

**MODERN
UNITARIANISM:
ESSAYS AND SERMONS**

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Modern Unitarianism: Essays and Sermons by Various

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VARIOUS

**MODERN
UNITARIANISM:
ESSAYS AND SERMONS**

MODERN UNITARIANISM

ESSAYS AND SERMONS

BY *and others*

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PREFATORY NOTE

The Essays and Sermons contained in this volume were delivered in connection with the dedication and opening of the new church-edifice of the First Unitarian Society of Philadelphia, in February, 1886, and a few references to the occasion of their composition are allowed to remain unchanged.

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DEDICATION SERMON

BY REV. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE, D.D.

OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

"This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers."—*Acts xxiv. 14.*

We have assembled to-night to dedicate this building as a house of worship, a home for Christian work, a school of Christian education. It is a Unitarian Church which meets here for the worship of one God, the Father. It is a Christian Church, which takes Jesus of Nazareth as the leader of the human race in its ascent toward God, and in its brotherhood of love. This is not the first time that a Unitarian Church has been dedicated in Philadelphia. February 14, 1813, seventy-three years ago, the first Unitarian Church in this city was opened for the worship of the one true and living God. The society having outgrown the original building, a second was erected, and dedicated November 5, 1828. And now we meet to offer a third building to the service of God and man. But the Unitarian Church existed here long before its first house of worship was erected. In 1796 fourteen persons united for Unitarian worship in one of the rooms belonging to the University of Pennsylvania. For some years they were a church

without a clergyman, and their services were conducted by the brethren. Three laymen—John Vaughan, Ralph Eddowes, and James Taylor—officiated as leaders of the worship of the society during several years, until about the time when William Henry Furness was ordained pastor in 1825, sixty years ago.

What has Unitarianism done during these years? What has it failed to do? What may it hope to accomplish in the future? Has it done its work, or is it only beginning to do it? And what do we, as Unitarians, owe to our faith? Such will be the subject of my remarks this evening.

In order to answer these questions it is necessary to consider the different methods by which truth extends and propagates itself. These methods take two principal forms,—outward and inward. Truth extends itself outwardly by teaching, discussion, controversy,—by associations, churches, constitutions, laws, and creeds. It also extends itself by an inward process, more silent, but not less powerful. By the constant influence of character it breaks down prejudices; by persistent loyalty to conviction it modifies belief; by the subtle, pervasive power of public opinion it disintegrates dogma and integrates new methods of thought. Christianity has acted on mankind in both ways. It built itself up as a community; it founded churches; it organized itself as an outward religion, with its creeds, its forms of worship, its sacraments, ministry, bishops, popes, monastic orders, solemn and noble architecture, majestic liturgies, institutions of charity and benevolence, missions. In this sense, and in this method of work, Jesus compared it to a seed. The resemblance is striking. As