672

-II-

His Theology

In his theology, William Channing Gannett was basically an ethical theist. In his early thought his position was, "Ethics thought out is 'religious' thought; ethics felt out is religious feeling; ethics lived out is the religious life." (79) His enthusiasm for this point of view was unbounded, and his hopes for its inclusiveness and faith in its effectiveness were high. This was probably the natural result of his discipleship under Emerson, whose prophecy that "The progress of religion is steadily to its identity with morals," he felt to be coming true. A sort of a Transcendentalist he was all his life. His poetry is full of it as are his sermons, and his conception of the evolutionary idea was a sort of a Transcendentalized one, if one may term it in that phrase. His early theology is set forth in his notable address delivered before the Illinois Fraternity of Liberal Religious Societies, at Geneva, Illinois in 1885. This has since been published by the A. U. A. (80) as marking one of the epochs of Unitarian thought, if, not indeed making it.

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(79) W. C. Gannett, "Faith of Ethics and Thought of God."

(80) "Memorable Sermons" series, #22. This sermon has gone through four printings, viz., 1922,1924,1925,1927

"Some good men, you know, stifle religion with Christianity, ortstifle their Christianity with the ism of their sect: and when one insists on 'something more than morality,' namely, 'belief in God,' as indispensable to religion, without which 'religion' cannot be, I confess I feel a little stifled by such theism - such theisticism. Say that this morality, so realized in its awful nature and its awful sweep, is the essential theism in a man, theism at first almost unconscious in us, and then more conscious, and ever more and more conscious as we grow to realize its meaning - say this, and one begins to feel kindled, inspired, by that word, 'God'! (79)

God is enthroned in the ever-present, all-controlling Ought. Morality enters as infinite and absolute element in every act we do, in every experience of the soul.

"Did Jesus confer sanction on the 'Thou shalt bless thy enemy' - or did the perception of these shalts sanction, aye, create the very Jesus?"

And so with the thought of God: the right creates and sanctions that in it which we most value. The Moral Law, the Living Right in things is a law of love, for

"If in thee the Moral Law eventuates and flowers in love, if always in thyself the solemn Right strains toward self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, then everywhere and everywhen the Right tends love-wards. Because the universe is one. " (79)

And elsewhere he said,

"We worship One in All - that Life whence suns and stars derive their orbits and the soul of man its Ought." (81)

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(81) See above, p.p. 29-30

This is further expresses in his poem, "Truth, Righteousness and Love":

O, the Truth is the voice of the God
Ever sounding in deeps of the heart:
Bidding climb, where no pathway is trod,
To the Sinai alone and apart.

Chorus: For his Truth and his Right,
For his Truth and his Right and his Love
Thou must climb, thou must climb
To the Sinai alone and apart.

And the Right is the will of the God,
'Tis the deed done by earth, sea and sky,
'Tis the law in the soul and the clod,
And the stars serve in courses on high -

Chorus: Serve the Truth and the Right,
Serve the Truth and the Right and the Love!
'Tis the law in the soul
And the stars serve in courses on high.

And the Love is the heart of the God
And to love is the Christ in a man;
On the errands of angels we plod,
If with heart of the angels we plan

Chorus: For the Truth and the Right
For the Truth and the Right and the Love
It is wings, as we plod
If with hearts of the angels we plan

So a welcome to all who will stand
For the Truth and the Right and the Love.
Not a soul on the earth shall be banned
Whom the heavens will welcome above

Chorus: For their Truth and their Right
For their Truth and their Right and their Love!
Not a soul shall be banned
Whom the heavens will welcome above. (82)

But his mind was always receptive, and his theology was somewhat modified in his later years. "Never think

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(82) UNITY, vol. 18, p.26

you have got to the end of your thinking;" he wrote in 1888, "Never dream that there is not a truer and better yet than you ever thought." (83) The development of science held a great interest for him and the evolutionary principle fired his imagination, as we have already said. This had its effect on his theology, of course. Volumes of Geikie and other scientific volumes in his library were dated with his name in 1871. The "social Gospel" had his attention, too.(84) An article in the North American Review regarding the freeing of the Serfs in Russia in 1867 foreshadowed this interest, (85) And there was a little group of books on Socialism in his library dated in the late '80's and early '90's, all carefully annotated. (84) A reference to his interest in Walter Rauschenbusch has already been made. (86) This social emphasis in his point of view found notable expression in an address delivered before the Middle States Conference held in connection with the celebration of the Semi-Contennial of the Meadville Theological School in

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(83) Unity, vol. 20, "Ideas of God," p. 201
(84) Appendix II
(85) North American Review, Vol. 105, "Serfdom and the Emancipation Laws of Russia."
(86) See above, p. 37

June, 1894. (87) In this statement he pleads for the "seven day church," stressing the importance of the minister as a social prophet. He should be informed on the social problems of his day, and he should preach on them more than just occasionally.

"Though you prefer the heights of the Gospel of John for Sabbath subjects, still it won't do to shut out entirely the Sermon on the Mount."

Theology and sociology should not be set apart from one another. The words ought not to suggest contraries.

"The living church of tomorrow may be an ism, but it must be sociological whatever else it be - and I hope the good A. U. A. will know enough to call it 'purely Christian", even if it does not call itself so, and won't refuse to co-operate with it on any ground of name."

There must be more sociology taught in the theological schools. The function of the minister is enlarging, the "higher criticism" of social institutions is to be part of his work, he is expected to become a captain of social reform. "For working purposes he can spare several things better than his sociology, for this is the 'kingdom of heaven' part of his training."

The following books were ones he found valuable in preaching his own conclusions, and he recommended them to the attention of those who desired to be well

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(87) Unity, vols. 33 and 34, p. 439. Published also in "Meadville Portfolio."

informed:

Tyndall's "Heat"
Darwin's "Origin of Species"
Spencer's "First Principles"
Lyall's "Geology"
Carpenter's "Mental Physiology"
Langley's "New Astronomy"
Lecky's "History of Rationalism in Europe"
Maine's "Ancient Law"
Green's "Short History of England"
Bryce's "American Commonwealth" (88)

His friend, Charles W. Wendte, describes for us the later modifications of his theology:

"From what had seemed to many a too exclusive insistency on the sufficiency of ethics, he had arrived at a more inclusive and reconciling attitude toward the established beliefs of Christendom interpreted by their spiritual significance. Salvation, Incarnation, Vicarious Atonement, Inspiration and similar doctrines of the church, however crudely they may have been stated in bygone ages, contained profound and enduring values, and were capable of larger interpretations, which liberals of all schools of thought might accept and find helpful in their religious endeavors and relations with one another." (89)

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(88) Unity, vol. 24, "Why should Busy People be interested in Literature," p. 59

(89) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 2, p. 318

III

His Work

I. As a Preacher:

Dr. Gannett was "fore-ordained by his predominatingly ethical temperament to become a preacher." (90) A brilliant career in the ministry was expected for him. But he was:

"An intense individualist, radical in his attitude toward church doctrine and forms, and unwilling to make concessions to popular demands where these seemed to involve the slightest surrender of ideals. William Channing Gannett did not occupy the prominent pulpits or receive the denominational distinctions to which we felt him entitled by his descent and abilities.

"Certain ministerial idiosyncracies, and a difficulty in voice production united with a later loss of hearing contributed to the failure of the liberal churches to recognize adequately one of the most gifted and worthy of their inspirers and prophets. It gave him little or no concern. He always rated his own powers most humbly. His mind was set on higher things - to keep the religious body with which he was connected true to its ethical ideals, to promote Freedom, Fellowship and Character in religion, to cherish a deep and reconciling sympathy for other forms of faith and the widest charity for all mankind." (91)

Nevertheless he wielded an enormous influence.

"No one else has done more to shape our tendencies during the past half century," writes Dr. Wilbur (92), "And no one else has approached the clearness of his insight into the inner significance of the Unitarian movement."

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(90) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 1 p. 187
(91) Ibid, p. 189
(92) Appendix III

Whatever may have been his limitations as to delivery, his written sermons have had an immense circulation. As with all of his work, they are written with meticulous care, each sentence being a polished, finished literary product. They all show scholarship and sure knowledge of human nature and needs. Immanence runs all through them as through his poems, and a beauteous doctrine it is as he discloses it. His sermon on "Incarnation" is perhaps the highest expression of it as far as his prose writings are concerned. Of course, the great sermon on "The Faith of Ethics and Thought of God" is the most "inspired" of his discourses, that is, there is a fire and enthusiasm in it which charactarize the young prophet. But the later sermons such as "Blessing be Drudgery," "Wrestling and Blessing," "The Sparrow's Fall," express a wonderful depth of tenderness and understanding of life. A volume which he issued in collaboration with Jenkin Lloyd Jones called "The Faith that makes Faithful" which had reached a circulation of over thirty-six thousand in 1919, has been translated into at least four European languages, including French, German, Swedish and Italian. (93) In England for a time it was sold in a cheap edition in the railway stations.

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(93) Pamphlet issued in 1919 by the publishers, Stratford and Company, Boston.

"The book is worthy of such popularity because it is a book of life, sweet, sincere, making its appeal to what is best in every human being." (94)

The secret of the appeal which his sermons hold is simple enough yet few preachers are gifted as he to learn it. He loved people, he loved liberty and he "lived constantly as in the very presence of God." (95) And always, he maintained the open, receptive and yet critical mind.

II. For Religious Education:

It was but natural that Dr. Gannett should have a deep interest in religious education. Comments by him on the needs of the Church School, articles and book reviews dealing with religious instruction are profusely scattered through the volumes of UNITY. He was one of the moving spirits behind the Western Sunday School Society. Though much of his work is now superseded, it was thoroughly, carefully prepared. The outlines of the various manuals which he compiled appear almost too scholarly and elaborate for ordinary use in the Church School with the teaching ability that is usually available. Perhaps that is why his excellent work has been superseded. It was in 1874 that F. L. Hosmer,

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(94) J. T. Sunderland, Gannett Memorial Number of UNITY, vol. 93, p. 6

(95) F. C. Doan, Ibid, p.3

Jenkin Lloyd Jones, William C. Gannett and others undertook the preparation of a graded system of religious education and of a hymn and song book for the children of the liberal church school and home. The lesson courses were an improvement on anything of the kind yet produced in the English language, and paved the way for a nobler literature of religious education in general. (96) Mr. Gannett's courses were "The Growth of the Hebrew Religion," prepared in the light of the best knowledge of the day of Old Testament criticism and comparative religions and scarcely outgrown yet; the "Life of Channing," a primer of the great Unitarian and his times; "The Childhood of Jesus," of which Dr. Sunderland says: (97)

"(They are) nothing less than a marvel of scholarly research, of sympathetic insight and of picturesque portrayal. But they were not successful for the use contemplated; they were too elaborate. When the series was published by the Western Unitarian Sunday School Society (1879-1914), it was introduced into a few schools. But it soon dropped out for the reasons just given. There was a demand for the author of the lessons to simplify and shorten them. But he did not see his way to do so except in part. They were published by the British Unitarian Sunday Schools as a manual.

"The title given to the lesson is not at all adequate. The series covers far more than "The Childhood of Jesus." In reality it is a brief, graphic and admirable history of the Jewish people from the beginning of the nation down to the time of Jesus, a description of Palestine and Palestine life in Jesus' day, and a study of the total environment of Jesus, and the influences of many kinds that operated to form his character and make him what he became."

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(96) C. W. Wendte, "The Wider Fellowship," vol. 1, p.328

(97) J.T.Sunderland,"Dr. Gannett's Writings," Gannett Memorial Number of UNITY, vol. 93, p.7

Then came "The Flowering of Christianity" which includes incidentally a brief, though very fine description of the Unitarian and other kindred liberal religious movements. Lastly "Old Testament Heights," published by the Rochester Sunday School in 1900. The "Heights" are Deuteronomy, some of the Psalms and Jeremiah, Ezekial and Third Isaiah.

Of his work for adult religious education we have spoken above in discussing the Unity Classes. (98)

III. As (a) Poet:

"The devotional spirit of Unitarians has found its most emphatic and beautiful expression in religious hymns and poems. The older Unitarian piety found voice in the hymns of the younger Henry Ware, Norton, Pierpont, Frothingham, Peabody, Lunt, Bryant and many others. It was rational and yet Christian, simple in sentiment and yet found in the New Testament traditions its themes and its symbolisms. The hymns and religious poems of Furness, Hedge, Longfellow, Johnson, Clarke, Brooks and Miss Scudder, have an interior and spiritual quality seldom found in devotional poetry. They are not the mere utterances of conventional sentiments or the repetition of ecclesiastical symbolisms, but the voicing of deep inward experiences that reveal and interpret the true life of the soul. Of the same character are the hymns and religious poems of Gannett, Hosmer, and Chadwick, who have but accentuated the tendencies of their predecessors. It is the more radical theology that has voiced itself in the religious songs of these men, but with a mystical or spiritual insight that fits them to the needs of all devout worshippers." (99)

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(98) See above, P. 37

(99) G. W. Cooke, "Unitarianism in America," p.p.243-244

It is natural that in his poetical writings his spirit should find its fullest and richest expression. "At times his wealth of thought and imaginative beauty outran his capacity of lyric expression." (100) Possibly this is because his hymns lack the simplicity of Whittier, Longfellow and Hosmer. "But," says Dr. Sunderland (101) "In literary excellence, in beauty and even splendor of imagery, and in ethical and spiritual quality, they seem to me unexcelled." Much of Dr. Gannett's poetry is autobiographical. "Aunt Phillis's Guest," "The Negro Burying Ground," the poems to his mother which is one of the loviest and most tender of all his poems, the various commemoration of events or memorials to friends who had passed on.

He gained wide recognition as a writer of hymns and of poetry of the spirit. In the volume of "The World's greatest Poetry," compiled by Mrs. Caroline Miles Hill, there are three poems of Dr. Gannett. In W. Garrett Horder's collection, "The Treasury of American Sacred Song," published nearly thirty years ago, seven are included from the pen of William G. Gannett, though not all of his work has been made public at that time by any means. The compilation with Dr. Hosmer and J. Vila Blake of the "Unity Hymns

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(100) /C. W. Wendte, op. cit., p. 190

(101 J. T. Sunderland, op. cit., p. 8

and Chorals" was a notable piece of work, this hymnal being very popular in many liberal churches today. It includes twelve hymns by Dr. Gannett. In the "Hymn and Tune Book" published by the A. U. A. six hymns are his, and noble hymns they are.

His favorite subjects were Nature, God, Home Jesus, Evolution, Faith and Optimism, and "Hill Top Days," as he called the twilight hours of life. (102)

"Dr. Gannett's poems are, of course, his most precious objective bequest to the faith he held dear. They reflect, in form, spirit and subject matter the fundamental unity of his entire nature, moral and intellectual. Every metaphor and rhyme and measure is the token of a trusting faith, of the utterance of a healthy, buoyant, optimistic disposition, born in Aready and resident in the Arden of that tranquil Theism of fifty years ago, where one found sermons in stones, books in the running brooks and good in every thing....Dr. Gannett always kept spring in his heart, love in his home, zest in his work, trustfulness in his prayers, and quite naturally his verse is full of glint, carol and cadenza. It is opalescent with all beautiful hints and flushes, a tapestry of every sunny and joyous color, mother's crooning, baby's laughter, brooklet gleams and flower glimmerings, stars and rainbows and soul rapturers." (103)

But the polish and beauty of his work was the result of hard work. We get a hint of it in a comment of his upon a Church School manual called "Noble Lives and Noble Deeds."

"'Good and 'fairly good' we say, as we pass along; yet very few suggest that the writer said to himself; 'Let me try to make this a little masterpiece.' It would have been well worth while to say exactly that, and to

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(102) J. T. Sunderland, Op. Cit.

(103) Charles H. Lyttle, "A Sermon in Memory of William Channing Gannett," Memorial Number of Unity, vol.93 p. 13

write and rewrite, touch and retouch, until each virtue stood out, a clear-cut, never-to-be-forgotten face." (104)

"Dr. Gannett was eminently a lover. He was a lover of humanity. Like Jesus he was a lover of bad people as well as good. He was a home lover, and a child lover; a lover of "God's out of doors;" a lover of simplicity, and above all, a lover of love.

"He was an idealist, and he was a realist. Particularly in his poetry he was a mystic; but he was a sane mystic. . . . To him the ethical and spiritual ....were more solid than rocks and mountains. (105)

IV. As Essayist and Historian:

The booklets, tracts and articles from Dr. Gannett's pen are numerous, and all bear the mark of careful, conscientious work. The Bible, the Home, Unitarian history, Channing, Parker and Emerson are the subjects about which he loved to write. Dr. Lyttle says of his "One Hundred Years of the Unitarian Movement in America," (106)

"It is not an exhaustive work, but it is accurate and discriminating and inspiriting." (107)

This is true of all his historical work. He had a remarkable gift of lucid, yet compact narrative, a keen appreciation of the significance of movements and trends and a fine insight into the deeds and motives of individuals.

"Dr. Gannett was one of those finely poised New Englanders who could cherish tradition and love the past without enthroning either." (107)

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(104) UNITY, vol. 31,"Noble Lives and Noble Deeds," p.83
(105) J. T. Sunderland, Op. cit.
(106) Published in 1915
(107) Charles H. Lyttle, op. cit., p. 12

Thus he was able to write the life of his father in a vein which was affectionate without sentimentality, vividly yet objectively.

"The life is one of the few feally good works on Unitarianism in America, because its author could be both son and critic of his subject at the same time. The son helps us to revere and love his father ....The historian justifies our disagreement with him on the major issues of human progress in his day." (107)

In the story of "One Hundred Years of the Unitarian Movement," Dr. Gannett gives us what is probably the best existing statement of the principles "we most care for" as Unitarians, "the best statement I know (and) the only one on which today in all candor, both the right and left wings of our body can unite" (107):

"Freedom the method in Religion in place of Authority."

"Fellowship the Spirit in Religion in place of Sectarianism."

"Character the Test in religion in place of Ritual or Creed."

"Service, or Salvation of Others the Aim in Religion in place of Salvation for Self."

In all his historical writings, Dr. Gannett points out the faults and weaknesses of the Unitarian movement as well as its virtues, but he always points the way to a higher realization.

IV

Epiloque

Tributes to a Great Spirit

It seems fitting to close this study of William Channing Gannett with some quotations from the tributes paid to him at the time of his death.

Dr. Crothers who succeeded him at St. Paul:

"I know no other who more fully fulfilled the mission of making people feel that the divine life can make itself felt through a human life. For he has made the word 'piety' live again. No other word so expressed his life. His was nautral piety, there was no self-consciousness.

"I do not want to speak of him in the past; he is of the present and future. He lives He is not a lost radiance, but a living radiance. His speech could not be misunderstood, and though he often differed in opinion with others, he was always gracious. He carried on the religion of the spirit.

"I never knew a man so unspotted by the world. He believed that love is stronger than hate. He has ever striven for the undefiled reward.

"We have seen a life of graciousness, a life of no regret, but of infinite promise. In him we have seen the power of endless right."

Dr. Richard W. Boynton:

"He was of New England, and yet something more - some older, deeper heritage - was also his. For he was a mystic ..... a prophet he was, and a poet - a poet first and then a prpphet because a poet. Baptized by Channing with water, he was baptized in the spirit of Emerson. Theodore Parker also laid a spell on his youth, and gave him the courage, the radicalism and the deep human tenderness that marked him all his many years.

"One realized that he was one of the patriarchs. His outstanding quality was saintliness. Let us apply to him as he disappears from our earthly vision, those words that Baron Bunsen used for Channing whose name our friend so worthily bore. Bunsen, who knew whereof he spoke called Channing 'that grand Christian saint and man of God' No words could more suitably describe his younger namesake, William Channing Gannett."

Dr. Charles H. Lyttle:

"His prayer for another's ordination to the ministry is in reality the revelation of his own ideal of the sacred office and the record of his allegiance to that ideal for fifty years:

'Ordain in him the seeker's mind
Of eager, trusting youth,
That hastens every morn, to glean
Fresh manna-falls of truth:
Ordain a constant heart to choose
Lone sides with outcast Right,
And hands that shall from Duty make
His gardens of delight!

'Ordain the eyes of sympathy;
The tones that stir and thrill;
The touch to heal, to bind the wound,
To brace the weakened will;
And give the prophet's eye to see
Where men's faith waxes dim;
Ordain the voice that speaks for God!
Ordain the Christ in him!'"

John Haynes Homes:

"No man was more uncompromising than he, yet no man more sympathetic in his understanding of his opponents or more gracious in his treatment of them. He was all tenderness for men, whatever their opinions or perversities Love was as much the atmosphere of his heart as fragrance the atmosphere of flowers.

"Dr. Gannett's life cries to heaven like the call of a silver trumpet that America produces and may ever produce intellectual and spiritual excellence of the most exalted type."

Dr. Curtis W. Reese:

"In his own life Dr. Gannett exemplified his religious philosphy. He believed and taught that all worthy interests, all noble aspirations and all good achievements are religious. Dr. Gannett properly belongs not to sect or race but to humanity."

Frederick M. Eliot:

"What was the essential thing in Mr. Gannett's life? What gave him his extraordinary power? Perhaps it was the combination of two things that are frequently found separately, but seldom together: a radical mind and a poet's imagination. Radical thinkers are not so rare, though few have been so courageous as he. Poets are far commoner than we sometimes think, though they do not always set down their poetry in words. But a radical thinker whose sensitive imagination saves him from undervaluing the human worth of ideas which he has to reject, and a poet whose passionate loyalty to the yet undiscovered truth keeps him always alert to the marvels which shall be revealed tomorrow - that is something that comes so rarely that we give it the name of genius."

Dr. C. W. Wendte:

"It has been more and more recognized that the character and career of this 'remarkable man', as his intimate friend and fellow poet, Frederick L. Hosmer recently termed him, are among the most precious possessions of the liberal faith and fellowship. Their influence will long continue to inspire the religious life of the body of thinkers and worshippers with whom he was for four-score years and more connected. He represents the outcome of four generations of New England congregational piety as transfigured by the transcendental philosophy, informed by the modern scientific spirit, and influenced by the vast social and humanitarian movements of our age."

Dr. Frank C. Doan:

"When the history of the Unitarian movement of this country during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of this twentieth century is written, Dr. Gannett's name will appear as the most spiritual of that group who defended the cause of religious liberty in America; a man who lived by the spirit with an abounding consciousness of God's presence in this great universe and an abiding sense of his loving presence in these human souls of ours."

No other poem seems more fitting with which to close this study than his own written in commemoration of Professor Noyes so many years before:

"A light upon the harvest-field,
'Well-done!' in the air:
'Rest-Angel, only weary yield!'
Rose up his eager prayer.

"A teacher, he in white-haired youth;
The body's clister, old,-
The spirit growing young with Truth
Through birthdays manifold.

"A teacher he of oracles,
And one his life did sing:
'The field lies always Harvest-white,
If inly lies the Spring.'"

Note: All of the tributes in this section with the exception of the final poem are taken from the "William Channing Gannett Memorial Number of UNITY," vol. 93, #1

APPENDIX I.

Letter from Mary T. L. Gannett to the writer:

15 Sibley Place
Rochester, N.Y.
March 13, 1928

My dear Mr. Hobart:

I am indeed interested in your subject - and would like to help you.

As to the time at the Divinity School - I have nothing to add to what you'll find in Mr. Wendte's book - which must be in your Meadville Library.

Mr. Gannett's work lay in three lines - the pulpit, the Sunday School and his class work. For the first, much is in print; for the last two, I could furnish you with lesson papers and outlines if you care for them.

A very real part of his service lay in his personal contacts in their own homes and in his own with his people, young and old. That sort of service has gone out of fashion, but the need for it still exists. He used to say he did not see how a man could preach life helping sermons without knowing the life experiences and problems of his people.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Mary T. L. Gannett

APPENDIX II.

Letter from Charlotte Gannett MacDowell to the writer:

Cold Spring Harbor
Long Island, N.Y.
April 29, 1928

Mr. Alfred Walters Hobart
5712 Dorchester Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Hobart:

Your first letter to my mother reached her while I was visiting her, and it was with your request in mind that I looked over some of father's papers, but there was nothing that seemed suitable to your purpose. He did not keep a daily journal, except for a few short periods, and for the last thirty years at least his home made engagement calendar was his only diary.

Father's life was not eventful. The early part of it was that of a Boston Latin School boy in the minister's home of which you have a picture in the Life of his father. His mother died when he was six and her teacher-sister came into the home and mothered the three children. Then Harvard, living in Cambridge and spending Sunday at home in Boston. After college a year of teaching in Newport. Then a start in the Divinity School, when the war, broke out and he served in the South under the Freedman's Bureau. Some of his letters of this period appear in Letters from Port Royal, edited by Elizabeth Ware Pearson. See also Aunt Phillis's Guest in series I of the Thought of God. His father was a good deal broken in health at this time so they went to Europe - for about a year - the "Grand Tour." And back to the Divinity School. The later dates, of his parish settlements, you know.

For his earlier ministry interests, the topics of his numbers of Unity Mission and Unity Short Tracts, which are in your library, give a clue. His are U. M. 4, 11, 18, 20, 28, 35, 40; U. S. 2, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 35. In the liberal movements of the day he played his part,-

anti-slavery, temperance, peace and the cause of liberal religion, woman suffrage, anti-imperialism. And from the beginning to the end he was eagerly interested in the developement of science. Various volumes of Geikie and other scientific books in his library were dated with his name in 1871. While never a specialist in any field of science, the science news items in the papers always caught his attention and the appeal of the evolution idea is to be found throughout his writings.

In the '80's and early '90's he spent much time on the preparation of Sunday School lessons, careful and critical work, but now largely superseded. In the '90's and early 1900's his summers were filled with study and preparation of study outlines for Unity Club, a group of church and non-church people who met once a fortnight for study, reading of papers written by the members, discussion. Emerson and Browning each held them for more than one winter. Other subjects were: the Elder New England poets, Dante, Wordsworth and Shelley, Novels Laureate, the Soul's Life, the Bible, Christ and the Church - these last two prepared first for confirmation classes that met around the dining room table.

This work belongs of course to his later life but I mention it as something that is perhaps little known outside the circle it touched and it was a real part of his ministry. The last few meetings each spring were usually spent on some social topic: Ruskin, Altrurian Ideals, Living Day Question, Rauschenbusch's Christianity and the Social Crisis. There was a little collection of books on socialism in the library, dated in the late '80's and the '90's, carefully annotated. An early forerunner of this interest was a review on the Emancipation of the Russian serfs in the North American Review of 1867.

You may be interested in father's answer, made in 1923 to the question, what ten books have you enjoyed most?

1. The Bible, Old Testament and New - and as a book of purely human origin; save as no great literature is really that.

2. Emerson's Essays.
3. Robert Browning's Poems.

4. Tennyson's Poems,
5. Wordsworth's Poems
6. Whittier's Poems.
7. Channing's Life
8. Frederic Robertson's Life and Letters.
9. Spencer's First Principle's - as a kind of bible of the evolution idea.
10. Lecky's Rationalism in Europe - as a kind of history of the evolution idea.

I am sorry to have no more to offer on the early period for which you are seeking particularly. But such material as exists is widely scattered thru letters and papers of a personal character which will require much sifting in preparation for the friend we are hoping will write the full account.

With good wishes for your work,

Cordially,

(signed) Charlotte G. MacDowell.

APPENDIX III

Letter to the writer from Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur, President of the Pacific School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California.

2400 Allston Way
Berkeley, Calif.
April 30, 1928

My dear Mr. Hobart:

Yours of the 18th inst. to Dr. Hosmer has been given to me to answer, for Dr. Hosmer is so far in decline that he writes no letters, and could probably muster no clear answer to your question.

My suggestion is that you apply first to Mrs. Gannett, 15 Sibley Place, Rochester, N. Y. She must have a mass of material, letters or other, bearing on the subject. My second suggestion is that you try Rev. Wilder Foote, who I think could tell you something.

We have possession here of what remains of Dr. Hosmer's papers and letters. Some of these must be from Dr. Gannett, though I doubt whether they have much biographical value. I fear I can not go over them just now, as I am driven east. But after I return, if you still wished it and would let me know, I would try to see what there is and let you know.

I have a sort of notion that a life of Gannett is in preparation - perhaps by his son - but I may be wrong. I am glad you have taken him up. No one else has done more to shape our tendencies during the past half century; and no one else has approached the clearness of his insight into the inner significance of the Unitarian movement as he set it forth first in the historical chapter of his life of his father, and later and much better, though very briefly, in Part xii of his "Flowering of Xy."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Earl M. Wilbur

APPENDIX IV.

Letter to the writer from Dr. Charles W. Wendte:

141 Parkside Drive
Berkeley, Calif.
May 2nd, 1928

Alfred Walters Hobart,
Chicago, Illinois.

My dear sir:

You have chosen a noble theme for your thesis and there is a great deal of material for preparing it although it may be somewhat scattered. I advise you to write to Mrs. Wm. C. Gannett, 15 Sibley Place, Rochester, N. Y. who has a great accumulation concerning her departed husband, and is preparing the material to be used sometime for a biography. His own son who is on the staff of "The Nation" does not seem just the person to do it as he was not entirely sympathetic with his father's point of view. You will find in the back files of Unity, to which he often made contributions, some valuable information.

The Meadville Theological School library ought to contain much of his printed articles and books. His poetic material is contained in the little book, "The Thought of God" issued by his friend F. L. Hosmer and himself. Read expecially Gannett's Life of his father which is really a condensed history, brought down to his own day, of the whole Unitarian movement in this country. Look through also the files of "The Index" and "The Radical" and the Free Religious Association annual reports.

I have quite a large correspondence of letters that passed between Gannett and Hosmer, and Mrs. Gannett must have many more. I will look them over and if they are of any value for your work I will transmit them to you. See also the second volume of "The Wider Fellowship" for various references to Gannett.

Hoping you find time and help for your laudable purpose I remain,

Truly yours,

(signed) Charles W. Wendte.

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