

superstition were permitted to remain, political bondage would soon return. For authoritarian churches and political tyranny tended to go together. They always had. Each supported the other. Each was a vested institution, the one with spiritual serfs, the other with political. And so it was natural that whether by that name or any other, it was the Unitarian faith which was the spiritual nurture of American foundations. Freedom must have a freedom-building faith—and it did.

It was natural that Jefferson should be a Unitarian. It was natural that John Adams and John Quincy Adams should be Unitarians, too. It was natural that Abraham Lincoln, though never a member of a Unitarian church, refused to join a more traditional church, and by his definition of his own religion identified himself as Unitarian. It is not a narrow or sectarian matter. It could not be. It is the avowal in all these cases of the creedless church, liberating the heart to unrestricted brotherhood and the mind to growing and advancing truth.

It is true that Unitarianism, down to now, has never been accepted by the multitudes. But it is also true that all American denominations have been affected by its influence. This may be seen, for example, in the liberalizing of their theologies, or in the emphasis upon the practical expression of religion—far stronger in America than elsewhere—such as is represented by the great work of Dorothea Dix for the reform of prisons, almshouses and hospitals; or of Samuel Gridley Howe, who pioneered the movement for care of the blind; or of Henry Bergh, who founded the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; or Dr. Henry W. Bellows, who established the Sanitary Commission which eventually became the American Red Cross. These and many others in America, like Florence Nightingale in England, were Unitarians, and they set a great example.

To this we must add the influence of Unitarian philosophers like Martineau, or essayists like Emerson, or jurists like Oliver Wendell Holmes. Or reformers like Julia Ward Howe and Susan B. Anthony. Or educational reformers like Horace Mann. All this has had its

influence upon religion in America. So has the preaching of Channing and Parker, and the statesmanship of Daniel Webster. It would be possible to name so many names that Unitarians have often felt considerable diffidence about referring to them. Yet there is importance in this weight of testimony. For Unitarians are not very numerous. Only one-tenth of one per cent of the population of United States is Unitarian in actual church affiliation.

A schoolgirl who saw that I would be preaching on this subject said to me last week, "Do tell the people some of the things Unitarians have done. In school, we are such a small group and nobody seems to know about us. They think we're queer. Build us up a bit." Something like that, she said. And so I am building us up a bit! After all, there are more important things than modesty, one of which is the testimony of achievement to what a religion can do. Although we are only one-tenth of one per cent of the population of the United States, one-third of the names in the American Hall of Fame are names of Unitarians. If we hold to a "queer" religion, it nonetheless has helped some men and women to do great service for their country and the world. According to Dr. Ellsworth Huntington of Yale University, writing in 1924, "the productivity of the Unitarians in supplying leaders of the first rank has been 150 times as great as that of the remainder of the population, while that of the Unitarian ministers (I will say this in a very soft, apologetic voice!) has been nearly 1,500 times as great." I hope this makes the schoolgirl feel happier about her "queer" religion!

KING'S CHAPEL, BOSTON

Founded in 1686
a century before the Union

(see page 5)

