

# **A STUDY OF THE SECTS**

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A Study of the Sects by William H. Lyon

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**WILLIAM H. LYON**

**A STUDY OF  
THE SECTS**



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# STUDY OF THE SECTS.

BY

WILLIAM H. LYON.

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all,  
and in you all. — EPIKOSIANS IV. 6.

TENTH EDITION  
WITH AN INDEX.

BOSTON:  
UNITARIAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY,  
25 BRACON STREET.

1902.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THIS manual has been prepared at the request of the Unitarian Sunday-School Society for the use of the older classes in the schools to which that valuable body ministers. It may also be found useful to adult readers. Its aim is to present on the one hand a just and sympathetic account of the history and beliefs of the various bodies considered, and on the other hand to show plainly wherein Unitarians differ from them; to counteract the bigotry and conceit from which Unitarians have by no means freed themselves, and at the same time to show how weak and inconsistent is the position of those Unitarians who are anxious to have it understood that there is not, after all, much difference between them and their Evangelical brethren. The fundamental idea of this book is that the difference between the two parties is as great as that between the Evangelicals and the Catholics, or would be if our Orthodox friends would stand still long enough to be photographed distinctly. The study of this subject and the consultations I have had with various representative men have surprised me by revealing the state of confusion and change in which all beliefs except those of the Roman Catholics now exist. Few of those who claim to hold the faith of their fathers are aware how far they have

drifted from that faith, or what chameleon powers words have to assimilate themselves to the mental environment of succeeding generations.

Realizing the danger of misrepresenting the beliefs of others, I have submitted, so far as I could, the various chapters to revision by prominent members or friends of the sects treated in them, and have in every case accepted the corrections made. This is true of the chapters on the Jews, Roman Catholics (doctrine only), Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Friends, Universalists, Unitarians, and Spiritualists. I am thus indebted to the Rev. MESSRS. RAPHAEL LASKER, RICHARD NEAGLE, L. W. SALTONSTALL, A. L. PLUMB, D.D., R. J. ADAMS, Bishop R. S. FOSTER, D.D., C. C. HUSSEY, E. L. REXFORD, D.D., GRINDALL REYNOLDS, and M. J. SAVAGE.

The entire chapter on the Society for Ethical Culture was written by Mr. W. M. SALTER, and the doctrinal part of the one on the New Church by the Rev. J. K. SMITH. I am also greatly indebted to the Rev. H. G. SPAULDING, Secretary of the Sunday-School Society, for many suggestions and much aid in putting the book through the press, and to the unknown but acute and learned proof-readers of the University Press for valuable corrections in both form and matter.

The word *sect* is used in no invidious sense, but as a convenient term for the parts into which the Christian body is actually divided or dissected. The words *Evangelical*, *Orthodox*, and the like are employed in their popular sense, without any concession of their literal truth; nor must the word *Liberal* be construed as implying that the only liberality in religion is to be found in the bodies so named.

The manifold nature of the subject has involved an amount of labor not likely to be appreciated by any one who has not attempted something of the same kind. Yet the necessity of giving to it only the fragments of a busy life may well have left it lacking in unity as well as mistaken on single points. As I review the extent of ground covered and the number of questions answered which have puzzled the saints and the ages, I fear to draw upon myself the latter half of the judgment pronounced upon Whewell, that "science was his forte, and omniscience his foible." Still more do I tremble at my temerity in daring to state the belief of Unitarians, which I have done against my wish and at the request of the Society which publishes the manual. Yet some such book seems to be needed,—is certainly demanded; and this may serve till a better one takes its place.

W. H. LYON.

THE STUDY OF ALL SOULS CHURCH,  
ROXBURY, May 1, 1891.

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#### NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

The only change of importance in this edition is in the remarks on the Society for Ethical Culture, pp. 180, 181. While I am grateful for the unexpectedly cordial reception which this book has found with both the religious and the secular press, I am sure there must be errors which a more careful reading might have detected. I shall be sincerely grateful for any corrections which may be suggested to me.

W. H. L.

ROXBURY, Sept. 16, 1891.





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