

## The Challenge of the Cults

### THE UNITARIANS

The Unitarian church in Kirkcaldy ceased functioning as a church in 1920. The reason I include it in our studies is because of a previous neighbour who was brought up as a Unitarian. While the church has now been turned into a nightclub in Hunter Street, she knew of some in the area who would continue to identify themselves as Unitarian.

In Scotland there are four Unitarian congregations, - in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh (St. Mark's), Glasgow. In addition, there is also the Forth Valley Fellowship. They have ministers ... Candidates for their ministry are not restricted by gender or sexual orientation. They offer special services to celebrate birth and naming, marriage and partnership, and death. Despite being a small number, they play an influential part within the Interfaith Scotland community. They were also very ardent in support of the Scottish government's campaign to introduce 'marriage' between homosexuals.

Unitarianism began during the early period of Christianity. It particularly came to the fore when three hundred bishops met at the Council of Nicea in 325AD, and overwhelmingly affirmed the deity and eternity of Christ. It also clearly defined the relationship between the Father and the Son. What *we* believe is entrenched within the Council of Nicea.

Prior to the Council, there were questions circulating as to Who Christ actually was, and Who He presently is? Is He more divine than human, or more human than divine? Was Jesus created or begotten? Being the Son of God, is He co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, or is He lower in status than the Father, i.e. subordinate to the Father? Is the Father *only* God, or are the Father, Son, and Spirit the one true God?

A priest from Alexandria named Arius attended the Council and he presented arguments that Jesus Christ was not an eternal being, that He was created at a certain point in time for the purposes of the Father. His view has become known as 'Arianism', out of which the concept of Unitarianism developed. In those early days the Arians received some positive recognition by Constantine the Great, who was baptised on his deathbed by an Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicodemia. Constantine's son, Constantius II, was an Arian sympathiser for he promoted Arianism. Another emperor, Valens (328-378), was an Arian ... but his successor, Theodosius I (347-395) effectively ended Arianism's progress at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

They moved into western Europe, and gradually gained recognition in Transylvania under the leadership of Francis David (1520-79), and in Poland under the leadership of the Italian Fausto Sozzini (1539-1604; his followers were known as Socinians, the Polish Brethren). They remained in the background, but after the Reformation they seemed to have a revival of sorts ... especially among some who left Roman Catholicism.

In Scotland, the Scottish Unitarian Association was founded on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1813 by two Englishmen, the Rev. James Yates, Minister in Glasgow, and the Rev. Thomas Southwood Smith of Edinburgh. This work was strengthened in 1830 by another Englishman, the Rev. George Harris. Although Scottish Unitarianism was stimulated and organised by the energy of English missionaries such as the Rev. Richard Wright, a growing indigenous Universalist opposition to Calvinism provided them with ready converts. The life-span of all-but-four of the churches was relatively brief, and hence, the reason for only four churches ... or as their website words it, “the four survivors which today constitute the SUA”. Generally, few of the leaders of Unitarianism have risen to any degree of notoriety, outside of their organisation.

It is easier to define what Unitarians believe by describing what they do *not* believe. On their website (<http://www.sua.org.uk/>) they present themselves as ‘all-inclusive’, ‘creedless’, and ‘a liberal religion’. There is no definitive definition for each are free to establish their own understanding. They describe themselves as a Christian church.

They do not believe in the Trinity. They reject the doctrine God is Three in One, and One in Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They do not believe the Son and the Holy Spirit are Divine.

Instead, they believe Jesus was merely a man, - He was “conceived and born in the usual human manner” (any other proposition is dismissed as being “the Christian myth”). He was an ordinary man who *became* “chosen, raised up, adopted and anointed by God ... to regard him as a major figure in humanity’s spiritual journey ... [W]hile honouring him, we do not worship him”.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, the Unitarians believe “The Spirit ... is the divine mystery moving among us and within us as we work and worship.” He is not God, “the active divine presence in individuals and communities, as the divine breath that gives us life, as that ineffable factor that binds us together”.

Their attitude towards the Scriptures is equally dismissive. Somewhat patronisingly, they describe the Bible as simply “the record of a people's long struggle to understand themselves, their world and their God”. It is an historical book, harking back to a previous, and as a book it cannot be regarded as inerrant, or as having “unquestionable authority”. “What it says must be viewed in the light of reason and conscience ... anything in the Bible that Unitarians accept as true is accepted because it rings true in our own humble reflection upon it. We do not accept it just because it is in the Bible. ... Unitarians prefer to abide by the spirit of the Bible's sacred treasures than by a narrow adherence to the letter”.

Concerning an after-life, “Unitarians take the view that ... the focus of our attention should be this world. Our concern is better directed to considering how we should live our lives in the here and now. A life well-lived is the best preparation for death, what-ever may lie beyond it”.

They don't believe in Hell or the Devil, “If we speak of him at all, which we rarely do, it is as a mythical being. In this sense the Devil is only the mythic personification of all the evil and malice of which human beings are capable”.

They believe the resurrection of Jesus is a “powerful myth”. Instead, the idea of resurrection is merely symbolic for it “celebrates the triumph of the human spirit”.

“Sin”, they believe, “is wilfully to act, speak, or even think in a way that one's own conscience condemns as wrong ... to sin is to fall short of the standards of conduct that one's own faith or ethical system regards as ideal”.

Regarding salvation, “We identify it with the deliverance of the human spirit from those things that diminish it and bar the way to its fulfilment”. Unitarians are, therefore, universalists, “God's love would not permit anyone to be damned eternally, and that everyone could and would be saved eventually”.

Once again, much within the belief system of Unitarianism lies behind what many in mainstream churches erroneously believe. It is the concept the serpent dangled in front of Eve (Gen. 3), - he *teased* her to formulate her own understanding of that which was beyond her capability. Unitarians, and others like them, have jettisoned the truth and replaced it with their own hopes and dismal aspirations. There is no concept of the almighty creator-God Who is vastly superior to anything any human mind could contemplate. They contradict

what the Bible plainly teaches, **Job 36:26** Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. **27** For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: **28** Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly. **29** Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? **30** Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea ... **Is. 55:9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts ... **Is. 40:28** Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding ... **Ps. 147:5** Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite ... **Ps. 8:3** When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; **4** What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ... **Ps. 95:3** For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. **4** In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. **5** The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

... These verses are only a taste of how the Bible describes the true and living God. If we began to describe Him using only our own inadequate intellect, our descriptions would be completely erroneous because, apart from the inspired and inerrant Word of God, we have no reliable source for the Truth as to Who God is. ... And that is how the serpent beguiled Eve in the garden, for he tempted her away from the words of God ... and she dared doubt the Creator's instruction.

Unitarianism bases its beliefs on the individual, - it is up to the individual to define what they want to believe. In rejecting God's truth, they reject His Son, and to reject His Son is to reject His plan of salvation, and to reject God's plan of salvation necessitates a human plan which is contradictory. To reject God's plan of salvation requires no allegiance or adherence to any Divine decrees. Everything is considered relative, - it's up to how each individual chooses to disseminate the information ... it all depends on how you want to believe ... and you are free to believe. Ultimately, there is no punishment, no judgment on sin (whatever 'sin' may be contrived to mean). Rather than being an 'arbiter', God is the ultimate Benefactor, content with whatever you make out of Him, and are prepared to relate to Him!

Once again, false doctrine thrives under various labels, and the times in which we live emphasises the requirement to **II Tim. 4:2** Preach the word ... **3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ... **I Tim. 4:1** ... giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; **2** ... having their conscience seared with a hot iron. The

errors of Unitarianism, - the old false doctrine propagated by Arius in the fourth century, - is deluding many today, inside and outside of Unitarianism. God's Word is not the foundation of what they believe. The Person of Jesus has been demoted and relegated, - His Divine conception has been dismissed, His sacrificial atoning death on Calvary has been downgraded to merely a 'representative' status, the Bible needs to be accepted in accordance with today's standards ... and Hell is a place God would never countenance!

These are evil times in which we live, but *we also* need to be alert ... for even included in *our* hymnbook, is at least one hymn by a Unitarian, who does not believe in the deity of Christ ... Sarah Fuller Adams (1805-48) was a Unitarian who wrote hymns including the first five verses of "Nearer, my God, to Thee" ... Arthur Tozer Russell, - originally a Unitarian who became ordained into the Anglican ministry [*I don't know if he rejected Unitarianism*], - wrote the sixth verse (*Christian Hymns*, 673). ... The sixth verse gives Christ His place ...

Christ alone beareth me Where Thou didst shine;  
Joint-heir He maketh me of the divine!

In Christ my soul shall be nearest, my God, to Thee, nearest to Thee.

... The first five verses, however, *neither* mentions *nor* refers to Christ ... and only the first five verses of Sarah Fuller Adams' "Nearer, my God, to Thee" are included in the Unitarian hymnbooks ... verses in which there is no mention of Christ, or His salvation. In place of salvation through Christ, Sarah Fuller Adams places the emphasis upon our perceived ability, for example, verse four,

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with Thy praise,  
Out of my stony griefs Bethel *I'll raise*

The hymnwriter boastfully places the emphasis on her own abilities, rather than in Christ ... and that is the only implied meaning acceptable to a Unitarian. It's a subtle way of error courting the truth, as the serpent courted Eve.

Yes, we must be careful ... Nevertheless, being mindful Christ is keeping His faithful and watchful Church pure, and the gates of Hell, - even in the guise of false religion, - can never prevail against it. Despite the craftiness of the enemy, the truth of God will never be defeated, no matter how numerous those errors become. But, it is our responsibility to be 'on the watch' and to conscientiously apply the words of Paul to Timothy, **1 Tim. 4:16** [Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.](#)