

Michael Servetus of Geneva fame. Like every form of religious thought, Unitarianism has shades and varieties of ideal but we treat it as a common item and the student will need to watch for the stronger and weaker sides.

Although Unitarianism and Deism are two different things, in some ways the Unitarian growth in the national period received a preparatory stage through the deistic movements that followed the revolution. The deistic thrust has been sounded by Paine in his "Age of Reason" (1793) which was an improvement in logic and approach on Ethan Allen's "Reason the Only Oracle of Man". These were supplemented by Elihu Palmer in 1802 with a work entitled "Principles of Nature". With other influences and the Jeffersonian tradition as well, these academic thrusts tended to soften the church and bend it towards humanitarian ends. A wing developed in the congregational church that favored these views so long as the benefit of man was foremost in the ideas and this idea of man as a supreme being with natural rights was prominent.

Theologically Unitarianism was a throwback (as noted) to the older Arianism and it saw Christ as a gifted human but not God, denied the concept of the atonement and the idea of personality to the Holy Spirit. Morality was the great good and it was defined in terms of the Christian ethic--at that time. Eternal punishment was denied. While Unitarianism is anti-creedal there were those in it who gave expression to something like a creed. Such was expressed by J.F. Clark (d. 1888) in his personal affirmation of faith: "The fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the leadership of Jesus, salvation by character and the progress of mankind onward and upward forever." It falls rather short of anything remotely biblical although it would not fare badly among most modern humanists.

#### b. History

(1) The first avowedly unitarian congregation was the King's Chapel in Boston in 1785. The ideas were popularized by many but capsulated by Channing (d. 1842) in his famous Unitarian sermon "American Unitarianism", delivered at an ordination in 1819. Following this, in six years, the Unitarian Association was formed in 1825 with a membership of 125 churches, mostly in Boston area.

(2) A harder line developed in Unitarianism with the philosophical transcendentalism of Emerson (d. 1882). He and Theodore Parker launched a view that minimized Scripture in any role and allowed man's experience to be the channel and measurement of truth. This was a departure from the concepts of the original unitarians but probably only a logical development of their ideas. This would soon be approximated in ideal by the growing universalist movement...not identical with Unitarianism by any means but certainly a kindred spirit.