

Unity Church, Pittsfield, Mass. October, 18 '08.

Subject, -- The religion of Humanity.

by Rev. Carl C. Davis

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la 10 I wish to speak this morning upon the subject,
The religion of Humanity. I wish to suggest the answer
~~that is~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ to that question that is behind all
the seething unrest and inquiry of our times. Why is
it that we are in the midst of all the turmoil, dis-
integration and reconstruction that we find about us
to-day? What is the significance of it all? What will
be the outcome of it?

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What I have in mind is well suggested in one of
the pointed and prophetic utterances of Mazini, the
great Italian reformer, who has been called the
prophet of the religion of humanity.

Even before the the movement of modern life had

2/ had become so well defined and it ~~was~~ ^{is} to-day, Mazzini ⁻²⁻ felt the full power of its vitalizing force surging through his being. He felt the call of the modern spirit of life, and even as he felt it he recognized it as the call of the ~~infinite~~ ^{infinite}. With an abandonment that is at once heroic and divine, he cast behind him all conformity and plunged into the midst of the movement that was just then beginning to be felt in the world in which he lived. He had faith that in the ~~XX~~ strange, unconventional ideas of the unknown men of his time, the voice of the Living God was speaking even as it had spoke to ~~XXX~~ Amos, the herdsman ^{of} Tekoa; to Hosea, the prophet of love; to Jesus, the prophet of the abundant life. He had faith that beneath all the changing forms, there is the eternal spirit, ~~that~~ ^{it} is

true to its inborn powers, and with an irresistible instinct, follows on towards the eternal truth of human life.

These two things should be noted in Mazini, for I am sure that they are the two anchors by which we should feel ourselves tied to reality in the midst of the changing conditions of our time. Mazini considered ^{the} current religion of his time to consist mainly of symbols and rites. To him as to most men of today these symbols, rites and creeds, ^{had} lost their vitality/ They no longer expressed ^a living faith. They are the falling leaves of a bygone luxuriance. To him they seemed to belong absolutely to the past. Yet in spite of the fact that he saw them fading away into

oblivion of ~~History~~, he did not do as many are doing to-day, ~~he~~ did not jump to the ~~conclusion~~ that there will be no more leaves, no more luxuriance. He did not see in the ~~decay~~ of the old forms, ~~and~~ the old symbols and the old creeds, the passing of that spirit in human life that had produced them. We look not with feelings of hopelessness upon the falling leaves, for we know that ~~even~~ now the self same spirit that has produced the leaves of the passing season is at work preparing for the luxuriance of the years that are before. To him also that self same spirit that has dotted the whole face of the world with spots that are sacred to human life, because there man's aspiring soul has for the moment caught a glumpse of the infinite

spirit of life; to him also that self same spirit in
 man that has produced passing forms to ~~express~~ its
 best thoughts , and its highest aspirations , that
 has produced sacred writings, religious institutions
 liturgies and even credos, ^{that spirit} is even now at work at
 the same problem trying to give adequate expression
 to the best thought and the deepest feelings that
 possess the mind of man as he contemplates his relat-
 ion to the unseen world of force and ideals in the
 midst of which he finds himself. The old forms pass
 away as do the dying leaves, but the religious ~~XXXX~~
 impulse of the human soul is abiding and will for-
 ever work so long as man lives and thinks and wonders
 at the mystery of human life ~~and~~ the glory, and the

majestic splendor of the Universe. This eternal presence of the religious spirit in human life, and the recognition of it as the master passion of the human soul was a fundamental faith of Mazzini. We must recognize this as the deepest faith of all human life. Then whatever changes in form or in interpretation ~~be~~ come we shall still be relying upon an ultimate faith in an eternal principle ~~of life~~ and an eternal function of the human personality.

But still more Mazzini saw that in all these ~~changing~~ changing forms, ~~and~~ the constant falling of the old leaves of faith and the constant ^{growth} ~~development~~ of the new leaves of faith, there is to be observed a constant ^{development} ~~development~~ and an approach to a clearer understanding of the truth. By whatever trail one may trav-

-7-

el, in howsoever deep a thicket one may find himself straying, the way is always up , up towards the mountain-top where the truth of the higher and the purer interpretation of human life finds a free scope for its inquiring gaze into the infinite.

Thus he sees in the evolution of the life of man, a growing appreciation of man's deeper relation to the mysterious unseen. "Perhaps in religion as in politics," he says, " the age of the symbol is passing away, and a solemn manifestation may be approaching of the idea as yet hidden in that symbol. Perhaps ~~the~~ the discovery of a new relation--that of the individual to humanity-- may lay the foundation of a new religious bond, as the relation of the individual with nature was the soul of paganism, and the relation of

the individual with God ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ has been the soul of Christianity!"

Such seems to me to be a true statement of the development of the religious life. In the simple life of the primitive man the inquiring spirit was directed towards the more apparent relationships of the individual to nature. As these searchings extended into the unseen spirit ~~back of nature~~ and manifested in nature, the object of interest was gradually transferred from the multiplicity of manifestation to the common source of the power that is seen in nature. But it is lamentably true that as men turned their eyes up from the earth to the unseen, they forgot altogether the facts of their relation to the realities of mother nature. They became entirely engrossed ~~in~~

in their contemplation of and their imaginings about that unseen spirit and that unseen world far off in the distant ^{ce,} ~~apart~~ apart from all that they could see and feel and hear and touch. Thus it happened that their faith came to hang by a mere thread of the imagination

All of a sudden men realized that they had ~~w~~ walked to the very edge of a precipice, and that ^{with} one step more, ~~and~~ they would step entirely off into the abyss of unreality. The spirit of the modern world has called them back from their vain quest of the ~~re~~ realities of life amid the ~~amid~~ the unrelated speculations of pure reason. Now we have turned again to our paganism of the relation of the individual to the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ world of nature, and we find that

to us even as to Moses of old comes the voice of
the great spirit from out of every bush that burnes
with the message of eternal beauty, - Take off the
shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou
standest is holy ground." Tired and weary in our ~~sa~~
search for the truth in the phantom world of specula-
tion, we have laid ourselves down to rest upon the ~~XX~~
hard rock of nature. We have awakened from our re-
freshing sleep only to say as did Jacob of old, -"
Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I know it not."
This stone of nature which our fathers, ~~rejected as~~ ~~XXXXXX~~
~~base and vile and evil~~ in their construction of
the temple of religious specualtion, rejected as vile
and ~~depraved~~ and altogether evil, the same stone, in
the new temple which we are building, is become a

corner stone in the fondation. We see that nature breathes the breath of the eternal truth and it is marvellous in our eyes.

That which we find in the beauty of nature, ~~as~~
~~xxx~~ we find in all the universe. Every where, ~~ixxxx~~
not alone in some far off section of space dwelling
in some heaven, do we find a big manlike God, but in
every least corner of ~~of~~ our *familiar* ~~mundane~~ earth is the
evidence of the eternal spirit of wisdom that is not
so much in nature as it is nature it-self. That which
we mean when we use the name God is not so much to be
defined as it is to be seen, not with the eyes of the
body, *but* ~~as~~ with the eyes of the personality. Every brea-
th that we breath, ^e every thought that we think, every

impulse that blows across the quiet surface ^{of human life} speaks to us of a spiritual environment in which intelligence, goodness, and high purpose survive. Within us, with out us, about us is a power infinitely greater, ~~which wakes for righteousness,~~ infinitely wiser, infinitely better, to which we are related by the simple ties of ^{the} unseen laws of human life. This is another thing that we have learned as we have turned away from that abyss of speculation back to the plain experiences of human life.

But we are learning another thing that is most important of all, that thing which led Mazzini to say, with the prophetic insight of high feeling and high appreciation, that the religion of the future would be the religion of humanity. From out of the complex ~~in~~ mysteries of human life already are appearing the

rough outlines of this new interpretation of ⁻¹³⁻the
religious life. We are beginnig to see a little
more @learly what Jesus meant when he said that the
whole law and the prophets hangeth upon the two
principles of love to God and love to man. Love is
not that flamboyant display ^{of} ostentatious worship,
~~nor~~ is it a mere sentimental adoration for that which
is manifestly superior. On the contrary it is that
power of appreciation, that insight of the understand-
ing ~~soul~~ ^{heart} that sees into the very soul of the person
loved and identifies ~~oneself~~ ^{with} with the object and the
purpose of the person loved in complete and ~~perfect~~
perfect harmony. Love is not the desire of ~~possession~~ ^{of} possession,
but the ~~passion~~ of devoted and disinterested service.

Thus between two persons, love is not the desire of possession, born of appreciation of beauty or charm, but rather it is the feeling which springs from such a deep insight into the purposes and the aspirations, into the hopes and the ideals of a person, that one forgets himself, and with an abandonment that is ~~xxx~~ wholly heroic, submerges himself in the interests and the life purposes of the one whom he loves. He is happy if he may but serve and in his service see the recognition, on the part of the one he loves, ~~of that responsive love that says,~~ "I receive and I am happy." That love between persons is complete when the aspirations of each find their satisfaction in the service of the other and in the pursuit of a common purpose in life.

It is this very same thing that is meant when we speak of the love of God. We do not refer to any sentimental attitude towards some person whom we have never seen. We mean simply this, that in some moment of insight we have ~~seen~~ ^{caught} enough ^{into} the meaning of ~~the~~ human life and its relation to the universe, to see ~~in~~ that this human life has some purpose to it, that it has some bearing upon the work and the relations of men, that we have something to do. Having seen that thing which we feel should be done, having seen that we ourselves must be the channel of its accomplishment, then we forget ourselves and in the devotion of service to ~~our~~ our new love, we give ourselves completely to whatsoever is necessary in the further realization of the great purpose. We do, ~~infact~~ ^{in fact}, come thus to identify

our own purpose~~2~~ with the purposes of the universe as
 we see them. We will to act in accord with ~~XXX~~ what
 to our best insihgt seems the highest and the best
 purpose of the world in which we live. That is not
 otherwise than saying that we will to do the will of
 God. Jesus said the same thing ~~XX~~ when he said; "I came
 came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the
 will of him that sent me." It makes no differ^herence ~~W~~^z
 as to the particualar language in which you cloth^e this
~~idea~~^{thought}; the~~X~~ idea is the same and it is what makes life
 significant and gives to it something of ~~d~~ignity and
 importance. To feel yourself so related to the ~~Unive~~-
 rse that you will that the apparent purpose of the ~~X~~
 universe becomrs your purpose, and you the servant
 working for the realization of that purpose, ~~XXXXXXh~~

and you are fulfilling that great principle of
human life which Jesus enunciated when he said
that we should love the Lord our God with all
our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind)

But we have been slow in learning our lessons from
our experiences; all too ^{many of} ~~many of~~ our declarations of
love to the great good will have been but the shallow
murmurings of our tongues. Still more delinquent have
we been in appreciating the fact that the true purpose
of the universe is, so far as we may learn from the
experiences of human life, related ~~with~~ ^{to} our conduct,
our mental moral and our spiritual relationships to
each other in the various conditions of life. Here
we come upon the heart of the new hope and the new ~~missions~~ ^{missions}

that ~~Mazzini~~ ^{Squ} ~~is~~ in the religion of humanity. God, whose wisdom and whose truth we seek to understand, and whose will we try to make our will, is a living God. The soul of man is the temple in which he dwells as well as in the beauty of nature. That human nature which has been ~~so~~ much ^{de} ~~decried~~ and condemned is the place where we find the ^H ~~holy~~ ^G ~~grail~~ of the deeper ~~xxx~~ insight into the meaning of the universe, where we ~~g~~ get the starting point for plotting the full curve of life. The thoughts that men are thinking to-day, the high hopes that they are expressing, the noble ~~xxx~~ visions that they are seeing of a new heaven and a new earth ~~x~~ are just as much the voice of the divine as the words of old. Yes, even more do they speak with the authority of infinite ^r purpose for they have to guide

them all the accumulated wisdom and experience of
the ages. In the light of this vision we are coming
to see more clearly that it is in the human soul, in
the personality of man, and in the life of man as he
lives that life in the three score years and ten upon
this earth that the best and the deepest problems ^{and lives}
~~confront us.~~ ^{are to be found} We are coming to see that we are not mere-
ly depraved ^{beings} things created to satisfy the whims of a
foolish God, but that we are here to take part in the
unfolding evolution of the universe; that we are ~~XXX~~
here to see and to understand the full glory of Truth,
~~Goodness~~ ^B and beauty, and to make our lives and the ~~X~~
lives about us the living incarnations of these uni-
versal principles of truth, goodness and beauty.

Our attention is turned from ~~from~~ the abstract ^{idea} of God to the concrete objects in which the spark of the infinite spirit dwells. God does not need our ~~XX~~ worship and our pious verbosities. The thing for us to do is to understand his will and to make it our will in these relations of human life, *to love and respect the infinite spirit as it is in the common world.*

Out of all this we are ~~XXXXXX~~ coming to see more and more the wondrous beauty of human life, the unsearchable mystery that hovers about it, as the morning mist hovers over the surface of the lake. The ~~the~~ more deeply we penetrate into the depths of the inner purposes of the pure life, the more we are impressed by its transcendent nobility. Here too is the spirit

of the living God.

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" The picket frozen on duty,
 The mother ~~dying~~ ^{starved} for her brood,
 Socrates drinking the hemlock,
 and Jesus on the rood.

" *And countless other millions
 who the flaring, hard faith way tread;
 some ~~for~~ call it consecration, and others call
 it God.*"

Here it is, the faith of the religion of huamnyty.

We are bound together not by ties of economic neces-
 sity, or bondw of social expediency , or shackles of
 supernatural authority, but by the common tie of a
 common purpose and a common spirit. In the life that
 now is we are to live the eternal life. In the life
 that now is we are immortal souls if we are immortal
 souls at all. Our basis of judgeing our relationships

shall no longer be that of the yard-stick^{to} of conventionality, but the subtle balance of the justice of purpose.

Men have been asked to go down on their knees before the alter^a which was the symbol of the God they worshipped, they have bowed themselves and prostrated themselves before some God whom they imagined dwelled in the far off limits of space. The English poet cried to his companion, -- "Down, down on you knees, man, violets, Violets." You have felt that way yourself, and so have I. But I want to say to you now, "Down, down on your knees, humanity, humanity!" I say to you, -- Worship the infinite in the human soul. There is no soul so base, so degraded, but that there glows within

its secret chambers, that self same spirit that has
 carried thousands of men as it ~~carried~~ ^{carried} Christ to ~~the~~
 complete devotion. There is no soul so noble but that
 there lurks within it the glory of an unending ~~XXXX~~
 incompleteness. I appeal to you in the spirit of ~~the~~
 modern life, not to love nature less, not to love the
 great ^g ~~good~~ ^{will} less, but to love humanity more, to
 see in the every day life of man the infinite beauty,
 and to hear in the voice of the common life, the com-
 mand of infinite ~~XX~~ goodness.

Above all I appeal to you that wherever you find
 humanity in ^o ~~ignorance~~, feel it your joy to enlighten,
 wherever you find humanity in bondage, feel it your joy
 to liberate it; wherever you find humanity imperfect
 and incomplete, feel it your great work to contribute

your life to its greater perfection. In the religion
of humanity, that is the motive power of all thought,
of all hope, of all action; the purpose of realizing
~~in fact~~ the great possibilities of the human soul for
living the noble life in the midst of a noble world.
I like that fine sentiment of Heine's, ~~in which he says~~
" I know not if I deserve that a laurel wreath should
one day be laid on my coffin. Poetry, dearly as I ~~have~~
have loved it, has always been to me but a divine
plaything. I have never attached any great value to
poetical fame, and I trouble myself very little ~~whether~~
whether people praise my verses or blame them. ~~But lay~~
But lay on my coffin a sword, for I was a brave sol-
dier in the war of the liberation of humanity"

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