

**COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN  
RELIGION:  
AN INTRODUCTION  
TO UNITARIANISM**

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Comparative Studies in Religion: An Introduction to Unitarianism by Henry T. Secrist

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**HENRY T. SECRIST**

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AN INTRODUCTION TO UNITARIANISM

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**HENRY T. SECRET**

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UNITARIAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY  
BOSTON, 25 BEACON STREET; CHICAGO, 105 S. DEARBORN STREET

## PREFACE.

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This book has been prepared mainly for the use of young men and young women who are pursuing a regular course of religious study, though it may be found available for general use. Such should have an acquaintance with the great religions of the world; this is given in the first part of the book. They should have a knowledge of the churches about them: this is given in the second part. These religions and sects are our neighbors with whom we are to live.

Young people should also know their own church and faith well: this is described in the last part. For this some history of the Unitarian Church is given, in order that one may get his bearings and appreciate the sources and the cost. Some plain and positive statements of belief are given; and then there are a few chapters devoted to the working forces of the church. It is hoped that in this way the young people will be prepared for appreciative understanding and for efficient work in their church.

In the Teachers' Edition suggestions are made for methods of teaching and for more extensive study by means of the larger works.

H. T. S.

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## PART ONE.

### Religions of the World.

#### *Chapter I.—CHRISTIANITY.*

##### *The Greatest Religion.*

Christianity is one of the religions of the world, and it is the greatest. We may claim that it is the very best religion, for one reason, that it is best for us, its record is a part of our near history, and its teaching is best suited to our needs; and, for another reason, that it is the religion of the most progressive peoples, is best suited to the needs of modern life, and by comparison with others we find it to contain the most truth.

##### *Its History.*

Christianity grew out of Judaism, and it has many of its roots in the Hebrew religion. The impulse toward a new religion came with Jesus. He did not himself try to found a religion, but his teachings and his life were such that a new religion came from him and he is regarded as its founder. Soon after his death, churches were organized, and Christianity took on definite shape and became known as a separate religion. Jesus bore the title, the Christ. The disciples were called Christians. So came the name Christianity.

##### *Forms.*

There have been many forms under which Christianity appeared. It has taken influences from the countries in which it has been. It has been different at different periods. At times its history has been marked by cruelty and bigotry, at other times by freedom and brotherhood. There is, however, a common tradition which leads back to Christ. We claim the right to our interpretation of Christianity and to call ourselves Christians.

##### *Other Religions.*

Some kind of religion is found among all peoples. A religion may be great and may number many believers, or it

may be peculiar to one small tribe. The religious sentiment is recognized as universal. In some places it is very crude, in others it is noble. Religions deserve to be measured by their best.

We believe that there is truth in all religions. We do not say that all others are false and ours only is true. God has been revealing Himself to many peoples and in many ways. Our Christianity is willing to receive any truth from any source. It is, by its nature, eager to receive and use the good which is found anywhere. Thus we have respect for all religions and show sympathy toward them.

*A World Religion.*

Many religions are ethnic; that is, they belong to one race or nation. The religion of the Greeks is such. In contrast with such we call Christianity a world religion. It is found in all parts of the world. It has been a missionary religion. Its believers have gone out to all parts of the earth to tell about it and to try to make converts to it. If no better religion is to appear, it is because Christianity is itself capable of unlimited development and is able to assume new forms and to receive new truth.

*Religion and Religions.*

This idea of the religions of the world leads us to understand as true the sentiment, "Religions are many: religion is one." It is one religion everywhere, and the religions are but different forms which it takes. Christianity has such a large share of this common religion as to make it worthy our devotion to it. This conception of religion should be an inspiring one to us.

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1. How did Christianity get its name?
  2. What is the relation of Christianity to other religions?
  3. What Bible passages fit this view? (Malachi ii. 10; Acts xvii. 26-28; Romans ii. 14.)