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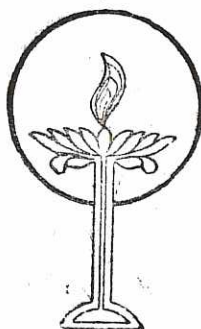
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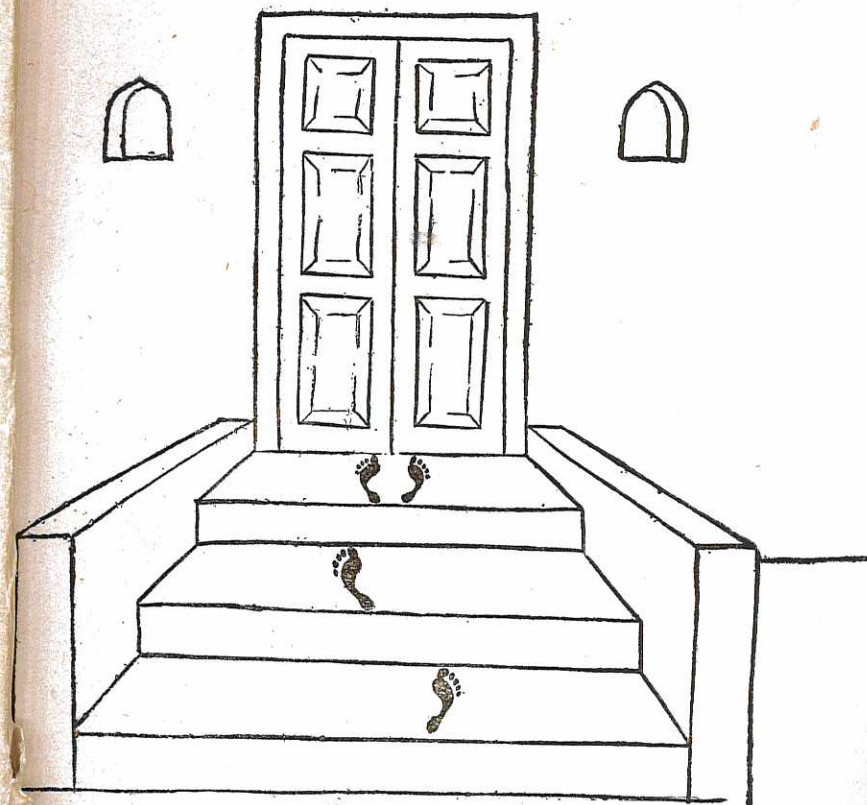
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MARGARET BARR

A UNIVERSAL SOUL

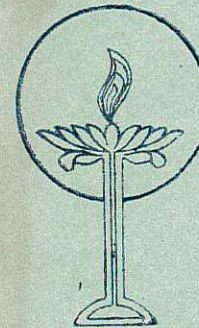


I Saw God's Foot Prints On My Door Steps
—Tagore

MARGARET BARR

A UNIVERSAL SOUL

Margaret Barr Dived, Floated and Lived in Universalism :



यूनीटेरियन सर्वभौम सर्वधर्म सत्संग (कूफी)

*The Correspondence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
of India (CUUFI)*

Devali, UDAIPUR 313001 India. 10/6/75

Those who are not against us are with us.—Jesus

सस्नेह भेंट

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Yours sincerely

Y. S. Paul
Y. S. Paul.

Unitarian Inter-Faith Fellowship of India

Devali, Opp. Fatehsagar Lake;

UDAIPUR (Rajasthan) India

MARGARET BARR

A UNIVERSAL SOUL

Margaret Barr Dived, Floated and Lived in Universalism :

She was a Universal Soul

—Yosupa

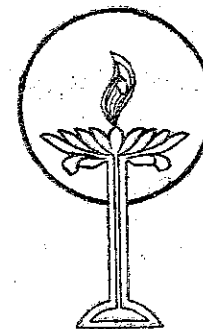
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Edited and Compiled by

Y. SURRENDRA PAUL

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First Edition, March, 1975



Unitarian Inter-Faith Fellowship of India

Devali, Opp. Fatehsagar Lake;

UDAIPUR (Rajasthan) India

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PREFACE

To fight for "space" in this "space age" may sound to you

ERRATUM

We regret for the following proof-reading errors, kindly correct before reading the book; thanks :

Page	Line	Error	Correct-word
15	18	Variety	Variety
21	11	Near	Never
22	20	Way	Why
25	5	mindid	minded
55	27	graat	great
66	6	clark	clerk
69	lastline	ws	we
77	15	through	though
79	24	Three	Thee
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91	16	West	Vast
100	18	9	I
104	last para lline-1	Deposit	Despite
106	" " " -2	He	Her
107	6	Sprit	Spirit

Thinks only this—

How may I serve my fellowmen ?

The most important contribution she made was to embrace Unitarian universalism as a way of thought and a way of life and being successful, advocated us to adapt it according to our

PREFACE

To fight for "space" in this "space age" may sound to you strange, however, in my case it became a fact. The book on Kong (elder sister) Margaret Barr was not planned. I planned a thicker issue of the journal "Sarvadharmā Satsangā : Inter-Faith Fellowship", but the material received was more than we could squeeze in, in that issue (August, 1974); so the idea of compiling a book on her was born. On account of the shortage and high cost of paper we tried to tailor the book to 80 pages. The whole attempt to limit the pages exploded and thus the reins were out of my hands; and the book followed its own course as the way of Tao.

Kong Barr's contribution in establishing and developing the Kharang Rural Centre in Khasi Hills and steering of the Unitarian movement in Assam (Meghalaya) received good coverage in Unitarian and other periodicals and books, and it was good. Yet I feel, Kharang Rural Centre was not the most important contribution of Kong Barr; I have seen far bigger ones. I have no doubt her true greatness was in her experimental side of the Unitarian Universalism and spontaneous expression of her deep spiritual love, Tulsi Das expressed it better;

*No hing is hard to him who, casting self aside,
Thinks only this—
How may I serve my fellowmen ?*

The most important contribution she made was to embrace Unitarian universalism as a way of thought and a way of life and being successful, advocated us to adapt it according to our

- 1.
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own needs. If I can, I will collect more of her letters and sermons for the second edition.

The book is not strictly an auto, or 'biography' or collection of articles, or only tributes; it is a mixture of all, a cocktail or "pulaw" or records. In the process of compiling it we have freely quoted from her autobiography, "*A Dream Come True*", (ADCT) edited by Mr. Roy W. Smith and published by the Lindsey Press, London. We are grateful to the publishers to allow us to use any of their books for quotations and translation. We also thank all the writers who contributed articles or have written tributes. Thanks also goes to Mrs. Ginny Shrivastava, Ajay Kumar Paul and A. D. Naik who assisted in the task of editing, compiling and proof-reading. The cover of the book is by A. D. Naik.

We in India feel that Kong Barr's book, "*The Great Unity*" though out of print is of permanent value and if we get funds or donations to translate it into Hindi, we hope to publish it for the future generation who is in schools and colleges. Every country should introduce Comparative Religion in the curriculum so as to build up goodwill and understanding between different sects and religious groups in their own country, and in the world.

Y. S. Paul

ANNIE MARGARET BARR : LIFE

HE WHO KNOWS ONLY ONE RELIGION KNOWS NONE

—Max Muller

[I]

Margaret was the fourth child in a family of six. As a baby and young child she cried a great deal—no-one knew why, but later it was learned that she had a "murmer" in her heart; certainly she was not strong as an infant, but later she grew into a robust happy youngster, like the other five of us.

Only one brother, Tom, and I are still alive and as we are both younger than Margaret all we know of her earliest years is what we have been told. But she was brought up much like the rest of us



(Margaret : age 8 years) of northern England, during her last visit in 1971, she remarked on the similarity between

In the earliest days we lived in the country amid very beautiful, peaceful surroundings. For Margaret, wild, undeveloped country was part of her very being, and her early upbringing, with freedom to wander, in this setting undoubtedly played a large part in inculcating a self-reliance and fearlessness which were a strong feature of her character. (When taken to some of the remoter parts

these wild, rolling open hills and her beloved Kharang in whose quietness she had found fulfilment and home.)

Our parents believed in giving us freedom of choice and independence and, as small children, on Saturdays we were given a penny to spend in any way we wished; but as the nearest shop was over a mile away (and with no conveyance other than our own little legs) we did not visit it very often. When we did we usually bought four different kinds of sweets—and we got quite a lot for our farthing (pice)! Each of us had a money-box and sometimes (when we were strong-minded) we put our Saturday-penny into that, to buy something more important than “jelly-babies” or “aniseed-balls,”—or perhaps to buy a present for someone else. It was always a great pleasure to have a little money saved up and to watch the other’s face as we gave our present, perhaps to mother or father.

Every Sunday we were dressed in our best clothes and taken to the long walk to the village chapel (Wesleyan Methodist) and we stretched out in a long line, all eight of us. During the prayers, while I was still very small, I liked to kneel on the seat and peep through my fingers at the people behind us. But when the sermon came I curled onto Dad’s lap and went to sleep. (On one such occasion I remember a sudden “snap” as I put my head back on his chest: I had smashed his fountain-pen—and in those days pen-ink was *wet*—but he was not at all cross and made no fuss.)

What Margaret did on these regular occasions I do not know, but her experiences must have been much like mine; certainly we were all taken, week after week, year after year to chapel from the time we could toddle.

At five years old we went to the village school, and so began the rudiments of our education. When Margaret was about ten we moved to the industrial city of Leeds, where our education continued at the much larger Grammar and High Schools and at a high level. My first clear memory of her is at this time, when I was eight. We shared an attic bedroom, and every night she used to pull off her clothes very quickly and, as soon as we were in bed, read aloud to me. Or sometimes, during the day, we sat on the branches of a tree or lay on the grass while she read—fast. We read through many volumes in this way, she reading very quickly always—not good for her eyesight, nor for my spelling! (To this day I find English spelling difficult.)

At school, and later at college, Margaret was never brilliant, but industrious and persevering, usually near the top of her form of about thirty pupils. Above all, her strength of character made her a natural leader—in an unobtrusive, quiet way—and she was form-captain in such sports as tennis, netball, cricket and hockey; and when she reached the upper forms she was a prefect and school captain of some sports teams.



It was not until she was in her (Age: 13½ years) twenties, and at Girton College, Cambridge, that Margaret became a Unitarian.

(Mrs) Winifred Laurie
England.

[2]

Margaret Barr as a student I never knew, but I believe that when she entered college to train for the ministry, the Teaching Staff regarded her with no little trepidation. They were a bit scared of her, both as a woman and an 'original'. I think they breathed a sigh of relief when, after one year, with her native impatience to get to grips with real life, she left college to complete her training in a pastorate in the grimy industrial North of England.

It was whilst she was in Rotherham that I made her acquaintance. She was ill in bed and had asked for a student from Manchester to conduct her Services. I was that student. From 1928 onwards, I was in touch with her in England and in India and whenever she returned on furlough she invariably stayed with us and preached to my people in Sheffield, Halifax, and Belfast. In Belfast in the sixties I arranged for her to broadcast and to address the senior girls of my daughter's school. She also gave a striking Central Hall lecture on her faith and work which was an eye-opener to some of her auditors. She never failed to proclaim her Unitarianism and made a point, in her radio interview, of mentioning the fact as often as possible!

To have her in the house, to walk with her over the Yorkshire moors, to hear her speak of the things nearest her heart was a joy and richly satisfying. She was a splendid guest; our children loved her; she loved a song and a chorus, especially 'on the road'. Indeed, she had a great capacity for enjoying life and was always ready for an adventure. A keen rambler, for her age and sex she ranked as physically quite tough. But her merri-ment was matched by her compassion. Her enthusiasm might occasionally lead her to make an error of judgement, but her

idealism became tempered, in later years, by the realisation that 'reform' of any kind, like politics, was in fact "the art of the possible".

First and foremost, in outlook she was a Universalist, a liberal thinker who found God in no single tradition but in all the great Faiths. The Divine Unity embraced all who worshipped God in spirit and in truth. Secondly, she was a staunch pacifist and democratic socialist, a follower of Gandhi in her attachment to non-violence. All men were brothers and the poor and unprivileged were in especial need of care and love. As a trained teacher, she knew the importance of education, but education should be properly fitted to meet the needs of the young and illiterate. Thus she invented 'dodges' to enable, them to make rapid progress and promote a zest for learning, methods specially adopted, for example, to the Khasi children in her schools in Shillong and Kharang. She was a practising psycho-logist, disliking the jargon but keen to apply what she regarded as commonsense.

Kong Barr's example of devotion to the best interests of the Khasi Unitarians has left its mark not merely in India but also on the minds of many who loved and admired her in England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America.

We at home will sorely miss her regular letters and visits, her radiant smile and helpful presence. But we shall treasure her memory as a messenger of hope and a true representative of a fine tradition of social service and spiritual leadership, that has meant a very great deal in the history of Unitarianism.

Dr. John H. McLachlan
(President of the G. A. in 1970-71)

[3]

News of Margaret Barr's death on August 11, 1973, came as a great shock to friends in Britain because in June she had written that she continued fit and was enjoying a lot of swimming. Her 'pool' was always a great delight to her.



(Margaret : 20-21 years)

On going to Girton College, Cambridge, Margaret joined a student missionary group. A friend took her to the Unitarian Sunday Service one day, and she gave up the idea of going to 'convert the heathen' after hearing Dr. Cyril Flower, the minister, speak of Hinduism with respect and understanding. She became a Unitarian, took her B. A. degree, did a course of education

training and after a short teaching career in London decided to enter Manchester College, Oxford to train for the ministry.

While in Oxford she met the Rev. Will Hayes who introduced her to "THE FRIENDS OF INDIA". She heard of Gandhi and the cause of Indian freedom. From 1927-33 she was minister at the Rotherham Unitarian Church and she retained happy memories of that time and of the people who became her friends. About that time she learned of the indigenous Unitarian Movement in the Khasi & Jainti Hills of Meghalaya, India, and its remarkable founder Hajam Kissor Singh and decided she must go to India. In 1933 she did, after being appointed to the staff of the non-Christian Gokhale Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta.

On her way there she was introduced to Gandhi by her sister Mary, who was one of the outstanding village workers. Gandhi's advice to Margaret was, "KEEP OUT OF JAIL AND FIND SOME CONSTRUCTIVE WORK TO DO". At the school she taught Comparative Religion and was encouraged to write her book, "The Great Unity".

In her vacations she visited the Khasi Unitarians, and by 1936 she had made her home among them as the representative of the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Churches. While cooperating with the well established Khasi Unitarian Union and joining them at their meetings she took no official part, but attended their conferences (sleeping down on the floor with others for two or three nights) and visited all their churches. The long, rocky, slippery and bare-footed treks across rough hilly country did not deter her and, as in Britain, everyone responded to her friendly manner and obvious love of people.

The extent of illiteracy, poverty and illhealth in the villages made her very concerned for the Khasi people. Whatever the

outcome there was an urgent need for education and the government provided none. Margaret Barr decided she would try to meet that need and she opened a school, later there was another, with an associated teacher training school in Shillong. Her aim

Staff and trainees : MULKI BASIC TRAINING CENTRE



Sitting Lady Ried (wife of the Governor) in the middle, on her right Miss A. M. Barr.

was to provide teacher for primary and basic schools, providing non-proselytizing free education in rural areas of Meghalaya, as advocated by Gandhi. Pupils came from the villages, but a village Khasi who has become used to town life is unwilling to leave it. Educating children in Shillong, as for work in the villages was defeating its object. There would have to be a school in one of the remote places.

At Kharang, altitude 6000 feet above sea level with a healthy climate, sixteen miles from Shillong she acquired some land, a mile from the main village, and became a 'member of the village.' In 1951 she returned after a holiday in Britain, and made it her home for the rest of her life. A few simple buildings

and an equally simple school provided the foundation of the Kharang Rural Centre and she hoped that during holidays, at least some young people would come for study and training in leadership and children would be sent to the school. None came. It was a time of disappointment and unimaginable loneliness; it was difficult for her to talk to the local people who did not understand the Khasi language she had learned in Shillong. However when she opened her school to the local children, they came.

Recalling that time she marvelled that a tribe still largely in its childhood. Hajam Kissor Singh, the first Khasi Unitarian, should have emerged. He made immense sacrifices of time and money to spread the light of liberal religion than the orthodox missionaries. This accounts for the fact that during the years when I plumbed depths of loneliness never experienced before, I should have been more than ever conscious of God's presence with me.

The outlook brightened. Bruce Findlow on his way from Australia to Britain, to train for the Unitarian Ministry, spent a year at Kharang then followed other helpers: Mrs. Findlow, Mrs. Mabel Beams and more recently two young English people Susan Hall and John Hewerdine, the loneliness was overcome for some time. Dranwell and his sister Maida came from Shillong to help in many ways but especially in setting up a dispensary and Maternity Home. They have thousands of patients each year and now have helpers, and salaries are paid by the state government of Meghalaya. Help was also forthcoming for developing rural craft and improved agriculture. Life at Kharang has become fuller and the school has been most successful with pupils having done very well in the national Basic Examination. Latterly with a State Government School in the village Margaret Barr's school

became residential, pupils being orphans for whom she made herself responsible.

Concerned for the future she set up the Kharang Rural Centre Trust and raised a capital sum to provide an income for the future although she hoped there might be increased state government support.

Devison Marbaniang's appointment as spiritual leader to the Khasi Unitarian Churches was a great step forward. He is secretary of the Kharang Rural Centre Trust and acted for her whenever she was ill or away.

We shall not again hear Margaret Barr's dear, quiet voice, her friendly greeting and her merry laugh but with people all over the world (she had friends in many countries) we join in giving thanks that we have had the privilege of knowing her.

An article written by her for the "Sarvadharm Satsanga : Inter-Faith Fellowship" (India) Journal last year entitled "What religion means to me" ended:—*To be sure of the voice that guides me and the experience in my daily life that 'Sense of Joy in God' which can weather all storms, make the heaviest burden seem light and be the kindly light that brightens even the darkest and loneliest path, that is what religion means to me.*"

[Mrs.] Gwyneth J. M. Thomas,
President,
General Assembly of Unitarian &
Free Churches in Great Britain.

How I Became A Unitarian ?

I was born and brought up in a Wesleyan Methodist home and do not remember ever hearing the name Unitarian, except once when I was teen-age school-girl. On the way to the school we had to pass a dignified old church building and one day I asked my mother, what it was, "Oh" she replied grimly : "It is a Unitarian Church. The people there do not believe in the divinity of Christ." And with that fantastic reply I was forced to be contented. But when I went as a student to Cambridge in 1920, I found in my year a girl who was a Unitarian and I asked her to take me to their service with her one Sunday. Anything less like what I had expected it was difficult to imagine. Everything combined to impress me, quietness and reverence, hymns for the most part different from the Methodist ones I was accustomed to, and best of all the personality of the minister who was a scholarly, saintly person and whose address at that first service was a scholarly and appreciative study of Hinduism. I had often heard addresses about Hinduism at Missionary meetings, mostly of the Katherine Mayo variety, designed to fire us with the need for large contributions to help them with the work of converting the benighted heathen. That a man like this minister should find anything commendable and great in Hinduism had never entered my wildest dreams. I returned the following week and before long had become a regular attender.

When I got to know him personally, as I very soon did, as he and his wife used to keep openhouse for under-graduates, one day I told him what my mother had said to me years before. He smiled his gentle, patient smile and said : "It is a common mistake. But let me assure you that what we don't believe is not the least important, even to ourselves and still less to anyone else. You have been attending our services for some time now, in our hymns and prayers and in my addresses I have been trying to show you some of the things that we do believe for instance, that God has never left himself without witness and that all the world's great religions belong to him, that all the world's great scriptures contain the Word of God, that great saints of every age and race have been path-finders and way-showers, Buddha and Shankara no less than Jesus and the Apostles. The important thing in religion is for every individual to seek and find and then remain true, to what he has found. And what he finds must be positive assertions, not negations and denials."

This sounded to me excellent advice. Once I had found Unitarianism, I embraced it with heart and soul and have remained true to it ever since. And never for one moment since have I regretted the step that took me from Orthodoxy to Unitarianism. It was a major milestone in my spiritual pilgrimage.

One thing that has always delighted me about Unitarians is their liberal attitude to people of other faiths. In a small town in Yorkshire England near the Unitarian Church where I lived before coming to India, was an Indian doctor, an Arya Samajist. Wanting religious fellowship he joined the local Unitarian Church; he was for many years chairman of the local congregation and also served on the council of the local District. He was widely

respected and loved and did much to make Unitarianism acceptable in the area.

When I visited Cape Town a few years ago I found that one of the keenest and most devoted families in the Unitarian Fellowship there, was a Parsee family from Bombay. Most loyal Unitarians they are, but as each child reaches the age of initiation to their own historic faith; they pay a visit to Bombay, so that the Zoroastrian High Priest may conduct the initiation ceremony. The children are then left in no doubt as to their ultimate place in their own culture. They go to the Parsee Aggiyari Ghar (Fire Temple) week by week as long as they stay in Bombay. How different this is from the insistence by most Christian Churches that a candidate for baptism must declare that he has broken completely with his heathenish past !

(Written in 1970)

Gandhiji's Universalism & Christianity

Miss A. Margaret Barr in her early life, after graduation was actively engaged in activities of educating British public to the cause of Indian Freedom. She came to India in 1933, and went straight to see Gandhiji, where her elder sister Mary was already close to Bapu and helping him. Gandhiji inspired Miss Barr to work in the villages of India. As a stepping stone to get to India; she first worked at the Gokhale Memorial Girls School at Calcutta, teaching Comparative Religion.

There are Unitarians in the Khasi Hills round Shillong, and Miss Barr as a Unitarian was anxious and keen to do educational and rural-uplift work among the Khasi people. She started a basic school in Kharang on the Gandhian lines. Kharang is a village on a hill-top some 6000 feet above sea level and about sixteen miles from Shillong. 3/4 of the journey is done on foot on a slippery foot-path specially in rainy season.

Through Kharang basic school many girls and boys of the nearby villages have been benefited in the past. In the last twenty years sister Margaret adopted and reared more than fifty girls and boys. Most of them were from different Christian denominations and a few from non-christian Khasi families. The work is entirely non-communal, non-sectarian and non-proset-

lysing. Every facility is given to the adopted children to attend their own form of worship. At present (1970) she has nine girls and a youngman of eighteen, some of them are in the high school stage. Like a mother, she lives with the girls in the same building, eats the same food that the children take. In fact sister Margaret has become a true Khasi and a true Indian.

Miss Barr is now seventy-one (1970) and still active. Last year and this year she fell ill and with great difficulties her friends in Shillong and Kharang were able to transfer her to the civil hospital in Shillong. Even then, as soon as she was able to walk, she insisted on returning to her village and thus disappointed all her well-wishers and friends who advised her to stay in the city. Her Gandhian type of Ashram-cum-school is serving the need of the village children, and her clinic-cum-health centre serves people of twenty or more villages. As a true Unitarian she is colour blind i.e. like Bapu she respects all religions.

Sister Margaret Barr dreams to live and serve the simple Khasi village-people till the end of her life, and does not want to return to her country of birth. She is not a missionary — Unitarians have none—but a true follower of Gandhiji. In this short article she speaks out her heart to you.

(Y. S. Paul—Editor)

I must first apologise to Christians if it sounds too much like an attack on them. The fact is, of course, that the whole article is meant as an attempt to vindicate Gandhiji's refusal to accept the word "only". And if I have used Christianity as my example, that is because, as far as I know, Christianity is the

only religion whose adherents still raise vast sums of money with which to support foreign missions throughout the world, the avowed aim of which is "the conversion of the heathen." It was a Hindu fanatic that murdered Gandhiji; but I have yet to hear of a Hindu fanatic whose fanaticism takes the form of wanting to convert all the world to Hinduism.

One thing that has always thrilled me is the universalism of Gandhiji's religious message, and his consequent rejection of the idea that any one of the world's religion should or was destined to oust all others. What he said was something like : The Christians say that Christ is the Son of God. I agree, so am I, so is every human being, child of the Supreme Parent immanent in all. As James Martineau, who has had an enormous influence on modern Unitarianism said, "*The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of Man universally, and God everlastingly. He bends into the human to dwell there; and humanity is the susceptible organ of the divine.*" Or as a liberal poet says :

When Jesus taught the world to pray

"Our Father". was it not to say

That each of us could claim to be

As much, as little, Son as he ?

For if Creation, since the dawn

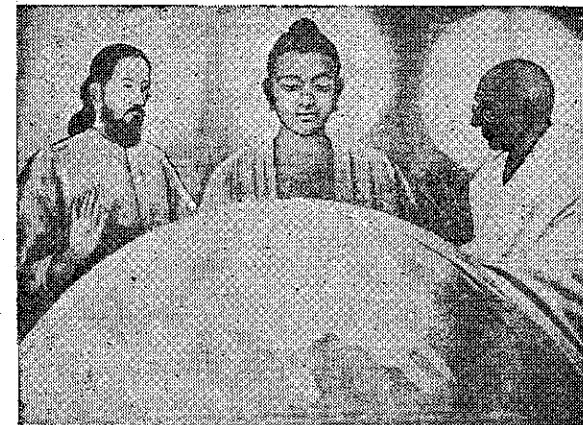
Of all created things, has drawn

Its origin from God, then what

Is any man but God-begot ?

"The light that lighteneth every man born into the world," as the Bible says.

But the moment the word "only" is added Gandhiji could no longer agree. How can Christ be the only-begotten (son) when all are children of God ? It is true that he brought a message of the healing of the nations, "Resist not him that is evil but overcome evil with good." But five-centuries before he was born, the Buddha in India was preaching exactly the same thing. We find his words in the Dhammapada.



JESUS

BUDDHA

GANDHI

Never does hatred cease by hating,

Hatred ceases by love,

This is always its nature.

Near by hatred can hatred cease;

Love only ends them evermore;

Love only brings all strife to peace;

That is the true, ancient lore.

(Translated by C. F. Andrews)

The Christians claim that Christ brought a new revelation of the one true God and that only by embracing Christianity can

men understand it. Did he? What about that magnificent passage in the Rig-Veda, older by hundreds of years than anything in the Bible : *There is only One God, the Supreme Spirit. Men call It by many names, wise poets by their words make the Beautiful-Winged manifold though It is One.*" One God, many names. Have there not been saints and seers in every age and race who have taught this?

The Christians say that only by surrender to Christ can men be saved. But in the Bhagavad Gita Shri Krishna says that in surrender to him and through work done with no thought of reward may men find peace; and thousands of Hindus have found and are finding daily the truth of this.

The Christians claim that all the world must be converted to Christianity since it alone has the words of life, a claim made nonsense of by all the saints of every other faith and by Gandhi himself, now acknowledged throughout the world as the greatest saint of this century. *Gandhi the Hindu.*

Again the Christians claim that only by embracing Christianity can men understand the message of the universal fatherhood of God. But why father only? Eastern religions have always believed that God is as much Mother as Father and it is that supreme Parents who has given His-Her own spirit to men and women.

So far we have quoted only the scriptures of great and famous religions. But this vision of universal parenthood is not confined to such. In the greatest Khasi-book ever written, Jeebon Roy's "Shaphang Uwei U Blei," (Concerning One God), written

towards the end of the last century, by the greatest Khasi of all we find among other great passages one that says : "When we consider our human parentage we find that no matter what a child does, whether he remains obedient and loving or whether he breaks his parents' heart by his evil ways, nothing can alter the fact that he is still their son and they are still his parents. Thus it is with God", writes Jeebon Roy. We are given the power to choose our course. Shall we love and honour our Divine-Parent and live honest upright lives? Or shall we be selfish, dishonourable, mean, treacherous, dishonest? It is for us to choose and the whole meaning of religion in our lives lives in our choice.

Thus by exploring the scriptures of some of the world's religions instead of making exorbitant and ridiculous claims for one religion alone, do we find confirmation of the splendid universalism of Gandhiji's religion, which more and more people throughout the world and belonging to every faith, are coming to accept, no longer trying to drag everyone into one faith, but realizing with one of the Persian mystical poets that *the paths to God are more in number than the brathings of created beings*; and every path leads to one God, the Nameless with a thousand names.

HOW LIBERAL IS UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP!

Jack Mendelsohn in his book "Why I am a Unitarian" declares : "I am willing to call myself a Christian only if in the next breath I am permitted to say in varying degrees I am also a Jew, a Hindu and a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Stoic, and an admirer of Akhenaten, Zoroaster, Confucius, Tao-Tse and Socrates." He continues, "By deliberate choice we send no missionaries over the face of the earth to convert others to our way of believing..... We generally feel that people of other religions have as much to teach us as we have to teach them."

(-Editor)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

One of the chief things that drew me to the Unitarian Movement was its attitude to other religions, combining as it did tolerance, understanding and cooperation. At the very first service (worship) I ever attended, the priest gave an address on Hinduism, a sermon at once scholarly, enlightened and revealing a spirit of sympathy and admiration which amazed me. As a methodist all I had ever heard of Hinduism had been at missionary meetings where the subject was invariably treated either with hostility, as the chief foe of Christianity in India, or with scorn for the ignorance and superstition in which its adherents were sunk. Both the spirit and matter, therefore, of the first Unitarian sermon I ever heard, I found intriguingly new and exciting and before long I became a keen and devoted member and have never swerved since from the Movement.

When I came to India, twelve years later in 1933, I began to discover for myself how true was that Unitarian teaching. And most of all I began to find its truth when I made contact with the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The only thing I ever dislike about this organization is its name. And I still think that to choose the name "Mission" in a country where that name is inextricably mixed up with

proselytization or conversion, was the one mistake made by its founder (Vivekananda). Here I found a body of men, as devoted to their religion as any Christian could be to his, pledged to the principle that religion must be lived and not just professed and withal as tolerant and broad-minded as I had found my various Unitarian teachers to be.

It was only after I came to India that I heard of Swami Vivekananda. I learnt of his triumph at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, of the splendid universalism of his message to the West and (which impressed me most of all) of his steady refusal to succumb to the temptation to settle down there permanently, secure in the support and adulation of wealthy devotees, and his return to his motherland as a poor mendicant, first to see for himself the great need, both physical and spiritual of the vast majority of his countrymen from Cape Cormorin to the Himalayas, and then to crown his lifework by founding the Ramakrishna Mission, "as an instrument of the universal culture of India, to teach humanity its own divine nature and the basic truth that all forms of religion are but different paths to the same Universal God." And at the same time to minister to men's physical and intellectual needs in a network of hospitals, clinics and educational institutions. And all this was achieved in a short life of only forty years. But so tremendous was his influence on others that since his death the work that he started has gone from strength to strength.

Much of this I learnt, by reading and conversation with educated Indians I met during the two and a half years that I was a teacher at the Gokhale Memorial Girls School in Calcutta. But I was only after settling in the Khasi Hills (Meghalaya) in 1936 that I began, through personal contact, to know and

appreciate the work of that great liberal Hindu and of the devoted followers who have carried on and developed what he so splendidly began.

Here in the Khasi Hills in 1924, while I was revelling in my newfound allegiance to the Cambridge Unitarian Church and enjoying the care-free life of a university student, one of Swami-ji's followers started a small centre at the little town of Shella on the slopes of the Southern Khasi Hills, not far from what is now India's eastern border with Bangladesh. His aim was "to educate the Khasis and help them to feel proud of their own cultural heritage and religion and develop a love for their great nation India of which they are an integral and vital part."

The work grew and spread, its HQ was moved from Shella to Cherrapunji and now in 1972, it comprises a High School providing higher education for over 500 boys and girls and in some 40 villages in the district a steadily expanding network of Lower Primery, Nursery and Middle Schools, Dispensaries, Libraries. Craft centres and many kinds of rural welfare work.

On my first visit to Cherra in 1938 having heard disquieting rumours in Shillong that the Mission was trying to turn the Khasis to Hinduism, I put a blunt question to the Swami who was then at the head of the Cherrapunji Centre "What is your aim in coming here? I asked, "Do you hope that the Khasis will embrace Hinduism?" As clearly as if it were yesterday I can still see his gentle tolerant smile as he answered, "If our boys and girls become better Christians, better Khasis, better citizens of India and the world and better men and women for having passed through our school, we shall have achieved our aim." This was so exactly my own aim in all my educational work that I

knew at once that I had found a kindred spirit. And so it has proved, for the link forged that day both with the Mission and with that particular Swami has strengthened with the years and, though we rarely meet, he is still one of my closest and dearest friends.

The Swami now incharge of the Cherrapunji centre, moreover, has gone further any of his predecessors in furthering the aim quoted above. In a few weeks he learnt Khasis language and read everything available, so that, thanks to his inspiration and leadership, we are now seeing a revival of Khasi religion and culture. And as there has always been a very happy relationship between the non-Christian Khasis and Khasi Unitarians, we Unitarians also are rejoicing in the revival. In fact I think everyone is rejoicing, except perhaps any Khasi Christians who, despite all modern trends of thought, still believe that there is only one way of salvation for humanity and that is through their Church and their creed. And it is because we know that, in India at large as well as in the Khasi Hills, this kind of Christianity is all too prevalent that we of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship have decided to raise our voice to proclaim again that central message of Swami Vivekananda that, "All Forms of Religion Are But Different Paths To The Same Universal God".

(November 1972)

A BIGGER CIRCLE

He drew a circle that shut me out—

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win;

We drew a circle that took him in!

—Virgil Markham

What Religion Means to Me

A few weeks ago someone said to me, 'You talk a great deal about the essential oneness of all true religion and have doubtless studied the great religions of the world, but what, actually, does religion mean to you?' This article is an attempt to answer that question.

My first reaction was to recall a passage in a book about Gandhi describing how someone once asked him if he had mystical experiences. He answered, "If by mystical experiences you mean visions and trances, no; I should be a fraud if I claimed to have had such. But I am very sure of the 'Voice that guides me.' If religion means to be sure of 'the Voice that guides,' then in all humility I too can lay claim to it

That mystical ecstasy, resulting in the experience of union with God, is the culmination of religious quest. I have no doubt whatever. I believe also that it is the ultimate goal of every soul, if not in this life then in another. But that religion in that highest sense is possible to every human being during the course of his present sojourn in the world, I do not believe. [This by the way is to me one of the most potent arguments in favour of re-incarnation (rebirth). No need to add this—We will have a separate article on it some day.] Consequently I do not equate religion with mysticism, and it is encouraging to find

someone as far along the path as Gandhi expressing himself in terms that can be understood by everyone, and not, as the mystics so often tend to in terms that are largely unintelligible to everyone but themselves.

Like Gandhi, I too know nothing of visions, trances and the ecstasy of mystical union. But my religion gives me something much more homely and perhaps in the long run more satisfying. It gives me, as the years pass, a steadily deepening assurance of the Voice that guides me, the voice that called me in 1926 to throw up my teaching post with the London County Council and go to Oxford to train for the Unitarian ministry, though the Committee took a lugubrious view of the prospects for women ministers, the Voice that, seven years later, send me to plough a lonely furrow in India, and that I know will continue to guide me to the end of the furrow.

"People sometimes ask me," said Gandhi on another occasion, "how I can be so happy when I have such heavy burdens. I do not know, only I am quite sure it is of God; and I would like such a sense of joy-in-God to spread in the world, whether it calls itself Christian, Hindu or by any other name."

There is a potent and refreshing simplicity about such sayings that puts the speaker of them once and for all in the company of the world's greatest religions teachers, a simplicity and sincerity that speak straight to the hearts of his fellow-men.

To be "sure of the Voice that guides me" and to experience in daily life that "*sense of Joy-in-God*" which can weather all storms, make the heaviest burdens seem light and be the "Kindly light" that brightens even the darkest and loneliest path—that is what religion means to me.

May, 1973

How People are Terrorised ?

So far as I know, Christianity is the only religion whose adherents still raise vast sum of money with which to support foreign missions throughout the world. The avowed aim of which is "the conversion of the heathen". I know that many missions today are liberalised and exist for service rather than conversion, but this is by no means true to all. I know too that other religions also produced their fanatics. It was a Hindu fanatic that murdered Gandhiji, but I have yet to hear of a Hindu fanatic whose fanaticism takes the form of wanting to convert all the world to Hinduism. There may be fanatical Muslims, not in India, I think, but I wonder if these regard it as a major duty to convert all the world to Islam. Yet in countries that still allow missionaries to work, there are many missions still working on the old lines. Some even are of the ultra-fundamentalist outlook represented by a man who visited me in hospital, when I was seriously ill—September, 1969. He declared in a loud tone that I had no hope of Salvation unless I repent of my heresy and accept Christ as my God and Saviour. At first I reasoned genetly with him, but became angry when he persisted in these nonsensical assertions and finally tearing up his leaflets before his face, unread, I told him to stop talking nonsense and clear out of my sick-room. He chose the wrong person when he came to me, as few could be firmer in their own faith and less liable to be frightened by his 'hell-fire' prophecies than I. It is surprising that such people are still at large in India, and they should certainly not be allowed in hospitals (civil, mission or private) where other sick folk may well have their last

hours dominated by terror of hell, and at the last moment may even be driven by fear to embrace a creed which they do not believe. Christianity in India, alas! still has people like this, speaking in its name.

(August 1970)

How I Became a Unitarian

I was born into a Wesleyan Methodist family and remained in that church until I went as a student to Cambridge University at the age of twenty-one. But for several years before that I had been restless, finding so much in the teaching of my church that my maturing mind could not understand and refused to accept blindly. The Doctrine of the Atonement I found especially baffling. How could the loving Father-God taught by Jesus require the horrible cruelty of the Cross before he could forgive sinful men? Surely this was a direct denial of his own teaching in the Parable of the Prodigal Son? And how was it possible for Jesus to be the "only-begotten son" when he himself had taught that all men were sons of God, and when history showed so many great and good souls even before the time of Jesus? What about the Buddha, Lao Tse, Confucius, Socrates, Ashoka, and the Hebrew prophets? I got no satisfactory answer to these puzzling questions from my minister and class leader and hated the sanctimonious atmosphere of evangelical revival meetings.

During my first year at college I joined the college branch of the Student Christian Movement, made friends with girls belonging to many other churches and started accompanying them occasionally to their services. Amongst them was a Unitarian and one Sunday I went with her "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken." I knew at once that I had come home and the quest for a religious affiliation able to satisfy me intellectually, emotionally and spiritually was ended. The Unitarian Church at Cambridge

could do all that—and more. It was wonderful to find a leader who was both a scholar and a saint, conducting public worship with dignity and reverence and speaking of other religions with a genuine respect that was wholly different from anything I had heard at Missionary meetings during my Methodist days, at worst with nothing but condemnation and even at best with a patronising tolerance which always gave place in the end to a re-affirmation of the complete superiority and uniqueness of Christianity.

It was wonderful to find myself joining in hymns such as "One Holy Church of God appears through every age and race", "Life of ages richly poured", "Wherever thro' the ages rise the altars of self-sacrifice", as well as hymns of personal devotion such as Martineau's "Where is your God they say?" and many others written by Unitarians, and to discover that some of my favourite "Christian" hymns had been written by Unitarians e. g. "Nearer, my God, to Thee". And most wonderful of all was the discovery that central to the teaching of the Unitarian Church was the conviction that had long been growing on me, that *the place to find God was not in anything external (even the Cross of Christ) but in the hidden depths of my own being*. It was this discovery that brought my religious life into harmony with all that had most appealed to me in the poetry that I had learnt at school: Emily Bronte whose "Last Lines" contain a magnificent affirmation of her conviction that the "God within my breast" was to be identified with the Spirit which "with wide-embracing love...animates eternal years pervades and broods above": Wordsworth's finding of the "something far more deeply interfused" in Nature "and in the mind of man"; Masefield's "O little self" and hosts of others. Perhaps these poems are not much read nowadays. But remember that I became a Unitarian in 1921, and that none of the "slings and arrows" of a long and strenuous life have done anything but strengthen the

bonds then formed and deepen the roots of the tree then planted—the tree of the Unitarian faith that I have found for over fifty years sufficient to my every need, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, and which still, and increasingly continues its work in my life.

Another thing that has delighted me about the Unitarian Movement as I have watched it developing in England and America over the years is that it seems to be developing more into “an inter-religious fellowship.”

During the six years of my ministry in a small town in Yorkshire, England, I had as a near neighbour and close friend an Indian doctor—an Arya Samajist who had found that, without repudiating his ancestral Hinduism, he could worship happily at the Free Unitarian Church in the small town where he lived. He was loved and respected all over the district and soon became a leader in all local Unitarian doings even to being elected President of the Sheffield and District Association of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Later, when I visited Cape Town I was delighted to find there as one of the keenest and most active families belonging to the Cape Town Unitarian Church, a Parsee family with business in South Africa but ancestral roots in India. They had not needed to repudiate their Zoroastrian faith in order to join the Unitarian Church, and as soon as one of their children reaches the age of initiation into that faith, the whole family pays a visit to Bombay so that the Chief Priest of the Parsees may perform the ceremony. Is there any Christian Church (with the possible exception of the Quakers and Unitarians) of which this is true?

On one of my visits to Cape Town I was shown some photographs of the initiation ceremony of the eldest son. Several

years later, on attending in Delhi a conference on World Peace, convened by the Gandhi Pwace Foundation in conjunction with some Unitarian and other Liberal Religious leaders from America, I found myself sitting next to someone who seemed familiar, though I could not recall having met him before. When the members of the conference sitting round the table were introduced by name, I realised that my neighbour was the Zoroastrian (Parsee) High priest whose photos I had seen in Cape Town.

There must surely be many liberal minded people, of many faiths, to whom the Unitarian Universalist Inter-Faith Fellowship being started by Dr. Y. S. Paul at Udaipur will make a strong appeal, since it is being founded like my own Unitarianism on the firm rock of personal religion and universal brotherhood.

The part played in the wider fields of service and brotherhood by the Unitarian and Universalist Churches of today (and it is a varied and honorable part) will be the subject of a later article. Perhaps this will suffice for the present to explain “How I become a Unitarian.”

[This was her last article which she wrote for the “Sarva-dharma Satsanga : Inter-Faith Fellowship in May 1973]

LIVING RELIGIONS

It was found impossible, in the short time at our disposal, to trace the history of religion back to its beginning in primitive man and in the influential, though now extinct systems of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. The utmost that we could do was to examine as far as possible the background and later history of the great religions already studied in Chapter II. The work, therefore, fell naturally into three sections :

- (a) The background, by which was meant conditions prior to the rise of the founder.
- (b) The contribution of the founder, which was largely revision work.
- (c) Subsequent developments arising, after the death of the founder, amongst those calling themselves by his name.

One or two important considerations emerge from a study of this kind, and when taking the course with students of school age it is important that these should be brought out clearly and not buried under a mass of detail.

In the first place historical study reveals the fact that the so-called "Founders of Religions" did not set out to found new religions at all, but were all reformers of older religions, dismayed by the apostasy of the people of their own day, and calling them back to a renewed grasp of what was really vital in their own faith.

This fact doubtless accounts for the second thing which it is important to note at this point, namely—the similarity of the message of these great prophets, each in turn being concerned, not with the founding of a new sect, but with the re-establish-

ment of essential religion as a way of life instead of a creed or a sacerdotal system.

Thirdly, even the most cursory of the subsequent history of the various religions reveals the fact that trouble invariably starts and degeneration sets in through the disastrous tendency of followers to deify and worship their Master instead of obeying his commands and following his example.

ZOROASTRIANISM

Background.—There is little doubt that the religion of Iran (Persia) before the coming of Zoroaster, was very similar to the old Vedic religion. A pantheon of Nature gods were believed in and worshipped, amongst whom the sky-god Mithra was probably supreme. There was also an important fire cult in which fire was regarded as a messenger to bring the gods down to help the worshipper, the whole being largely based on magic and superstition, and like all primitive religions, having little or no relation to conduct.

Zoroaster's contribution was the supremely important one of recognizing the connexion between religion and morality. Taking over the cult of fire no longer as a thing of magical efficacy but as a symbol of purity, he insisted on the crucial importance of purity in thought, word and deed.

He dismissed as evil powers all the popular gods except Ahura Mazda the God of Light, and taught that man's chief duty is to help the God of Light in His conflict with darkness. He taught further that though there is a power for evil in the universe (personified as Angra Mainyu) it is Ahura Mazda who has created all things and ordained the great struggle

in which He relies for help on His faithful worshippers. And that though He has given a just and moral government to the world, He is yet a being with whom man can have communion.

Thus at one stride Zoroaster lifted religion from the realm of magic and fear on to the high level of mysticism and morality.

Later History:—It was hardly to be expected that such a high level could be maintained at so early a stage of the spiritual evolution of man, and so, as we should expect, we find a rapid deterioration setting in after the time of Zoroaster. The Magi or priests of the new faith, in order to increase their own power or perhaps because they did not understand Zoroaster's pure doctrine, soon re-introduced the magic and superstition of the earlier religion as well as a mass of new ritual.

The good qualities to which Zoroaster had called attention became personified as gods to be worshipped—the old gods were restored and Mithra in particular came to be worshipped as co-equal with Ahura Mazda, being thus restored to his old place in Vedic hymns as co-equal with Varuna. And Zoroaster himself came to be regarded more as a lofty soul to be revered and even prayed to, than as a leader to be followed. His personality was exalted and his precepts forgotten.

But in spite of this, Zoroastrianism remained an important and living religion, influencing successively Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and in spite of all popular fallacies there remained always a devoted, if small, succession of faithful followers who refrained from worshipping Zoroaster, and walked instead in his path of the quest for truth and purity.

For many centuries Zoroastrianism was the State religion of Persia until it was overthrown in the seventh century A. D. by the Muslim invasion. And even then there were many hundreds who preferred death or exile to apostasy. Many fled to the west coast of India, and the Parsees, as their descendants are now called, have maintained to this day the old ideals of truth and purity, and the old reverence for fire as the sacred symbol.

BUDDHISM

Background:—It was during a period of transition that the Buddha was born in India. A decline had set in, in the belief in the minor gods, and in the ritual and sacrifice which they demanded. This led to a decline in the power of the Brahmins, and a breaking up of class dominance.

Concurrently with this was a growth in the belief in Karma, and in ascetism, both of which supplied the need for something more intellectual than the old formal, semi-magical rites and ceremonies in honour of the gods.

The Buddha's Contribution:—It was at this point that the Buddha came upon the scene with his great revolutionary message of religion as a way of life in which compassion, gentleness and truth are the important things, and not rites and ceremonies, and with his agnostic attitude towards the existence of a transcendent God, though he clearly believed in an all pervading Life Essence.

Later History:—Buddhism made considerable progress in India during the first few centuries and was especially popular during the reign of the great emperor Asoka in the third century B. C. But in so far as it was true to its founder it was not in any

sense a "New" religion, but rather a recall of Hindus to what was vital in Hinduism. And in so far as it introduced new elements it was not acceptable to Hindus. It is hardly surprising therefore, that its subsequent development as a religious system did not take place in India so much as in other countries, and that by the beginning of the Christian era it had practically ceased to exist in India as a separate system, though the Buddha continued to be loved and revered as one of the greatest of all India's sons.

But though it speedily disappeared from the land of its birth, Buddhism has always been one of the greatest of missionary religions and claims to-day more adherents than any other faith, an outcome very largely of the missionary zeal of Asoka, Buddhism's greatest convert.

Asoka sent his missionaries to the north, the south, the east and the west. In the north, south, and east Buddhism flourished and became established as a result of this missionary enterprise. But in the west this did not occur, though there is considerable evidence that Buddhism influenced certain developments of thought, and during the last fifty years it has begun to spread again towards the west, especially in Germany. But the major part of the history of Buddhism is concerned with its travels north and east of India.

Southwards to Ceylon went Asoka's son and daughter taking with them a branch of the sacred Bo-tree under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment, and preaching his gospel of emancipation to the Singalese people—Ceylon became Buddhist and has remained so throughout her subsequent history. It was there that the Pali scriptures were produced and much of the

spread of Buddhism can be traced to the work of Singalese missionaries.

About the year 100 A.D. Buddhism was divided into two great parties representing two view points—one became the prevalent faith of the northern countries, China, Japan, Korea, and Tibet, and the other of more southerly Ceylon, Burma, and Siam. The northern type is called Mahayana Buddhism and the southern type Hinayana. The names mean "The Great Vehicle" and "The Lesser Vehicle" the Great Vehicle being the Broad Way by which all men may reach heaven, and the Lesser Vehicle the Narrow Way which only few find.

The main difference between the two is that Hinayana Buddhism regarded the Buddha as a human being who taught the gospel of deliverance through self-discipline, whereas the Mahayana school believed that the Blessed One came from heaven to be the "saviour" of men. And later on, when the historical Buddha had become the Cosmic Buddha, it began to teach that deliverance must be sought through faith in Him. In other words Hinayana believes in salvation by works, Mahayana in salvation by faith.

This makes the history of Buddhism difficult to follow. For though in a sense it is the Hinayan school that preserved the original message best, it has at the same time tended to be narrower and less truly universalistic in tone than some at least of the developments of the Northern school.

Perhaps the best place of all in which to study Buddhism at first hand is Burma, where live the merriest, most contented and truly happy people in the world, and where the original Buddhism has been most nearly preserved. Anybody who thinks

that Buddhism is a pessimistic religion should make a point of visiting Burma; and if he cannot do that he should do the next best thing—read *The Soul of a People*, by H. Fielding-Hall

Mahayana Buddhism probably spread first to Tibet. Research during the last few years has unearthed some very valuable traces of original Buddhist teaching in that country. But what is popularly known there as Buddhism is a decadent type almost unrecognisable as having anything to do with the Buddha. It is a mass of formality and priestly ritual centring round the image of the Buddha as godhead, and the Lama as High Priest, despotic ruler and the latest incarnation of God. Prayer wheels and other mechanical aids to salvation are in regular use. And a form of High Mass is celebrated in which the worshippers eat the body of their Master in the form of rice-cake.

But though overlaid with much that is useless, and tarnished by remnants of their old demon worship, there still emerge the main principles of original Buddhism. And, according to the recent researches of Madame David Neel, some of the Lamas have a very deep philosophy of life, though they consider it (probably rightly) to be too difficult for the illiterate masses.

It was probably in about the middle of the first century A.D. that Buddhism spread to China and thence to Japan, where it has continued to hold its own ever since side by side with the other religions of those countries.

Fortunately the people of China are very tolerant and willing to accept good counsel or good news from whatever quarter it may come, with the result that in Chinese temples today may often be found shrines to Confucius, Lao Tse, and the Buddha, side by side. And there is no doubt that Buddhism has

played a leading part in bringing about the religious unity that undoubtedly exists in that country. For Buddhism, though essentially a missionary religion, has never been a persecuting or an exclusive one. Its method has been more the method of peaceful penetration, so that its commanding position in the east to-day may justly be claimed (in the words of a modern Universalist) as "one of the world's best examples of the might of gentleness".¹

In Japan Buddhism has had an even greater influence than in China. It was introduced in 552 A.D. and within a few years it had become accepted as the foundation for religion and politics. For over a thousand years education, art and medicine were in Buddhist hands and the whole development of Japan cultural, political, social, intellectual and religious—was directed by it.

TAOISM

Background: The early religion of China consisted of Nature Spirit worship. The spirit of Heaven was the greatest and was known as Shang-te. The spirits of earth and the elements of rivers and mountains were worshipped; also the reigning emperor. Filial piety was strong even at this remote time and has been the corner stone of Chinese morals all through her history. The Golden Age of China is reputed to have been between 1000 and 2000 B.C. and the two great emperors Yao and Shun are revered even to-day for their economic and political wisdom. Back to the Golden Age, when princes ruled in equity and people were honest and contented, has been the keynote of much traditional Chinese wisdom.

¹ Quotation from an unpublished lecture on "How Buddhism Spread," by Will Hayes.

Lao Tse's contribution was to supply deep philosophical and mystical roots to this attitude. He urged men to return to their natural simplicity and stop straining after effect, to realise the oneness of all life in the arms of the Universal Mother. Such teaching was too mystical for more than a few to comprehend. An atmosphere of mystery hovered round Lao Tse. He was regarded as a great and wise thinker but his true disciples were of necessity few.

Later History. It is hardly surprising therefore, that Taoism as a religious system degenerated more rapidly than any other, though not more completely than did Buddhism in Tibet. Lao Tse was worshipped as God, idols were made, ceremonies, rituals and a hierarchy of priests instituted. To-day popular Taoism consists of practically nothing but ceremony, magic and idolatry.

There have been a few Taoists, however, who have caught the true spirit of Lao Tse's teaching from his book and set it forth for themselves and others in books of their own. Whenever Taoism has been truly understood it has resulted in highest philosophical thinking and in the grasping of truths which the modern world, no less than the China of Lao Tse's time, is all too prone to disregard.

CONFUCIANISM

Background. The background of Confucianism is the same as that of Taoism, the two sages being contemporaries except that Confucius was some fifty years younger than Lao Tse.

Confucius' contribution was a call to the Chinese people to revert to the good government of the Golden Age. He claimed

that this could be achieved by perfect individual behaviour, the rules for which he set out in great detail in his books. Indeed it is probable that his unique position in the history of Chinese religion and morality is largely due to the fact that he embodied in his person, both in precept and example, the perfect illustration of the Superior Person, so long and so highly honoured by the Chinese people.

Later History. The history of Confucianism is the history of China since the fifth century B.C. The two are inseparable. The system of conduct established in his books became the basis of Chinese politics, law and education. And as he claimed not to have originated this, but to have inherited it from the sages of the Golden Age, it is true to say that the whole of Chinese civilisation and culture stands upon the foundation which, if not actually laid by him, is at any rate associated with his name. A ceremony is held every year in his honour in Peking, but though he is revered above all the other sages he has not been deified. He remains not God but man, albeit the perfect man, the great teacher who not only taught but also followed his own teaching. If we are ever tempted to think that Confucius was not so profound a thinker or so great a personality as some others amongst the world's greatest men, let us remember that China enjoyed many centuries of almost unbroken peace in the midst of a war-ridden world—a feat which must, in justice, be attributed to the fact that her greatest teacher had a message not too profound or exalted for ordinary people to understand and live up to.

JUDAISM

Background. The early Hebrews were a nomadic people, and there are indications in the Old Testament that their religion was

of a very primitive nature. The gods were localised, Yahweh, who later became their only God, being originally a storm-god living amongst the clouds that veiled Mount Sinai. Natural objects like mountains, wells and stones, were regarded as sacred.

Moses' contribution was principally that he laid the foundations upon which the later greatness of the Jews was built. He was a great political and religious leader, and under his leadership a number of scattered, though kindred tribes, were welded into a nation with a strong sense of national responsibility and national pride, united under one law and the worship of one God—a god who demanded from his worshippers not only an undivided allegiance but also righteousness.

Later History: The Jews were fortunate in having, after the time of Moses, a succession of teachers unique in the history of religion. Though they had a number of setbacks the general trend of the history of Judaism, till about the beginning of the Christian era, is one not of deterioration, but of development and of the steady erection of a stately and stable edifice on the foundations laid by Moses. Whenever the people got slack and began to fall away from their faith, someone arose to speak as the mouth-piece of God. And in every case the keynotes of the message were the same as those struck by Moses, though carried somewhat further by the great writing prophets of the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries B.C. "Ye therefore shall be holy, for the Lord your God is holy" an early injunction, perhaps uttered by Moses himself. This was developed by the later prophets into a magnificent and consistent gospel of social righteousness. Sacrifices and rituals, prayers, professions and temple services were of no consequence in comparison with justice and mercy.

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?"

"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is Good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (*Mic. Vi. 6-8*)

"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (*Isaiah i. 14-17*).

Early in the sixth century B.C., the country was subdued by the Babylonians, and large numbers of the people were carried off into captivity in Babylon. This probably marks the beginning of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism, and the grafting on to it of certain characteristically Zoroastrian ideas such as Satan, angels and Heaven and Hell.

In the year 538 after fifty years of exile, the Jews began to return to their own country, under the rule of the tolerant and

sympathetic Cyrus. They rebuilt the temple and formulated a strict code of rules calculated to keep the race pure and to consolidate the old faith. During this period a priestly class grew up, ritual and sacrifice became of supreme importance, and the characteristic prophetic note ceased to be heard. But further oppression in the time of Antiochus (second century B.C.), who tried to force the Roman religion upon all peoples within the Roman Empire, led to a fresh purification of the Jewish faith. And under the leadership of the Maccabees a sturdy defence of national traditions and the national religion was made. This was good so long as it lasted, but by the end of the first century B. C. formalism and priestcraft were again in the ascendance.

The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the subsequent scattering of the Jewish people, opened a new chapter in the history of Judaism. But it has retained its individuality and remains to this day, one of the greatest of the world's living religions.

CHRISTIANITY

Background: As Christianity arose directly out of Judaism, the resume of its background will be found in the passage above dealing with the history of Judaism up to the beginning of the Christian era.

Jesus' contribution was two fold. In the first place he recalled the people to the great religion embodied in the teachings of Moses and the prophets, rebuking them for falling away, for being hypocrites and for not attempting to understand and practice the faith which they professed. And in the second place he carried further than Moses and the prophets the implications of their faith, stressing and making even clearer than they

had done, the practical implications of faith in God and of the great commandment to love our neighbour as ourself. Above all, he developed the idea contained in germ in the prophet Hosea, that God is a God of Love, and so formulated the most important (and most most misunderstood) part of his teaching, namely that God is a Father who loves His children, and that men, as His children, must be likewise actuated by love for one another.

Later History. Shortly after the death of Jesus the position of leadership amongst his followers fell to the lot of Paul, who had not known him during his life-time, but who was firmly convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, sent by the Father to play the part of the offering in the great sacrificial scheme by which mankind was to be saved from sin. In this way he reconciled his Pharisaic faith in sacrifice, with the teaching of Jesus about divine sonship, and with his own passionate loyalty to the crucified Christ. But the consequence of this was that a theology and scheme of salvation rapidly grew up wholly different from that taught by Jesus. The human teacher and his superb message of love for God and man were relegated to a place of secondary importance; and faith in the efficacy of his blood to save man from the consequences of his sin became the keynote of the new religion. Thus standing as a mediator between man and God, Jesus soon began to be prayed to as a divine being. And by the third century the process of deification was complete, Jesus being no longer the carpenter of Nazareth, but the second person of the Trinity, co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. And to this day, within the ranks of the Christian Church, the test of membership is a creedal test concerning faith in the person of Christ, not the test contained in his own saying :

"Not those who say unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

It is a significant fact that Christianity, like Buddhism made singularly little progress in the country of its birth. But while Buddhism spread east, Christianity spread west, and its importance in the world to-day is to a considerable extent due to the fact that it has become the official religion of the progressive and ambitious white races.

I S L A M

Background: The religion of Arabia before the coming of Mohammed was a mixture of Christianity, Judaism and a primitive polytheism. All three were in a state of degradation and decay.

Mohammed's contribution was a challenging recall to religion and morality. Judaism attracted him by its strict monotheism and its high moral tone. The personality and teaching of Jesus attracted him, but he attacked the Christians for their idolatry and polytheism, in that they were worshipping Jesus, instead of recognising him as one of the long line of prophets sent by God for the guidance of the human race.

All around him he saw drunkenness, vice, cruelty and dishonesty, and he set himself to preach a practical religion based upon belief in the unity of God, and upon surrender to the will of God as the first duty of man. He also laid down certain other duties, obligatory though secondary, such as prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving.

Later History: The history of Islam, like that of Judaism is inextricably involved with the history of the Arabian people.

The death of Mohammed was followed by a period of the most rapid and startling conquest that the world has seen, and by the ninth century the Muslim Empire extended eastwards to Persia and westwards to Spain.

This was due to strict discipline, missionary fervour, and the belief in predestination, which gave Muslims the absolute conviction that they were doing God's will in destroying or converting the infidels.

Also there is no doubt that Islam appealed to many people who had begun to lose faith in Christianity. It was so much simpler in creed and in the demands that it made upon men; it abolished idols, and talked in terms that the common man could understand.

Its weakness lay in the fact that it went hand in hand with absolute despotism politically, and so was doomed to failure when no strong or able Sultan was available. Also in the fact that faith in predestination cuts both ways, making for success so long as the will of God seems to denote success, but for failure when once even a small setback has occurred.

There have been many sects and schisms in Islam during the course of its history, but they have been over minor matters and it has remained essentially the same religion.

Its adherents are equalled only by the Jews in the faithful consistency with which, century after century, they have resisted the temptation to deify their founder. He is still to them, what he always claimed to be—not God, but Mohammed the prophet of God.

('Living Religions' is taken from Margaret Barr's great book THE GREAT UNITY, published by The Lindsey Press, London, in 1937 and Reprinted in 1951, It is out-of print now.)

AN UNREPENTANT IF PUZZLED THEIST

When I spoke to the Unitarian Universalist Association of America in Chicago in 1963 I raised a roar of laughter by describing myself as "an unrepentant theist", which, after another eight years of patient self-examination, I know that I still am. The second adjective I have borrowed from Bishop Barne's epithet for C. P. Scott when he called him "a puzzled theist".

Puzzled, how can anyone fail to be in this strange world of contrasts? As long ago as 500 B. C. the Buddha faced the problem: "if God is both good and almighty whence then comes evil?"—and resolved it by becoming agnostic on the subject of God and stressing in his teaching the fact (and cause) of suffering in human life, and the path by which it could be transcended: "While you do not know about man what is the use of arguing about God?"

Hinduism tends to solve it by believing that all is God, the evil no less than the good and it is only man's ignorance (the Maya that blinds him) that sees anything that is not God. A puzzling thesis. Is God then equally responsible for Hitler and Gandhi, concentration camps and Mother Theresa's leper camps, S. African jails and Fr. Huddleston's school in Sophiatown?

Christ's solution seems to have been that the evil is there and remains by God's will though He did not put it there. The wheat and the tares must grow together till the harvest, even though the latter arrived in the field through enemy action and not by the will of God. Who then is the enemy? Are we back with a personal God and a personal devil—Ahura Mazda

and Ahriman contending for supremacy in the field of society and in the individual soul, as Zoroaster taught? Surely an outmoded theology in the world of to-day. Were these the things that puzzled C. P. Scott, as they have puzzled many another? And must the conclusion of those who "think on these things" inevitably turn to Humanism? And what is Humanism anyway? Is it to believe with the Quakers in "that of God in every man" and that it is the supreme duty of the religious man to magnify that divine spark in himself and to help others to do the same by acquainting them at first-hand with deity, as Emerson told us to do? Is this what Masfield meant in his sonnet "O little self"? Perhaps. Yet even there, is there not in the last two lines a hint that that divine spark is something more than the human self, something that can even be prayed to? "O living self, O God, O morning star, Give us thy light, forgive us what we are". And there we are, back again to theism, to belief in the something more than man which is transcendent, as so many of the mystical poets insist; a world invisible and inapprehensible which can yet be viewed and clutched by those who have eyes to see and out-stretched hands to grasp, so that, if we miss it "'tis we, 'tis our-estranged faces that miss the manysplendoured thing", perhaps just because we have never awakened to the glory that surrounds us, seeking the transcendent "where the wheeling systems darken" and failing to see "Christ walking on the waters, not of Genesaret but Thames". Or perhaps because, like the little boy in A. A. Milne's poem, we persist in imagining that everything we want can be bought for gold, going to the market square with our penny or tuppence or sixpence to buy our rabbit, only to find that "they haven't got a rabbit not anywhere there", and then, when he hadn't got "nuffing" 'so didn't go down to the market square but walked on the common, the old-gold come on he "saw little rabbits most everywhere".

Yes, we must learn to look for God in the right place if we would find Him. And where is that right place? Perhaps the humanists would say: in people, every-day people, there needs and troubles and failings and conquests; we must make people our chief concern and it is in this outreach on all sides that our own spiritual life will develop. Certainly, who would wish to deny it? But if the axis is to be complete there must be, in addition to the sideways reach, the corresponding up and down movement down into the deep places of our own being, up into the measureless heights of the being of God.

And that brings me back to the poem which has for many years been more meaningful to me than any other single poem, Emily Bronte's "Last Lines", found in her desk after her death at the early age of twenty-nine, in which with the audacity born of a triumphant and courageous faith, she identified the immanent with the transcendent God, "the God within my breast" with the spirit which "with wide embracing love animates eternal years, pervades and broods above, changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears."

And to this conclusion, with steadily deepening assurance as the years pass, I find myself always returning—an unrepentant, if often puzzled, theist.

CHOICE OF READINGS

THE CHALLENGE :

—William James.

I confess that I do not see why the very existence of an invisible world may not in part depend on the personal response which any one of us may make to the religious appeal. God

himself, in short, may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity. For my own part, I do not know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life mean, if they mean anything short of this. If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it feels like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem—and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted. The deepest thing in our nature is this dumb region of the heart in which we dwell alone with our willingnesses and unwillingnesses, our faiths and fears. Here is our deepest organ of communication with the nature of things; and compared with these concrete movements of our soul all abstract statements and scientific arguments—the veto, for example, which the strict positivist pronounces upon our faith—sound to us like mere chatterings of the teeth.

Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact. The "scientific proof" that you are right may not be clear before the day of judgment (or some stage of being which that expression may serve to symbolize) is reached. But the faithful fighters of this hour, or the beings that then and there will represent them, may then turn to the faint-hearted, who here decline to go on, with words like those with which Henry of Navarre greeted the tardy Crillon after a great victory had been gained: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon! we fought at Arques, and you were not there".

(by kindness of Rev. Francis Terry, England)

Songs and Poems Referred in Her Articles and Sermon

LAST LINES :

—Emily Bronte

O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present Deity,
Life, that in me hath rest
As I, Undying Life, have power in thee,

Vain are the thousand creeds,
That move man's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity,
So surely anchored on,
The steadfast rock of Immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.

Though earth and moon were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee.

(her sister thought this was her last poem, but it is now known
that it was written three years before her death.)

SONNET

—John Masefield

O little self, within whose smallness lies
All that man was, and is, and will become,
Atom unseen that comprehends the skies
And tells the tracks by which the planets roam;
That, without moving, knows the joy of wings,
The tiger's strength, the eagle's secrecy,
And in the hovel canst consort with kings,
Or clothe a god with his own mystery:
O with what darkness do we cloak thy light,
What dusty folly gather thee for food,
Thou who alone art knowledge and delight,
The heavenly bread, the beautiful, the good.
O living self, O God, O morning star,
Give us thy light, forgive us what we are.

(1) HYMNS

Where through the ages rise
The alters of self-sacrifice,
Where love its arms has opened wide,
Or man for man has calmly died.

We see the same white wings outspread
That hovered o'er the Master's head;
And in all lands beneath the sun
The heart affirmeth, 'Love is one'.

Up from the undated time they come,
The martyr-souls of heathendom,
And to the cross and passion bring
Their fellowship of suffering.

And the great marvel of their death
To the one order witnesseth
Each, in his measure, but a part
Of the unmeasured Over-Heart.

—Whittier.

(2)

Life of ages, richly poured,
Love of God, unspent and free,
Flowing in the prophet's word,
And the people's liberty !

Never was to chosen race
That unstinted tide confined;
Thine is every time and place,
Fountain sweet of heart and mind:

Breathing in the thinker's creed,
Pulsing in the Hero's blood,
Nerving simplest thought and deed,
Freshing time with truth and good;

Consecrating art and song,
Holy book and, pilgrim track,
Hurling floods of tyrant wrong
From the sacred limits back !

Life of ages, richly poured,
Love of God, unspent and free,
Flow still in the prophet's word,
And the people's liberty !

—Samuel Johnson

(3)

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee !
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Shall all my songs shall be,—
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.

Though, like the wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone;
Yet in all my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.

There let the way appear,
Steps unto heaven;
All that thou sendest me
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Near, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.

Then with my waking thoughts
Bright with thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs
Bethel I'll raise;
So my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to thee
Nearer to thee.

Or if on joyful wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and star forget,
Upward I fly;
Still all my songs shall be,—
Nearer, my God, to thee
Nearer to thee.

—Sarah F. Adams

WE MET THRICE ONLY

—Dr. Y. S. Paul

.... Been too busy since returning in October. Well again now but memory much impaired. Do you remember how many days elapsed between my fall and the day we went to hospital ?

(by A. M. Barr to Y. S. Paul, November 1970)

For more than one decade before 1957, I lived a life of loneliness but not of homelessness. By self-thinking and self-reasoning I come to the conclusion that I should discard from my personal theology the Virgin-birth of Jesus, His death as the universal and exclusive Atonement, and His resurrection. This gradually isolated me from the main stream of orthodox Christianity and the established church. In my theological training, I keenly studied Comparative religion, but it was one sided mainly. I was longing to find a home. In Church history I read something about the Unitarian Church which did not believe in the theory of the Trinity. I started a hunt to find the Unitarians for years without any success. Then one day I found a booklet which gave the names of philanthropical institutions in the U. S. A. Going through the list, to my surprise and amazement, I found the address of the Unitarian Universalist Association of America. I lost no time and wrote a letter which was forwarded to The General Assembly Hq. in London—at that time it was in Gordon Square—A few books and a nice letter came, giving the address of Miss Margaret Barr. Since then we both remained in touch with each other.

I wanted to visit Kong Barr, but it was not possible. I was on the western end of the country and she was on the eastern end. Suddenly the opportunity came when I was in Bikaner, working as the Executive Secretary of the District Adult Education Association. In 1969 the Adult Education Seminar and

Conference was held in the end of October at Gauhati (Assam), I went. Then I visited Shillong after the conference where Kong Barr was convalescing after her first serious illness.

In 1970 March I left Udaipur for Shillong stopping at New Delhi to preach on Sunday the 15th in the Unitarian Fellowship meeting, meeting Dr. and Mrs. Thomson, Mr. and Mrs. Moore, who were the life and soul of the fellowship. For Easter I was with my son Dr. Prem Kumar Paul and his wife Angilina who were in Sevapur Mission Hospital in the Golepara district of Assam. Prem was the Medical Officer but the reins were in the hands of a missionary-nurse whose attitude and behaviour with nearly half-a-dozen doctors forced them to quit. In July Prem was also forced to resign and leave the place so I proceeded to Shillong. Sister Margaret warned me not to try to take a journey to Kharang at that time of the rainy season. I ignored the warning and replied, "Sister, you put all through the track red lights to stop me and I will think they are all green lights to welcome me." And she replied, (1.7.70),

"If you really do mean to in spite of all the red lights. It is a terrible journey at this time of the year and the guest house here is full of water—But if Devi is willing to bring you do come. But be prepared for the worst. No time for more. Will write fully later if I don't see you."

I arrived in Kharang on the evening of August 9, after tracking for 11 miles in five hours with a group. It was raining for the last two days and so the track was muddy and slippery. On arrival I found her standing at the door. With a smile she remarked, "So after all you have made the trip. I am so glad"

My response was "I have made it, slipped four times, but thanks to God all my bones are intact" I gave her all the manuscripts which were prepared by me for the Fellowship publicity work. She went through them made some corrections and gave some suggestions. The next day we discussed them in detail. She approved them and I started to type then so as to give them a final shape. Although the Fellowship was born on 24 December 1969 at Udaipur, it got personality and direction for a future line of action in those next two or three days when we discussed and planned. That was the time she gave me critical and creative information about the Unitarian Movements in Great Britain and U. S. A. which laid the foundation of my knowledge of the Universalism of Unitarianism.

On 11th August—exactly three years before she died, she went out of her house to spread her clothes on a rope in front of the hostel which was her house also. She slipped, and fell on her face. We had our dinner with her children and she retired early, complaining about a mild pain in the left eye and the left side of the body. As I was requesting and reminding her to write for us, at night she wrote the short article, "How I Became A Unitarian". It was on small pieces of paper, it was given to Phinoes her adopted daughter for typing. For two or three days she complained of pain in her left eye and did her normal work but half-heartedly, which showed that she was not well. Feeling a little better on the fourth day she quietly slipped for a swim in her pool. It was in the afternoon. It was still raining. All her pains increased by dinner-time. I asked her if she wanted to go to the hospital at Shillong but she refused. My worries increased because her health was going down and the pain was increasing which was not relieved even by a few tablets of Sarradon, a strong pain relieving drug. After the 15th, her condition

progressively deteriorated day by day. It was still raining and people discouraged me when I suggested to transfer her to Shillong



Miss Barr (left) Phinoes
Rani adopted daughter
(Right) and Phinoes'
husband in the middle.

They said that it was impossible to carry her for eleven miles when it is raining ; it was too risky. On the 16th, Dranwell, Phinos and I had a short conference and Dran agreed to go to Shillong and bring the jeep of the center to transfer her. When he didnot returned and there was no message, on the night of the 18th, Phinoes (her adopted daughter) and I decided to transfer her at any cost. She took the responsibility of arranging for a carrying chair, which a man can carry on his back, taking the weight on the usual wide straw band which passes over the forehead. I had no idea of a carrying chair and of all the difficulties of transporting a sick person in that part of the country. I grew impatient. Then Phinoes explained to me that she would arrange for the carrying chair and 8 men to carry the chair. It would take a whole day; the earliest we could leave this place was the 20th. In the meantime we packed and got ready. The pain by this time extended to the right eye also and she complained of sever non-stop headache along with the pain in eyes. I got alarmed and worried. Slowly but progressively she drifted into a coma. Now Phinoes attended her at nights and the other

girls and Mrs. Dranwell nursed her by day. Fortunately the rains stopped on the 18th and there was sunshine and the chances of her being transported safely increased. On 20th morning the whole party left Kharang with Kong Barr in the carring chair. She was still in a deep coma. Early morning two men were sent as advance party to go and bring any jeep immediately to a village six miles from Kharang. The journey was slow and we covered 5 miles in $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. In that village there is a Catholic church building, there we waited for the jeep. There was no sound of a vehicle and it was already five in the evening. The wind became shiller and we were faced with the prospect of spending the night in the open. As the time passed I looked in Phinos's face with a question mark in my eyes, which she read but no reply came. The prospect became gloomy. At last the sound of the jeep was heard away beyond the hills. It was like the joy and hope of victory which the Duke of Wellington felt when he heard the sound of the German guns yet away from the battle field. We packed into the jeep with Kong Barr and started the last phase of the journey. The unmetteled road was just no road at all the earth was removed by the force of the rain water at every hundred yards or so. We reached the Shillong Civil Hospital at 8.30 p. m. and by nine Kong was put in a private ward. The doctors came immediately and started to attend her. I was trying to read their faces, and they were starring at us with a puzzled question mark in their eyes. I told them, "we wanted to bring her earlier but the rains ..." Her condition was grave and to the doctor's questions she just uttered something which no one understood. For four days she was hanging between life and death. On the 24th she made a little progress. It was the turning point. With confidence and hope for Kong Barr's recovery, I left Shillong the next day.

The third time we met was in Udaipur. Dr. John H. McLachlen visited India as the President of the General Assembly for the year 1971-72. Miss Barr returned to India with him after a tour of Great Britain. From Delhi they came to Udaipur by air. They were unable to get an accomodation on the regular flight by the mistake of a clark of the Airlines at Delhi. I returned disappointed. But at two p. m. they came in a taxi. Both stayad with us for three days and met some of the members of CUUFI and saw a bit of Udaipur. She liked the place because it was like Kharang a hilly place.



At Udaipur : Y. S. Paul with Kong Margaret.

She told me that she was already seventy two, and she had only a few more years to live, may be three or four. She was very anxious to see the Fellowship grow and spread the light of liberal and universal religion and unite people of all religions. That was in her heart. She pointed to the geographical position of the Khasi hills, isolated from the rest of the country, and people

were simple (in comparison to the life of the rest of India which is very complex with many sects and denominations in all the great religions). I told her that the Christians in India are so sure of the myth of creation, virgin-bith, miracles, atonement and resurrection as historical facts that they don't want to get rid of the illusion. She said with a smile, "Let them even believe that the blood of Jesus saves them. But if they believe that other people also have a right to believe what they think best then they could become members of a broader group and enjoy the fellowship with men of other religions."



Miss Barr at Udaipur (extreme right)
from left to right : Mangal Singh. Sopan (boy), Kanak Paul
Mrs. Sarojni Naik, A. D. Naik and Y. S. Paul.

(Photo by Dr. H. John McLachlen)

She and Dr. McLachlen both became life members of CUUFI and promised to help in starting a journal in Hindi-English for the publicity of the Unitarian Universalist view point

to create understanding and goodwill among men of different religions or "National Intregation and Communal Harmony" as the popular term goes in India.

She also pointed out that Gandhiji was very keen that she might start Khadi (spinning and Weaving) in her centre and teach Hindi to the children. However the Khasi-women were not interested in Khadi and parents were interested to teach their children English and not Hindi. At the time of her departure she invited me to visit her when the Journal was established and I agreed. She wrote from Kharang (19.11.71). "I very much enjoyed my visit to Udaipur but travel alone is very difficult for me so I cannot say when I shall be able to go again."

..

Margaret's Personality as reflected in her letters

A Generation's Gap

In the beginning of 1934 Margaret wrote to her mother from Calcutta :

Do not cheat yourself with the thought that the things I am saying and doing now are the irresponsible excesses of rash youth. They are nothing of the kind, I know that to one's parents one is always a child. But let me remind you that I am 35 last month, as you should know who bore me. That is not young. It is the time of life at which—if at all—a woman will achieve something—the time when experience of life has checked and corrected 'the first fine careless rapture' of her enthusiasm, but when she has not begun to be conscious of the frost of age chilling the blood in her veins. Remember too that six years as minister (priest) of a church in an industrial depression has given me some knowledge of life that I should never have gained in 60 years of comfortable, middle-class security and seclusion.

That we should fail to see eye to eye is natural, for we belong to two different generations, and the War has made the gap between your generation and mine even bigger than is usually the case. But that we should quarrel is unnatural and deplorable.

(ADCT)

KHARANG

The Constitution of the Kharang Rural Centre.

For some years now, as the Central Fund grew, I have been anxious to form an all-sectarian Board of Trustees to share the responsibility with me.....

The Committee comprises Unitarians, non-Christians (i. e. Khasis belonging to no church), Presbyterians, an Anglican and two Hindus. And the constitution rules that, if the Centre ever closes down as an all-sectarian, rural welfare centre, none of the assets shall accrue to any sectarian body but shall be divided between, (a) The Assam Branch of the Kasterba Gandhi Memorial Trust which trains village girls for village work all over Assam, including the Khasi Hills (b) The Ramakrishna Mission which in spite of its anomalous name (which is the one thing about it that I have always deplored) is an un-sectarian and un-proselytising as my own work and which has for over forty years been doing magnificent work in education and health all over the Khasi Hills.

Kharang News letter Nov. 1970

I was, of course, viewed with suspicion at first, and it has taken me the best part of the twenty years I have lived at Kharang to convince people of this vital difference between my Centre and Mission. But the days of suspicion are over.....

She loved Kharang. It was her life.

Today morning was bright and I took her (Miss Barr) for a 45 minutes' walk along Kench's Trace. She is longing to get back to Kharang and is only waiting for better weather condition so that Dran could drive the jeep to Shillong and take her back. So any moment Dran comes' she is gone. She was all along say-

ing that Kharang is my home. I love to live and die there. So there is none who can persuade her to come and stay in Shillong. She hates town life. So why stand on her way. One may fall ill here, there and any where. She should stay where she loves to. We should only be a bit patiente to look after her when she falls ill.

(Devison Margbaniang, to YSP dated 22.9.70)



Kharang family : Devison Extreme right

1.12.72

We have pulled down the old house and school and are all living in an outhouse like a refugee camp or a slum—all my files, letters, papers, books, furniture, clothes and everything else accumulated over 20 years, scattered to the four winds. Quite hectic. Hope to be settled by the end of this month. Meanwhile with exams. looming up on the 11th, I haven't a minute to call my soul my own. All strength to you. Love to all.

(to Y S P)

Wealth & Property

(Dated 8th February 1967.)

I am far from rich, never having earned more than Rs. 200/- p. m. during all my 34 years in India, but I have generous friends and have always tried to follow Gandhiji's teaching of "waste not want not" and that the man who either wastes or has more than he needs while any of his fellowmen are starving is thief. Of course, on that definition we are all thieves, but to remember the teaching helps one to reduce the guilty conscience to a minimum. If you instil these principles into your children they will find, perhaps to their own surprise, how comparatively easy it is to be a blessing to others later in life.

(to Y S P)

17.6.73.

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd and the enclosed receipts. It's quite right, of course, and I have had no hesitation in letting...A... know that I have paid his life subscription. But I got very tired of begging letters from people who assume that everyone with a white skin is rich. Those who have for long been personal friends, like...A, or who have proved themselves willing to make personal sacrifices for their faith, especially when they have great contributions to make, like yourself. I am ready and happy to do all I possibly can. But individuals must prove their worth and sincerity to me before I either help them financially or am willing to ask others to do so.

I entirely agree with you, of course, as to the great need for our movement to have competent laymen to present the faith, help you with written and administrative work and in general give the new Fellowship some standing in this country.....You know

how keen I am to encourage you to make a grand success of the Fellowship and the Journal, and how completely in sympathy I am with your religious position and how eager to make the best possible use of my slender personal resources to help all I can. But I have become a little cautious in my old age, having in the past wasted (and encouraged others to waste) too much precious money on people who have not yet proved their worth and have subsequently failed to prove it at all.

Affectionate greetings to you all.

Your sister, Margaret

The monsoon has suddenly arrived in earnest. Over 33 in's since June 11th (less than one week). I wonder how things are in your drought stricken state.

(This was her last letter to YSP)

How She Trained Leaders ?

From the very beginning I have known that the future of the Unitarian Movement here depended on its ability to produce leaders with the two-fold qualification of general education up to University standard plus commitment, dedication, loyalty and a genuine desire to serve. Steadfastly I have refused to take up the work of leadership myself, knowing that to do so would make this church no different from the Mission churches. Unswervingly I have concentrated on general educational work, at first in the towns, Shillong and Jowai, and for the last twenty years in this village, since by 1950 it had become evident that in Independent India the old partnership between Government aid and Christian Mission work was a thing of the past and Unitarian students would be able to go on without my help. For several years now, thanks to the liberal attitude of the Indian Government, the number of Unitarian graduates has been increa-

sing steadily, but still I have had to wait, as none of them gave evidence of possessing the second qualification, even to the extent of coming to read and study with me occasionally during their winter vacations from college. Now at last it looks as though patience is to be rewarded by the arrival of a young man from Jowai.

"The Unitarian", England.

Analyses Her Sickness. 1970

I seem to be deteriorating into a thoroughly tiresome old woman—59 days out of the 10½ months from October 3rd '69 to August 20th '70, I have spent in the Shillong Civil Hospital, 23 days last October with pyelitis following a mysterious fever that they never managed to diagnose, 10 days in April '70 with amoebic hepatitis and 26 days in August and September '70 with concussion following a fall just outside my front door. This last was a queer business. Finding no broken bones but only scratches and bruises. I assumed I was basically unhurt and carried on with my usual routine (including swimming) for a few days of which I have a fairly clear memory. Then apparently I slowly slipped off into unconsciousness and have no memories whatsoever of the next two weeks till I came to myself in the Shillong Civil Hospital. Of the journey to Shillong, the first four miles or so in a carrying chair on carriers' back (it was the middle of the monsoon and the road quite unusable by vehicles of any kind) followed by a jolty jeep for the rest of the journey to the hospital, I have no memory whatever, nor of the first 8 or 10 days in the hospital. That fortnight has vanished from my conscious experience as though it has never been. I'm told there were lucid moments, but for the most part if I talked at all it was nonsense.

16 January 1970 (After her first illness in 1969.)

I got back home in time for Christmas after all I am feeling fine, but very busy catching up on everything and firmly determined not to allow such a crisis to arise again. If and when I die (as die I must) there will be no confusion about money, as I shall have none !

(to YSP)

× × × ×

I regret to inform you that our beloved Kong Barr died at New Delhi on the 11th August 1973 in the Indian Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital. She was cremated the same evening in the Electric Crematorium and the ashes will be brought to Shillong by the lady who accompanied her to Delhi.

Before she left for Delhi, she had instructed us not to inform anybody anywhere until and unless she was quite sure the cause of her illness.

(Mr. P. M. Ngap, treasurer of KRC)

Religion

To say that we can't say and do things as Jesus did is true, of course, but utterly beside the point and the very essence of defeatism. Nobody has ever said and done things as he did (with the possible exception of the Buddha), but that has not hindered his disciples in every age from trying their little best to echo his words and imitate his actions.

Someone once said to Gandhiji, "I know some people who are praying that you may become a Christian because they feel that you can give a truer interpretation of Christianity than any given to the world."

Gandhiji promptly replied, "There are others who feel that too. But if they wish me to say that Christianity is the only true religion, I cannot do so. I can truly say, however, that Christianity is A true religion."

Bright points in Hinduism and other Religions

You say you cannot understand the power of Hinduism over educated men. Have you ever read any of the Hindu scriptures ? If your 'knowledge' of Hinduism is confined to what you have been told at missionary meetings, I do not wonder at your difficulty. Try reading the Gita and some of the Tamil poets and extracts from the Vedas and Puranas, and the difficulty will rapidly vanish. Hinduism at its best contains at least as much to attract intelligent, thoughtful people as does orthodox Christianity—perhaps more, because it combines tolerance with its other virtues—the virtue which both Christianity and Mahomedanism are woefully lacking in. As to the appeal of Hinduism to the poor masses, that of course is partly due to superstition, as is the case also with Roman Catholicism, and partly to the simple beauty and dignity of many of the Hindu saints and teachers. For these people it is character that matters not theology, and in the production of saintly characters Hinduism is as fertile as any religion in the world—in the present age probably more so than any other. (ADCT)

Have you ever read the Bhagavad Gita ? I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to get the full depth and beauty of the teaching of Christ without knowing the Gita also. Just as it is impossible to get to the full depth and beauty of the Gita without knowing the Sermon on the Mount. The two have a tremendous lot in common—more than I ever dreamed. At present I am taking Islam with the girls. There are some

good bits in the Koran and I think Mohammed has been so badly misunderstood and misinterpreted by his followers as Christ has by Christians. There's a gentleness and tolerance about many of its utterances that one does not usually associated with Muslims. But in spite of this I find it difficult to work up the same enthusiasm for Islam that I have for Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. But It's all very interesting.

Unitarian Universalism Explained

As you say, that our premises in religious matters are so different that there's not much sense in trying to discuss. What matters, after all is not that we should all think alike—heaven forbid !—but that having experienced God in our own way, we should each see to it that the fruits of experience are to be seen in our lives and that we should be ready to admit that other people's paths to God, through different from our own, may be equally effective. That is the point on which I find myself most at issue with Christians. I quarrel with nobody for finding the Real Presence of God through Christ, so long as they do not deny that for another with different traditions and different background, Krishna or Buddha may be the living incarnation of God; and so long as they see to it that the chief thing is the experience and not the theology with which they rationalise it.

All that I have said is that I, AMB am not and have never been a missionary as that word is generally understood (in Asia and Africa), meaning by it one whose good works are done with the hope and motive of converting people from other religions to

some brand of Christianity. This has been the burden of my song for the last twenty years. I had no intension whatever of violating the age-old Unitarian antipathy to proselytisation or the claim (so tragically common in Christian missionary circles) that one religion alone has got the word of life.

Schewiter has long been one of my heroes and his statement in 'On the Edge of Primaeval Forest' of the motive which originally took him to Africa was one of the major inspirations that took me to India. If the word 'missionary' meant in general the sort of work that he does, then I should be proud indeed to share it with him. But I think it would be true to say that he never tried to convert to Christianity a single Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, Parsee or member of any other of the world's great religions. There would not, I think be many missionaries in India who could or would wish to have the same said of them. It is this vital difference that I have tried to make clear. I am sorry if I failed,

Crisis in Prayer-meeting

On Sunday evenings we held a little service, conducted in rotation by the different groups using their own hymnbooks and their own ideas. At our short daily prayer sessions, morning and evening, we followed Gandhiji's way of using prayers, reading selected from the different religions of the world. The little book of readings and prayers translated to Khasi, that I published during my early days in Shillong is still in 1973 used by the children who live with me. My own wish was that our periods of common worship should be regarded by no one as opportunities for proselytization but concentrate on the things that unite rather than those divide.

All went well for several months and we had same excellent and thoughtful addresses from some of the older boys and girls. Then one evening when it was the turn of the Welsh Mission group, though the address was good, they had chosen as the closing hymn some horrible thing about washing in blood with a rousing chorus, "The precious Blood, the blood." I looked round the circle of faces and was interested to note that only the Christian were singing lustily. The non-Christian don't use hymns and rarely joined in any and the Unitarians to a man were as silent as I, though they knew the tune well and were looking on at the books of their Christian neighbours.

At the end of the service, while thanking those who had contributed, I took the opportunity of mentioning the offending hymn and pointed out that those words were such as no Unitarian could sing with conviction.

'There are lots of beautiful hymns in your hymn-books,' I said, 'Please try to choose for these services ones that we can all sign together without breaking the unity of spirit in which our services are held.'

Nobody said anything but three weeks later, when their turn came round again, we were treated to one of the best services we ever had. The address was on a reading from Buddha and the hymn were carefully chosen, the last one being, Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to the.

Why she Opposed Foreign Missionaries

In this year of grace 1973 one does not expect that there will still be misunderstanding, and I had assumed that a chapter on it would not be necessary. But only last year (1972) the Unitarian Universalist World carried a Khasi

photograph with a caption referring to me as a missionary. I sent a vigorous disclaimer which was duly published, but if this can still happen in the UUA it is clear that this short chapter must be written after all

Miss Barr as a child, believed that all non-Christians dwelt in outer darkness (hell). It was the privilege of those favoured like herself to contribute their pennies to help the missionaries lead them to Jesus. Of course, to a small English citizen the idea of British rule was of a great favour being bestowed on foreign heathen. As she looks back on such smug superiority she regrets that the widely known Mutiny and the Black Hole of Calcutta were acknowledged reasons for the conversion of the perpetrators of such evil deeds! She also regrets that the great names of India as Ashoka, Akbar, Shankaracharya, Nanak, Ramayana, Gita, Vedas and the Upanishads—were not even known to her, and that Buddha was scarcely more

My friend, Marjorie Sykes (Quaker) gives the following definition of a missionary: 'missionary is the common interpretation of the word is one whose deliberate purpose is so to influence people that they will come to share his belief and join in his religious community.'

On the above definition Margaret remarks, "This certainly is what most people in India would mean by the word, this is why I have studiously and consistently discouraged its use in connection with myself. Ever since becoming a Unitarian while student at Cambridge I have believed that my work was not to seek to influence others that they might join my church, but to be something more in the nature of a bridge-builder and to find in fellowship with others (who might not share my theology but

who share none-the-less my belief in the superemacy of the things of the spirit) the environment in which the spirit can take wings and a life of a human being become not unworthy of its divine origin. My years in India have made this possible in ways and to an extent undreamed of before.

Another thing that developed during the Calcutta years was my feeling about Christian Missionaries. My father fearful for my welfare on plunging into an all-India environment, wrote to an English lady in charge of a Mission school near to the one where I was living. She duly called and invited me to lunch. I went and found there the sort of set-up that I later discovered to be common in Mission centres, where the Indian staff had their own mess and quarters while the English ones pursued their English ways and ate their English meals. I never went again. I had gone to India to identify myself with Indian life and to be one of them. I had no wish for them to think of me as in any way, through either Government or Missions, identifies with the British in India save by the accident of my birth which had made me British.

The fact is that if one is going to win the confidence of educated Indians one must first clear oneself absolutely of the suspicion of having any contact with missionaries. My whole motive in coming here was to meet and live with and get to know and if possible win the confidence of Indians. This does not mean that I am not grateful to you and Miss R for your kindness and trouble. But there are times in life when gratitude and good manners stand in the way of one's work, and then they must take a backseat.

No, I haven't met Andrews (C. F.). I should like to. He is one of the very, very few Christian missionaries in India

who is widely and generally beloved and respected. And that, I think is due to the fact that he is far more a Gandhi-ite than a missionary, like Verrier Elwin, Forest Paton and a few more.

I never said that I loathed missionaries. I try not to loathe any of God's creatures: What I said I loathed was the typical missionary attitude. And that statement I repeat. That some missionaries (about one in a thousand) are the salt of the earth.

I am sorry that Prem (Dr. P. K. Paul, our son) is again in difficulties, but not altogether surprising if the hospital is a Mission one. As you know the Government has all my sympathy in its desire to reduce Mission influence whether in school or hospital.

-to Y. S. Paul

A Child and his Religion

Margaret advocates teaching of Comparative Religion to the future generation; in fact she throws a challenge to the educators and leaders of all nations :

I am convinced that the major reason why the world is cursed with so many narrow-minded and prejudiced people in the matter of religion is sectarian education in childhood. Others again would omit all that is specifically religious, and teach just ethics, the science of conduct and the good life. With these too I have sympathy, if the alternative is Sectarian Teaching. But I believe and know that there is another alternative, namely the teaching of Comparative Religion, and it is that alternative that

was the basis of our experiment at the Gokhale School. And here let me hasten to add that by Comparative Religion I do not mean (as is all too often meant) to take one's own religion as a standard with which to measure and compare all the rest, treating them, at best, with a sort of tolerant patronage, and at worst measuring what is best in one's own with what is inferior in others, and so, of course, strengthening prejudices already strong. By Comparative Religion I mean genuine interest in and unbiased study of all the world's great religious traditions. And this can and should be started at a very tender age, by saturating the child's mind with story material, not from one, but from all; till Christians are as familiar with the story of Buddha carrying the little lamb in his arms as they are with Jesus blessing the children; till Muslims know as much about Arjuna's conversations with God as they do about Mohammed's: and until all of them have sensed something of the reality of the experience which led Lao Tse to the assurance that his Immortal Mother Above was bending over him in his last moments, and Christ to surrender unhesitatingly to the Father into whose hands he committed his spirit. And if anyone is thinking that this last is impossible for children, let me assure him that the childlike trust which has been outstanding characteristic of the religion of the world's supreme spiritual masters is far more comprehensible to the child mind than to the child mind than to the average mature one. It is this that convinces me that ethics is not enough, for to teach only ethics and withhold such things as these, is to deny the children the very thing which they are most capable of entering into, and which will stand them in good stead later in the development of their own religion.

The Martyrdom

As regards your comments on martyrdom, I could not resist a smile at your truly magnificent disregard of logic. Do you really believe that the heroism with which people defend a creed is any test of the truth of that creed? Does the fact that thousands of Hindus suffered martyrdom rather than embrace Islam in past centuries make Hinduism the last word of God's truth? Does



In France (1929)

the martyrdom of ancient Norsemen at the hands of 'Christians' (recounted for example in the Heimskringla a tenth-century Icelandic saga) make their pagan religion supreme? Would you allow that the death of Servetus and many another Unitarian proves the truth of the Unitarian faith? Does the willing self-sacrifice of Nin (my eldest brother killed in action in Flanders in 1916) and

his generation make the last war anything other than the mean and unworthy thing we now know it to have been? Surely one of the great tragedies of human history is the fact that in every age many of the greatest martyrdoms have been for unworthy or mistaken causes; or because people were so wedded to the creed for which their fathers had suffered that they could not recognise God's truth when presented in a new form by the prophets of their own days.

IMPERIALISM

The only thing that I can remember having written that might have led you to write such nonsense is that casual remark I made about the Victoria Memorial positively reeking of Victorian imperialism. And you took that to mean 'an unbalanced judgement' and sweeping denunciation of the Victorian era. Nay, Mother, have a bit of sense. Surely it was obvious that what I was condemning was not the Victorian era but imperialism. I should loathe that building just as much if it represented Roman, Persian, Japanese, Georgian or Muslim imperialism. The only difference is that, with the exception of last three, all these are dead and one cannot have the same lively loathing for a corpse as for a savage monster which continues to stalk through the land devouring the bodies, minds and souls of men women and children. Roman and Persian imperialism are dead. But Victorian still lives, crushing this land like the insatiable monster it is, and my loathing for it deepens in intensity with every day that I live here. If this is to have an unbalanced judgement then I admit the charge. And it will be a happy day for India when a few more of my smug self-satisfied countrymen lose their balance too. I suppose the perfect type of the 'balanced person' is the one who sits on the fence, swaying gracefully....with one leg on

the imperialist and one on the democratic side, prating eloquently (like Baldwin) about liberty and justice and Englishman's loyalty to these things. If that's the kind of 'balanced judgement' you want for me then I'm afraid you are doomed to disappointment. No, my dear Mother, for good or ill the issue is joined and this ugly duckling of yours is enlisted once and for all in the ranks of those who are pledged to fight to the death against the monster Imperialism and its ally War. (ADCT)

Literacy & Education

If Saroj's failure in her intermediate means that she is now taking up something useful like craft instead of going further on the academic line, I find it a cause for rejoicing rather than regret. I'm afraid I have little patience with the academic trend in Indian colleges. What India needs is people who can do things, not those who can recite textbooks. So please congratulate her from me on the sensible way she has dealt with her failure

30.10.67. to Y. S. Paul

As regards your remarks about the Government, I suppose if I were sensible I should ignore them, as it is silly for us to quarrel. But things of that kind make me even more angry now that I have seen a few things for myself, even than they did before I came here. You say that the Government is influenced by the illiteracy of the millions. Granted, but who made them illiterate? Before Britain came to India there was a school in every village. A hundred and fifty years ago masses of India were more literate than the masses of England. Yet you people claim that Britain is ruling for India's good. You further make the utterly untrue statement that 'in spite of the high moral teaching of the best Indians the fact remains that they have personally

done very little for the millions'. It is just NOT a fact. The pioneer work for the uplift of the masses was done by men like Ram Mohan Roy. And in the last ten years far more has been done for the untouchables by Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu, than has been achieved by all the Christian missionaries in all the years of their activities here. Nobody who knows India today would dream of questioning the truth of this—even the missionaries who confess, some of them somewhat ruefully, that he can do what they cannot. Your letter reads for all the world like a missionary meeting address, which is doubtless why it has made me unduly angry. As to scrupulous courtesy to those with whom I do not agree, I assure you that in spite of all evidence to the contrary, my behaviour in that matter is and has been exemplary. But it's birds of a feather who flock together, you know. So where the missionaries congregate I don't.

(February 1934 : To her father.)

(ADCT)

LONELINESS ? NO, SOLITUDE ? YES

So often people ask me if it is not a lonely life; the answer is no. For solitude is not loneliness; loneliness is involuntary, as of a man in a prison cell, and in almost all cases it embitters, corrodes and hardens. Solitude is voluntary, as if a hermit in his cave, and it strengthens, ennobles and illuminates. Solitary I have been in a sense lonely never.

And yet, of course, there is a sense in which I never have been even solitary. The hermit in his cell seeks God only in himself; that has never been my way. Though it becomes increasingly clear to me that 'the indwelling God proclaimed of old', is for every individual more important than anything outside himself and to seek him in isolation would never have answered

my need. Love and service have always come first in my experience. And though my life has been solitary in so far as congenial companionship on an intellectual and spiritual level has often been lacking, always there have been children—children to play and dance and sing with and to read stories to in the long dark winter evenings, some orphaned some handicapped, all poor; children I have loved and to whom I have given a start in life, not just the small family that might have been mine as wife and mother, but dozens of them, a never failing stream. And how can life be lonely or even solitary where there are children ? (ADCT)



HAJAM KISSOR SINGH—Founder of Unitarian Movement in Meghalaya. Born 15 June, 1865—Died on 3 November, 1923.

Recalling the time she first settled down in Kharang she marvelled that from a race still largely in its childhood, Hajam Kissor Singh, the first Khasi Unitarian, should have emerged ! He made immense sacrifices of time and money to preach "a more Christ-like type of Christianity" than the orthodox missionaries. "He must have been a very lonely man. This accounts for the fact that during the years when I plumbed depths of loneliness never experienced before, I should have been more than ever conscious of God's presence with me."

16 11, 58

My dear Marie,

I have been waiting to answer your letter of Oct. 6th till the promised MS re The Mahatma and the Buddha should arrive. It did so yesterday and I am now preparing a review for Gandhi Marg, as requested. I hope the editor will accept it. I think he will. He's a pal of mine (and perhaps yours) a staunch believer in the FFT, to which I intend to make a passing reference. Your article, with its Buddhist monk, Sevagram prayers etc etc, gives me all I need plus what I already know and am never tired of reiterating in season and out of season re Gandhi's way in religious education. I am quite sure also that, though his way in life was definitely the way of Karma Yoga, he got confidence, strength and clarity of vision from his regular, daily periods of meditation. My own way becomes more and more like his. I have taken to waking every morning at about 3.30 and as I do not call the children till 4.30, that gives me an hour for the morning tryst. I don't force it and sometimes I fall asleep again, but generally now I don't and the serenity engendered in that morning hour is beginning more and more to accompany me.

throughout the day. I can never remember in all my life being so happy and so deeply content as I am at present.

I entirely agree with you about publicity for the "Footprints", and hope very much that the second book will soon make its appearance, which I shall again enjoy reviewing for any journals which will accept what I send.

Glad to know you continue occasionally to minister to the needs of my fellow-Unitarians in Sydney. You're right about the lack of readings in the Bible re meditation. Though perhaps, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" might make a good text another time, and not, I think, more definitely theistic than the relevant Gita passages. Good for them to have the Gita, any way and the Buddha, which they doubtless know far less than they know the Bible.

15.12 58

My dear Marie,

Our letters follow fast and furious.

Your last has again set me probing to the depths of what I do really believe and it would seem that there are still some (perhaps major) differences between us.

With what you write about finding "the God within" I am in entire agreement. But for me, the God within is only, as it were, half of what I must find. The older I get the more of a theist I become. That is why I find the Gita so satisfying, as it is as explicit as anything I know that the God within is also the God without—Immanent AND Transcendent. Surely that is the

meaning of chapters IX and X, "I who am all and made it all, abide its separate Lord."

And even so far as the finding of the God within is concerned, there are things which help and things which hinder. Contemplation of the love and compassion of Buddha, Christ, Gandhi helps to bring one nearer to God. Contemplation of the cruelty of Hitler and his like does not help. And this does not mean that I put any or all of these in the place of God (I remain an unrepentant Unitarian on this issue). They are indeed revealers of God, but to me they are also and supremely revealers of man and of the heights to which humanity can climb. That is what makes contemplation of them so encouraging and so helpful in the quest for the God within. They were what they were because they (men as they were) had found the God within. Nothing less than this can satisfy me also, and even though vast numbers of lives may be required for the attainment, attained it must be in the end, and a good start made here and now, not in separation from the world and its troubles and travails, but in and through them as expounded in Chapter V of the Gita.

In practical things too I try to the utmost of my power to carry out the teaching of our readings and prayers. There's an old lady living about half a mile away who has been a pest ever since I started the school, forever coming and interrupting my classes to complain about something or other. At first I got irritated and was more than a little short with her. But one day it occurred to me that was not the way to show my children how to overcome evil with good. That was many years ago and after that I was always gentle with her. I've lost count of the times she came to complain that my dog had killed one of her hens.

As I had no adequate proof that he hand't, though it was strange that none of the other neighbours ever complained, I told her to bring the dead hen and I would give her a live one in exchange. I only thought of this bright idea after the second occasion. The first time unwillingly and grudgingly I just paid up. After the advent of the bright idea it happened less often (i. e. the periods in between were longer) but whenever she had a mishap to one of her hens she continued to come to me for compensation. We ate the dead bird and gave her a live one. She's very old and very poor and under no circumstances would I allow it to be said that I had failed to do justice to any such. Now suddenly (or rather, as I now learn, little by little over a period of months) she has become most loving and gentle. I gave her an old darned woollie the day before yesterday when she arrived here shivering in her threadbare clothes and the next day she sent me a present of a few potatoes from her garden. She has stopped grumbling and scolding and become a model neighbour.

Glad to hear of your lonely tent in the mountains, but your sentence about being "tempted to look at beauty instead of at God" suggested that there are still some differences in our approach to these matters. To me beauty is one of (perhaps the clearest) revelation of God, and to look at and love beauty is to look at and love Him. Much love, my dear,

Margaret

Miss Marie Byles is seventy two now, she was the first women advocate of Australia. She is much influenced by Buddha.

Personally to Y. Surrendra Paul

(assorted.)

My dear Brother,

First of all may I ask you to treat this correspondence as strictly private and confidential. (8-2-67)



Hall's remark on seeing this : Spontaneous expression of the emotions. Boulonris St. Raphael, Var South France May, 1929. Esterel Mountain's in distance.

What a greedy fellow you are ! You chide me for not answering your letters and do not realise that, in the last two years or so, you have had more than any other person in my very wide circle of friends. When I send out my duplicated newsletters over a hundred go and the vast majority of the recipients have to be content with only those as my personal letters these days are very very few and far between. If the two English girls who were to have come to spend a year with me had been

allowed by the Government of India to enter Assam, all would have been different by now, as writing letters for me was one of the jobs I meant to give them. But they were not allowed to come so I must needs manage without them in spite of being short of help and short of sight and handicapped into the bargain by advancing old age. (30-10-67)

Nevertheless I am glad to have your last letter and to know of the new opening you have secured, or rather has been offered to you. [The reference was to the new appointment as the Executive Secretary of the Bikaner District Adult Education Association. I went to the Thar Desert and my family remained in Udaipur.] It sounds excellent except for the fact that it takes you away from home and makes it necessary to run two establishments. But it sounds to be a very worth while job and I know you will make the most of this splendid opportunity for service.

One of my functions since coming to India has been (and still is) to rescue Indian friends from the clutches of money-lenders by lending some of my own invested savings at no higher interest than I should be getting if they had stayed in fixed deposit at the State Bank (i. e. 6% p. a.).

I have always lived very economically and now in old age, in addition to sundry investments earmarked for my work (which, of course, are trust money and cannot be touched) I have also a few that belong to me myself. As my old-age pension from Britain's Welfare State of which I am still a citizen, is enough for my simple needs, I am at liberty to use these personal investments to help my friends. But naturally I want to feel reasonably sure that they will return to be reinvested and used again. (25-2-70)

Advice Ajai, with my grandmotherly regards, to consult the nearest Family Planning clinic, so that he and his wife may learn how to have a small well-spaced and well-cared for family. In view of the world-wide food-shortage and population-explosion and the fact that India now has family Planning high up on her list of social services, this is a MUST for all young married couples. (8-2-67)

Thank you for the news of the children. I am a little surprised to learn that Prem means to get married so soon after the end of his medical college course. Tell him from me to go in for Family Planning for the first year or two until he is fully and satisfactorily launched on his career. It is a matter of deep concern to me that so many young people want to rush into family responsibilities before they are really equipped to undertake them. I believe that Family Planning is of supreme importance in the world of today and especially in India. We have an F. P. clinic in connection with our Maternity work and are trying to give village women a responsible attitude towards maternity. It's slow work with these uneducated folk but should be less so with folk like Prem. (30-10-67)

In her last years especially after her illness in 1970 Aug. to Oct. she generally forgot things easily. One good and interesting example is given below :

She wrote to me on 22-4-73, "My dear Brother, I have gone carefully through your report and accounts and I have only one correction to make, but it is an important one. On page 1 of the report you say that I gave you Rs. 1,000 "from my grant". "Grants" are money sent and earmarked for a special purpose. For me to have used any of mine for any other purpose

would have been "misappropriation of funds", a criminal offence, I believe ! But all my life out here, in addition to official grants, I have been receiving private gifts from friends, mostly non-unitarian, for me to do whatever I liked with. These I have hoarded and it is from this, purely Private money that I have always helped the needy with loan and gifts. What I sent you must have been from this though to be quite frank I completely forgot that I ever gave you so large a sum. It doesn't matter and I be sending some more as soon as my Kharang Capital Fund reaches target, and before that if you find yourself seriously short of money with which to follow up all the splendid work you are doing Don't worry, but just cut the words "out of her grant" from your report. In reading your letter I see that the report has already been sent to London (General Assembly Hq.) and Boston [Hq. of the Unitarian Universalist Association of America]. So when next you write you better make the correction."

What a precarious situation for both of us.

Kong Barr in her letter dated 25-2-70, wrote from Kharang:

Last night's mail brought me both your letter of the 16th and one from the bank saying that the UUA grant had come. So here is Rs. 1,000 I promised you. You had better acknowledge it both to me and to the Director, L. O. R. Dept., U. U. A., Boston, as this is the last year that grants will be channeled through me, so the sooner you establish direct contact the better.

No time to answer your letter now; will do so as soon as possible. Keep on the good work. (How prompt in answering letters.) Glad so hear of your Hindi publications.

My reply to her was that she gave the amount with the knowledge and permission of UUA. She informed Dr. Max

A. Kapp (the then Executive Vice President) in her letter of 4-4-70;

"I. Y. S. Paul. You indeed slipped up about this man. I sent you a full report in Dec. of his visit to Shillong, after many years of correspondence and of the service at the (Laban) church at which Devi welcomed him to the membership of the KJHUU (Khasi-Janti Hills Unitarian Union) and I, in my position as liaison officer for both GA and UUA to the wider fellowship of the universal world-wide movement for Liberal Religion. He is a live wire, very keen, better educated than any in the Khasi Hills and with wide contracts. He is using Rs. 1,000 for publication in English and Hindi, having received permission from GA to translate any of their propaganda material."

Her reply was just graceful; "I am sorry my memory is so bad these days I have no memory of having given you money from a UUA grant, but it is quite possible as their grants in earlier years were sent to me to disburse "for work in India," if you are sure that it is all right and that the UUA sanctioned the money I gave you, well and good ... So apart from that Rs. 1,000, anything more from me, past, present and future, must be entered in your records as anonymous donation. The enclosed cheque for Rs. 250 is first for A's Life Membership, and the balance for postage as mentioned above (25-5-73)

I entirely agree with you that Fellowship is a better word than Church for us to use.

I got back finally on Oct. 21, about 9 weeks after you had helped to convey me to the hospital. I have still a long way to go to catch up with overdue correspondence, as you may well imagine, so this must be short.

I hope the Tippa (typewriter which she presented) is giving good service Phinos' son was born on Sept., 24.

X X X

Of couse you are a hopeless case for orthodoxy.

X X X

My Capital Fund is still far below target But I don't worry ; if the work is to continue yours and mine, support will come. I am so happy to have you as a colleague.

X X X

Dt. 22-2-73. If and when I can get round to writting an article for you I'll try and make it relevant to the subject of your autom seminar. I'll also send you some money to help nearer the time.

X X X

So now the play has returned to you. Your turn to write.

All strength to you. Carry on with the good work.

3-5-73. Try to arrange for a longish visit when you come in autumn.

Greetings to all.

Your affectionate sister,
MARGARET

REMINISCENCES AND TRIBUTES

It is not so surprising that there are so few women in the ministry (priesthood) in our Unitarian movement, when one realises that the main critics of women in the ministry have been and still are, women themselves. It is not therefore so surprising that the few women who have dared to venture forth as ministers have been outstanding in their service; it has been a great experience for me on the occasions I have met such women; Margaret Barr was a truly great person. If ever a person deserved to be recognised as a SAINT of the Unitarian church then Margaret Barr does. I will always remember how impressed I was on the two occasions I heard her preach. The first time was at an annual service for ALL FAITHS in Dundee, on the 28th of April, 1963. Miss Barr could not read her address, she was waiting for an operation for cataracts on both eyes. Her address was inspiring. At the annual meetings of the General Assembly (of Unitarian & Free churches of Great Britain) the same year held in Edinburgh. Margaret Barr was one of the invited speakers. One of the coments I heard afterwards was, "IT WAS LIKE LISTENING TO GOD."

Rev. Douglas Webster, Auckland, New Zealand.

FEET WASHING :

In the real Indian Culture we prize personal relationship more than formal or official ones. Gandhiji was a good example of this. He loved his workers as a father loves his children and grand-children. Mirabehn, the famous English girl who became

one of the famous disciples of Gandhi relates how she was treated by him, "I could see and feel nothing but a heavenly light ... He lifted me up; and taking me in his arms, said 'You shall be my daughter.' And so it has been from that day."

Margaret Behn (sister) was like Gandhi in this respect; she deeply imbibed this to such an extent that she resented it when people tried to address her in formal ways. St Paul also had that mystical experience and exclaimed, "We are fellow-workers with God." In some report published in one of the official organs of Unitarians; Mr. Devison Marbaniang (whose pet name is Devi). was mentioned that he was Margaret Barr's assistant. She was very crossed and upset, and said to me in Udaipur on the lakeside. "What a nonsense, they call Devi my assistant, I have no assistants, I never had one. Devi is my dear colleague as you are. In the Khasi Unitarian Union I have no official position while Devi is the Church Visitor; in a way I am under him. The Union is an independent body."

And I felt as if I was witnessing the feet washing ceremony by Jesus to his disciples. In a way the fellowship has the same sacred meaning. We are ONE and so EQUAL. When a man or a woman reaches to that high altitude of spirituality, he or she becomes a saint.

-Y. S. Paul

Overwhelmed by the success of World preaching tour on her "UNIVERSALIST" faith, Margaret Barr or Kong Barr as known to the Khasis wrote to me from Africa in October 1963 "I become increasingly sure that it is this that we must teach to the whole Movement if it is to be worthy of its name, and and heritage. One thing we must make them understand is that

the honours that have been heaped on me during this year of absence, both in England and America, have come as a result of this wide universalist message which I have been preaching everywhere."

From this I can gather how Kong Barr was anxious to see that the old-time Unitarianism held by most of the Khasi Unitarians is replaced by the modern trend towards a universalist world-outlook, inter-religious Fellowship and world citizenship. The old way was to stress what was special and different; the new way stresses what is common. She wanted to leave the Khasi Unitarian Movement more in harmony with other branches of the world-wide Unitarian-Universalist Movement.

She continued, "we cannot stand still where Hajam Kissor Singh left us forty years ago, any more than the Americans can stand still where Channing left them."

Devison Marbaniang (Church Visitor)
Unitarian Union, Khasi, Jaintia & Mikir Hills,
(Meghalaya)

IN THE MINDS OF MAN

On pages 56-60 we have compiled for ready-reference all the poems Kong Barr referred to in her articles and sermons, however, Wordsworth's poem eluded all our searches. As a last hope I requested Kong Barr's sister to find the poem for us. Mrs. Winifred Laurie (Kong's sister) and her brother Mr. Tom H. Barr and his wife Freda consulted books and found the quotation. Mr. Barr writes from Bristol, (England) dated

17.3.75. The quotation you asked about comes from "The Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Valley" (quite near here, in the beautiful Wye Valley) on July 13, 1798—when he was 28. Margaret and Freda spent some days in our caravan together less than a mile 'above Tintern Abbey' in 1971 [when she visited England for the last time] but I did not know the association of ideas if any. The poem is too long to quote, but your passage runs :

For I have learned

To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth but hearing oftentimes
Th' estill sad music of humanity
Nor harsh nor grating though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
And rolls through all things.

VISIT OF MARGARET BARR TO ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA :

Margaret Barr came to Adelaide on 1st December, 1950 and was with us until the 1st January 1951—a visit of great value. She was the representative of the General Assembly in Sydney, N. S. W., for the centenary of the first Unitarian Church in Australia. The month's stay in Adelaide enabled her to give

a series of sermons on Unitarian Affirmations, taking the pulpit on every Sunday in the month, and also being the preacher at the Anniversary Service of the little church at Shady Grove which she said reminded her of the churches in the Khasi Hills, so completely in the bush with no houses in sight, and also founded by faith and courage (The "bush" is that of eucalypts and acacias, which grow in the moderate rainfall of the lovely hills close to Adelaide)

This was not all Miss Barr was able to do. This time of year, just before our summertime Christmas holidays, was not feasible for a public lecture, but the Rev. Colin Gibson had arranged for her to speak to various groups, enabling her to meet a representative section of Adelaide society. The press gave her very good coverage and the Australian Broadcasting Commission interviewed her as "personality of the week".

During this very happy month, Miss Barr was the guest in some of the homes of our congregation, spending Christmas Day in one of them, and a few days at a Government Experimental Orchard where she loved the trees on the steep hillside, and the bounty of apricots, plums and peaches—too early for apple and pear crops. There were other expeditions roundabout, and twenty years later she wrote of her happy memories of bathing in the warm sea, sparkling and fresh, at a nearby beach resort.

It is indeed a stimulating experience to meet such an outstanding personality, with her capable and open mind, and her interest in everything and everybody. So it is not surprising we were sorry to see her go on her journey back to the Khasi Hills and her high hopes, knowing we were unlikely to see her or like again.

But the Adelaide Women's League made sure that she received every church calendar for the more than twenty years that followed, and from time to time money and parcels were sent to help her. The last parcel was, at her request, of good quality knitting wool, and it was with great regret we heard from Miss Barr that such heavy customs duty had been charged on that gift that she had to sell some of the wool to cover the cost. She had very little time for ordinary correspondence, but it is surely true that she had warm friends in Adelaide.

—Mrs Dorothea Harris

MARGARET BARR— a VISION and a HOPE

"The dynamic that sent me to India", she once wrote, "was my Unitarian faith in God and man and in religion as a way of life." Rightly, she believed she was "properly in the Unitarian tradition", illustrated, for example, by the lives of Mary Carpenter and Dorothea Lynde Dix. And so she was. Her own special contribution has been its extension beyond the privileged West to India, where poverty, illiteracy, and disease abound—surely an appropriate location for the application of social responsibility in the mid-20th century! Margaret, in fact, realised the importance of "the Third World" long before Overseas Aid and World Development Action were envisaged. She has thus proved to be a pioneer in more ways than one, a fact of which Unitarians may justly be proud.

Deposite the fact that the College Committee "took a lugubrious view of the prospects for women ministers", Margaret persisted. After one year she entered on a lay pastorate at the Church of our Father, Rotherham, and became minister in 1928.

The vintage Margaret was now in the making. She once described to me how the joint ministers' fraternal split over her, "as the Anglicans refused to co-operate when they discovered I was a member of the Free Church one". However, her nonconformist colleagues stood by her, with the result that the combined fraternal "thereupon dissolved". Mischievously she added, "I always enjoyed giving battle, or watching others do it for me. And there's a sorry confession for a pacifist to make!" This



KONG BARR & Dr. H. J. McLachlan
at Udaipur (India)

was part of her secret : that she loved fun and lived on excitement. That is why, clubbable soul that she was, she sometimes felt inexpressibly lonely in the remote jungle station at Kharang. Only her courage, tenacity and sense of complete dedication enabled her to overcome the lack of intellectual and spiritual companionship.

That was Margaret : enjoying life, full of fun, warm, keen, devoted, an exciting person to live and work with. Roy Smith

once called her "a very great lady". So she was, but her ladyship was also capable of doing what St. Paul seems to have thought impossible : she could both set her mind "on high things" and "condescend to things that are lowly". In fact, she was a splendid allrounder. Her universalism is well represented in a useful little volume, "the Divine Unity". Among her papers will, I believe, be found valuable lessons on the great ethnic religions and their teachers (in this field, she owed a considerable debt to the late Will Hayes). Her contribution to the modern Unitarian outlook was recognised in 1963, when she was invited to preach the General Assembly sermon in Edinburgh. In 1971 she was made an Honorary Member of the Assembly, an honour which gave her particular pleasure, and in the same year her old College, M C O., elected her an Honorary Fellow. She never sought publicity herself. But she never failed to acknowledge and to assert her unwavering Unitarianism. Her love for her fellow men was reflected most beautifully in her care for the orphans who shared her home, and those privileged to have seen her in the role of "little mother" will treasure the picture all their days.

We shall hardly see her like again, but we can—and should—adopt her motto : "Full of hope !"

Dr. John H. McLachlan
President, G.A. 1971-72

TRIBUTE TO MISS BARR

A MEMORIAL SERVICE for Margaret Barr was held at the Cambridge Unitarian Church on 19 October (1973). Her brother, Mr. Tom Barr, paid a short tribute, Mrs. Gwyneth Thomas, representing the Women's League and Mr. Roy Smith, representing the General Assembly, read the lessons.

In his memorial address, the Rev. Dr. H J. McLachlan said : In one of the very last letters that I received from Margaret Barr, she spoke of the expansion of the work at Kharang and how much she looked forward to the erection of a little hospital and creche. "It's all very exciting and hopeful," she said, "and now the rain has come at the right moment to water all the seeds we have been planting", and then followed her final words; 'Full of hope'.



Mrs. Gwyneth I. M. Thomas, President G. A. 1974-75

I could hardly find a better starting point than that for what I want to say: "Full of hope". It was typical of the kind of person she was, and is, surely, the secret of the whole of those forty years she spent in India; a seed-sower, full of hope.

Today we give thanks for that life, and remember, with pride and affection, her personality and achievement. I should like to think that, symbolically, we are engaged in an act of dedication to the ideals and hopes which she cherished

Deeply influenced by Gandhi and Tagore, she turned away from the materialist and superficial West, its disastrous money-grubbing its hellish noises and death-dealing traffic, to an environment without all these "advantage", to the fulfilment of simple human needs and aspirations; to the cultivation of human relationships with young and old; to the stretching out of a loving hand to the utterly unprivileged; to the merry song and the quiet prayer at night with the orphans round the charcoal burner in her home in the primeval forest.

Here was a piece of humanitarian social and educational work made possible by a deep and fervent faith; and its repercussions have extended far beyond the bounds of the Khasi Hills. Like Albert Schweitzer, Margaret Barr sought to pay her, and our, debt to other, less fortunate, human beings. So doing, she has left an example of quite heroism and consecration which cannot fail to grip the imagination and inspire others to like devotion. *One small candle may light a thousand*

(INQUIRER) England

YOUNG INDIA. (Periodical) SHILLONG

When my steps are no longer printed in the dust of this road,
and the ferry boat plies without me,
When I have bought and sold for the last time,
and my going to the market in the day break
and returning home in the dusk is ended,

What if you do not remember me,
if you never call me
Raising your eyes to the stars

But who says that I shall be no more that morning ?
I will play in their plays who live.
I will have new names and other arms to bind me in love,
For I am of all days and will ever move in the sun.
What then if you do not remember me,
If you never call me raising your eyes to the stars ?

—Gurudev Tagore

Margaret gave full cooperation to Ramakrishna Mission in the Khasi Hills as being the only organisation which was helping the Khasis to preserve their own culture and become truly Indian. She was also a faithful friend of the 'Seng Khasi' which had the same objectives. She herself published a book of Khasi songs sung in purely Indian tunes which had been composed by Swami Chandikananda of Shillong Ramakrishna Mission, and such Indian songs she would teach her pupils.

Speaking more personally, this writer from the moment he started his weekly nationalist paper *Young India* got the allout support of Margaret Barr. She would very often not agree with his views on Gandhi and Nehru. But she always wrote to the effect that though she differed strongly on these points, she would always support a brave effort which shows courage and conviction. And she was true to her word. Whenever *Young India* faced trouble from any quarter, it was Margaret Barr who first rushed with a cheque of a substantial amount to tide over the crisis.

To the last breath of her illustrious life Margaret Barr was faithful to the ideals and principles of Gandhiji. She was loyal to the rationalist outlook of Bertrand Russell. She was a great champion of Indian culture and religious ideas. She taught us the spirit of true Indian nationalism. She was generous to a fault in all good causes for the benefit of India. She worked silently for the poor and neglected in Indian society as a true and faithful disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. She was loyal to Swami Vivekananda and extended her helping hand to Ramakrishna Mission at all times. No one ever went to her without getting some help or encouragement in whatever work or wish she was approached to advice or help.

We are fortunate that her mortal remains have found their last resting place after a life of wonderful activity in the sacred soil of India. Margaret Barr is now merged in the lap of her adopted Mother, Bharat-Mata (Mother-India) and the ashes of her sacred body will sanctify this land with the touch of total self-abnegation.

Our Kong (sister) Barr, our Margaret Barr is now in all our work, in all our play, in all our hopes and aspirations, in all our struggles.

Shillong (Meghalaya) -Kapila Chatterji, Editor, Young India

TRIBUTE by Dr. Stephen H. Fritchman (U.S.A.)

Although for most of the years of our friendship Margaret Barr communicated her love of life, her insight and affection, to me over very long distances by mail, she has been a tower of strength to me as well as a delightful long-distance companion.

Her letters, several times a year, from Kharang, quickened my imagination, stirred my conscience and supported my feelings about the goodness of human nature. We have exchanged ideas and experiences for over a quarter of a century. Her letters were filled with comments on books I sent from time to time and her incisive observations on my published sermons from Los Angeles, as well as vivid accounts of her own rich life. We shared common convictions about socialism as an alternative to a merciless profit centered economic system. We were old-fashioned practitioners of our own Puritan ethic—she much more than I—on the disciplining of one's time, the cherishing of health through intelligent dietary habits (as we understood them—a very controversial subject), the value of physical body labor by "intellectuals," the joys and rewards of self-sufficiency in mind and spirit in an era that made so many people unsure of their own powers, and thus dependent on gurus, priests and exploitative parvenus with gospels of "positive thinking."

Margaret Barr was a whole person; she could be equally happy in the British Museum library or in a cottage in the most remote mountain ranges in Asia. She was a true Gandhian in her spiritual integrity; she shared Gandhi's constant concern to help others in building effective institutions for self-help—in schooling, ethical religion and community cooperation. Our letters discussed the alternatives found in the USSR, the People's Republic of China, India and the various societies of the British Commonwealth and the U. S. A. We used our Unitarian freedom of conscience and mind to accept or reject as we thought best. Her creative intellect, her quick, dry wit, her sensitivity to the misery of mankind were all a part of the pleasure I received from long-distance friendship with this strong and life-loving woman. She shared with me appreciation and criticism of per-

personalities and social systems, with utter candor, including our own Unitarian household with all of its ambiguities and evasions, as well as its solid contributions to human worth. We loved Emerson and Channing and said so, even when we made footnotes of dissent. One does not need many friends in this world if one knows such a one as Margaret Barr to bring love and courage to the tasks of living in the thermonuclear age.

× × × × ×

Margaret has been my close friend for many years. She was the younger sister of our beloved Mary who was co-editor of *THE FRIENDLY WAY* until her death. Like her sister Mary, was committed to Gandhi's fearless non-violent struggle for freedom, justice and a good life for India's village people. She warmly supported Mary when the latter decided in 1932 to abandon her secure "missionary" career for grass-root service as a national worker in an Indian village in Madhya Pradesh. Margaret was among the very first non-Indian to live in Gandhi's centre at Sevagram and share at first-hand in the exciting and far reaching experiments in education which were going on there. She loved teaching and she loved and understood children, and for the rest of her life, first in Shillong and then in the Rural Centre which she built up at Kharang, she applied all her educational insight and skill to the task of bringing Gandhi's principles and values to bear upon the lives of poor Khasi village children.

She started schools, laying the ground work upon which alone leadership—educated, competent, devoted leadership—can be based. 'The possibilities are endless' she reported 'It is all very exciting and hopeful.'

Hopeful, yes. But needing endless patience too. Margaret had great courage, and endured great loneliness. The costliness

of her hope was sometimes hinted at to friends, as in one of her last letters to me: "One plods on but it is not easy. But why do I tell you that, as if you didn't know?"

Towards the end of her life Margaret had opportunities of "balancing" the quiet joys of her simple home in Kharang by the intellectual stimulus and pleasure of contacts with urban college students in Shillong. This gave her special delight, and she responded eagerly to invitations to talk to groups of students and teachers about Mahatma Gandhi's personality and ideas. She longed to help the new generation to see Gandhiji not merely as a "father-figure" in a history book, but rather as a warm hearted dynamic human being whose message to us today is as relevant and as challenging as when he first spoke it.

I cherish Margaret's last letters to me, one written only a day or two before the onset of her final illness, overflows with the joy of our "knowing one other in that which is Eternal"—though we had been led by separate paths in our external religious commitment, she to Unitarians and I to Friends. Asking for a copy of C. F. Andrews' *Representative writings*, she speaks of her deep admiration for him. "Living in the jungle, books are my life-line, books and letters like this last of yours. To know how close you feel to me is one of those unexpected, gratuitous joys that bring the sun shining through Do try to come, but not during the monsoon. There is a market bus once a week on market day that comes to within about five miles—but not during the rains."

Dear Margaret, she knew that I can no longer tackle so light heartedly as we both once did the twelve miles or so of mountain track on the old "short cut" between Shillong and

Kharang. From the highest point of that track, in clear weather, one may see the snows of Mount Everest gleaming in the far north-west, across four hundred miles of intervening lowland. They seem to me now to be a symbol of Margaret's vision, of the *high things* on which she set her heart, knowing that they can only be attained, if at all, by patiently, daily, "condescending to things that are lowly."

Yes, Margaret, I shall try to come, if only by that bus, knowing that I shall find your living spirit where you desired that your ashes should be scattered, among your friends on the Khasi Hills.

—Miss Marjorie Sykes

Editor, The Friendly Way, Journal of Quakers in Asia.

Margaret Barr was unique among women in the Unitarian movement and there will probably never be another woman who could make a similar contribution to the world's work.

I only saw her during her stay in Sydney years ago when she spent a day with me. We sat on the verandah in the sun and talked about her work, what she still planned to do in the years ahead; about our favourite authors; the various ways of cooking rice and countless other subjects dear to us both.

Not long before her death in August of last year I had a letter recalling that day and acknowledging a contribution from the Poetry Reading Group of the Sydney Unitarian Church. I had asked her in a previous letter if she contemplated going back to England and enjoying some comfort in her remaining years, to which she had replied that India was where she belonged and where she hoped to stay for the rest of her life.

To make a list of the many projects which she brought to successful conclusion shows what lion-like courage and dedication lived in that small body—the school from which so many children benefited; the orphanage which provided a happy home and education for girls who, in their turn, were able to coach the younger children living there; the farm (one of Margaret's special concerns) which provided green food for her charges; the clinic and maternity unit which meant so much to the women of the district.



Mrs. Eleanor Wilson

Certainly, from time to time, various people went out to work with her (two went from Sydney Church—Mary Bannon, now Mrs. Findlow, and Bruce Findlow, now Principal of Manchester College, Oxford); but life for Margaret Barr must have been a solitary existence between those visits which we, who live surrounded by our own kind, cannot possibly comprehend.

How does one distil the essence of someone in just a few short sentences? One cannot, all one can do is remember the

impact of her personality, and say that her generous heart beats on in the lives she moulded.

Vale, Margaret Barr.

—Mrs. Eleanor Wilson,

Editor, Unitarian "QUEST", Sydney, Australia.

NOW MISS BARR BELONGS TO HISTORY

With a heavy heart we inform our readers of the passing away of Miss A. Margaret Barr, one of the founder members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of India; and the beloved Kong (sister) Margaret of Khasi people. She was a well known figure in the Unitarian world

Her friends and fellow-Unitarians held a memorial service in Shillong on 19, August, in which people of different religions and Christian denominations took part and paid their last homage to Kong Barr who was a light-house for the people of Meghalaya. Sarvadharm Satsanga : Inter-Faith Fellowship of India pays its homage to Margaret Behen (sister).

—Y. Surrendra Paul

Unitarian Inter-Faith Fellowship,
Devali, UDAIPUR (Rajasthan).

EDITORIAL : KONG BARR ISSUE (August 1974)

In August 1970 I was in Kharang (Meghalaya) and two or three days before Sister Margaret fell and later on was transferred to the civil hospital in Shillong; we both were having a chat on our favourite mottoes or the golden verses which become the

compass of our lives. I said that slowly but surely the spiritual truth dawned upon me and I found it to be the joy of my life. The joy is to serve the cause you stand for and when success is achieved, forget about it. You should not keep an account of your service as a bania (trader) does. It should become one's nature to do good and forget about it; have a spirit of non-attachment to the contribution you make to the society. I still remember as fresh as if it happened only yesterday, that chat I had with her. It was about 8 or 9 in the night, and with a joy which took the form of her usual radiant smile, she arose, went upstairs to her tiny room and returned with a book, autographed it before me, opened it and read, *"Perform every action with your heart fixed on the Supreme Lord. Renounce attachment to the fruit. Be even-tempered in success and failure; for it is this evenness of temper which is meant by Yoga."* (2nd chapter of Gita). And presenting the Bhagavad-Gita to me, said, "Like you, I have experienced that the loftiest practical truth is in this verse, nothing higher than this". And I realized that we had crossed each other's way. Such was the saintly character of the Unitarian World's Saint Mira Bai*. It was her experience that if you want to understand the Sermon of the Mount given by Jesus Christ, then you should read the Gita along with it; and if you want to go to the depth of Bhagvad-Gita's message then read the 'Sermon on the Mount, At this point I narrated that when I was a young-

* Mira Bai was the poet saint of Rajasthan, a worshipper of Krishna. She was the princess from Nagore and was married to a king of Mewar (Udaipur). She was a great saintly woman who wrote many devotional hymns in praise of her chief deity. These songs are very popular in North India and beyond.

man and in the training for the ministry, I met a Sadhu, and while talking to him, naturally I tried to impress that Christ is the only saviour, and He has no rival. He opened his small saffron bundle and took out two books quite old and marked at many places. With a sense of joy and great affection; he kissed both the books and put them before me, and said, "Youngman ! For years, since I become a Sadhu, everyday I read and compared the Gita and Gospels. In my meditations the Gita and Gospels lose their identities and become ONE. In the same way the personalities of Jesus and Krishna are united. But the God-Supreme is beyond them. IT is in my and your hearts. It is like the Light which is Divine. And Kong Barr and I sat speechless for some-time, trying to ponder on the Truth which is nothing but THE GREAT UNITY.

UNITARIA,

(to : Y. S. Paul)

Karlava 8/186, 110 00 Praha 1 (Czechoslovakia)

Dear Blessed Self :

You did a splendid job in devoting you last issue/ No 6-7/ of Sarvadharm Satsang to sister Margaret Barr. All will agree that she did a great deal for the uplift of the country population in the Khasi Hills. If the British Unitarians can boast of a Martineau, who lived some decades ago, Margaret Barr become a beacon of these last years of which the British Unitarians may be proud too.

It is with great interest that we read the whole issue. Personally I was very pleased to read your editorial, especially the last part, in which you show that the Gita and the New

Testament do not exclude one another, but on the contrary they help to understand better the other Scripture. This is also our experience. We may also say, as you mention, that the personalities of Jesus and Krishna are in the same way united.—They are actually two faces of one Reality.

At the present moment we study the Shrimad Bhagavata. I did not read so far a better discription of what religion ought to be like in this collection, where it is said: "The highest religion of man is unselfish love of God" I venture to say, that this word "unselfish" raises the teaching of Krishna a degree higher than the teaching of Jesus. The Christain Church throughout the ages tried to provoke selfishnes in the faithful, for the sake of its own selfish aims. Selfishnes is the biggest enemy of man. If you read the legend of the birth of Krishna according to the Bhagavata, don't you feel that King KANAS is Selfishnes incorporated ? Selfishnes and Divine Love go together. One fights the other. Herod of the Christian legend is but a copy of Kansa. Even in the Gospels Herod does not stand for anything else than for a symbol of egoism, of selfishnes, which fears to lose its hold of the heart of man. Only when one becomes free of the ego, of selfishness, the reign of Kamas comes to an end and the Kingdom of God, or Ramraj opens its gates to the devotee.

We hope that your country will pass safely through these time of trial, that your goverment will find a way to do away with the danger of famine and unemployment and that you will not lack paper to carry on your work successfully !

May unselfish love and World Peace be our common tie !

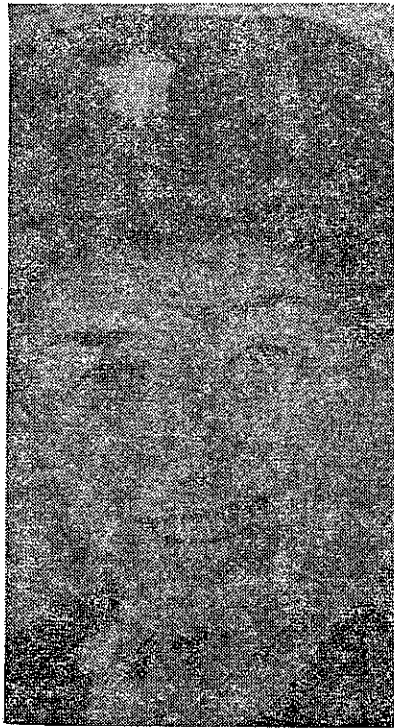
Yours with NAMASTE

Dr. D. J. Kafka

HOMAGE TO MARGARET BARR

To pay tribute to Margaret Barr is indeed a difficult assignment, because words are much too cold to describe as beautiful and unique a human being as she was.

During my almost 30 years with the USC of Canada as its Executive Director, I have rarely met someone more fulfilled. She was immensely simple in her own needs, because her entire



Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova

being was dedicated to serving others in physical and spiritual distress. She was humble, straight forward, thoroughly practical and courageous. We were very intimate friends and I watched

her closely during those difficult years when her dream to establish a High School for Khasi girls on Gandhi lines in Assam never materialized. But I am convinced that she left a lasting mark on all those who were fortunate enough to meet her,—and even more those boys and girls who lived under her roof in daily contact with a leader like herself.

She knew what she wanted to achieve and she worked on her task day and night. What exactly was her goal ? To liberate the Khasis whom she so dearly loved of widespread superstition and the shackles of ignorance and prejudice; she tried to provide the children in her school with a liberal all-embracing approach to life and the challenges it holds for every individual.

In many ways Margaret Barr has succeeded. The Home for her youngest children is continuing and will continue even after USC withdrawal next June; the medical program, desperately needed in her isolated area, will grow, since there are now active plans afoot to build a hospital in her memory. But most important of all, it is her radiant example which she displayed day and night to her many disciples scattered over the Khasi Hills and beyond, which will never tarnish and never die. Her Gandhi-like life of utter simplicity, of service devoted to others and her unceasing battle for truth cannot be forgotten in the hearts and minds of those privileged enough to have known her as a teacher and a friend.

Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova, Executive Director,
Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.

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I first met Margaret Barr in the late thirties when both of us were working among the Khasis. I am witness to the battles she fought in getting her work off the ground. There was opposition from very powerful quarters, for her liberal ideas about religion naturally irked those who were trying to save the heathen

soul. Even to the Khasi Unitarians she was a crank. Margaret Barr knew that she was right and did not care what others said and thought about her. She pursued her ideals to the last day and her patience paid dividends as is evidenced by the fact that she later became 'Kong' (The Big Sister) to one and all in the Khasi Hills.

She lived a noble life of dedicated service, far away from the public eye, alone, and in most trying conditions. She may not have left behind anything in the way of a big institution to remind us of the great work done by her, but if love and care for fellowman count for anything, then, she certainly was a great woman deserving our deepest gratitude and admiration.

Swami Lokeshwarananda

Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

HER HORIZON THE WORLD

It was in the year 1935 that I first heard of Margaret. I lived in England then and was a member of the Unitarian Church in Maidstone, Kent. In the Unitarian weekly journal, *The Inquirer*, I read an account, written by Margaret herself, of her appointment as English Unitarian representative to the group of Khasi Unitarian churches in the hills beyond Shillong in Assam. The post had been advertised and she had applied for it; but she was refused the appointment. To send a woman alone to that 'wild' corner of India might be very dangerous, she was told. Why, she might be eaten up by a tiger!

But Margaret was a very determined person. This refusal in no way damped her great desire to work in India. India was fighting for her independence, and Margaret felt a call to serve the downtrodden and oppressed people of India. Margaret's sister, Mary, was already in India. Mary had worked as a

missionary for some time, but left her mission and became one of Gandhiji's workers. So Margaret made up her mind that she too would go to India—she must 'get there somehow'. For two years she taught in a girls' school in Calcutta. During the school holidays she went to the Khasi Hills, learnt the Khasi language, and discovered her great affinity with the Khasi people. Thus it was that she was finally appointed to the post she had been refused. When she went to visit Gandhiji she asked him what she should do to serve India. 'Keep out of jail', was his reply. 'Keep out of jail, and work in a village'.

To Margaret the Unitarians in the Khasi Hills were not merely an isolated group, a small sect with religious affiliations in the West. Not at all. The Khasi Unitarians were a part of India, their loyalty was to India and to the building up of India as a great nation. She always viewed her work in this very broad context, and when, in later years, she studied the nationalist teaching of Swami Vivekananda, she was ready for the universal embrace that those teachings provided. The remote village in the Khasi Hills where Margaret worked had as its horizon not only the whole of India, but the whole world.

With Margaret's help and encouragement I came to India in 1935, and from that time onwards there was a bond between us of deep love and understanding. Although our paths were separate, we complemented each other; mentally and spiritually we grew, each in a different way, as we absorbed the lesson that India had to teach us.

'Till death do us part' is an idea I am unable to accept. My experience is that death does not part us from those we love,

it brings them closer. Margaret, her pilgrimage completed, is always my friend.

Mrs. Irene R. Ray
Editor, Bulletin, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

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Margaret Barr came only once to North America. She came in 1963, not as a tourist, but at the special invitation of our American Unitarian Universalist Association. She came so that we might personally present to her our annual Award of Distinguished Service to the Cause of Liberal Religion.



Dr. Robert Nelson West

We gave her that award as a token of appreciation for her pioneering courage and endurance, her medical and educational ministry, her faith in the "Great Unity" of the major religions of the world, and her personal character.

Although until then most of us in North America had never met her, we had been touched by her life. When she left, a multitude of friends and admirers had found a new dedication to their own faith because of her example.

She chose to spend her final decade among those with whom she had spent most of her life. The Unitarian Universalist Association is grateful that we were able to provide some financial support for her work, even as we now help support the continuation of Devison Marbaniang's enterprise.

Margaret Barr's ministry in the Khasi Hills was a life of putting into practice the liberal religious principles we all hold dear: "The dignity of man", "the supreme worth of every human personality", the universal truths taught by every age and tradition", "Love is the doctrine of this church and service is its law", "peace on earth and goodwill toward men". In Margaret Barr the words were made flesh. She was an incarnation of the best we all believe. We around the earth are profoundly grateful that she lived and moved among us.

Dr. Robert Nelson West,
President, Unitarian Universalist Association,
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