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FIFTY AFFIRMATIONS.

RELIGION.

1. Religion is the effort of Man to perfect himself.

2. The root of religion is universal human nature.

3. Historical religions are all one, in virtue of this one common root.

4. Historical religions are all different, in virtue of their different historical origin and development.

5. Every historical religion has thus two distinct elements,—one universal or spiritual, and the other special or historical.

6. The universal element is the same in all historical religions; the special element is peculiar in each of them.

7. The universal and the special elements are equally essential to the existence of an historical religion.

8. The unity of all religions must be sought in their universal element.

9. The peculiar character of each religion must be sought in its special element.

RELATION OF JUDAISM TO CHRISTIANITY.

10. The idea of a coming "kingdom of heaven" arose naturally in the Hebrew mind after the decay of the Davidic monarchy, and

ripened under foreign oppression into passionate longing and expectation.

11. The "kingdom of heaven" was to be a world-wide empire on this earth, both temporal and spiritual, to be established on the ruins of the great empires of antiquity by the miraculous intervention of Jehovah.

12. The Messiah or Christ was to reign over the "kingdom of heaven" as the visible deputy of Jehovah, who was considered the true sovereign of the Hebrew nation. He was to be a Priest-King,—the supreme pontiff or high-priest of the Hebrew church, and absolute monarch of the Hebrew state.

13. The "apocalyptic literature" of the Jews exhibits the gradual formation and growth of the idea of the Messianic "kingdom of heaven."

• 14. All the leading features of the gospel doctrine concerning the "kingdom of heaven," the "end of the world," the "great day of judgment," the "coming of the Christ in the clouds of heaven," the "resurrection of the dead," the condemnation of the wicked and the exaltation of the righteous, the "passing away of the heavens and the earth," and the appearance of a "new heaven and a new earth," were definitely formed and firmly fixed in the Hebrew mind, in the century before Jesus was born.

15. John the Baptist came preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But he declared himself merely the forerunner of the Messiah.



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16. Jesus also came preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and announced himself as the Messiah or Christ.

17. Jesus emphasized the spiritual aspect of the Messianic kingdom; but, although he expected his throne to be established by the miraculous intervention of God, and therefore refused to employ human means in establishing it, he nevertheless expected to discharge the political functions of his office as King and Judge, when the fulness of time should arrive.

18. As a preacher of purely spiritual truth, Jesus perhaps stands at the head of all the great religious teachers of the past.

19. As claimant of the Messianic crown, and founder of Christianity as a distinct historical religion, Jesus shared the spirit of an unenlightened age, and stands on the same level with Gautama or Mohammed.

20. In the belief of his disciples, the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus would not prevent the establishment of the "kingdom of heaven." His throne was conceived to be already established in the heavens; and the early church impatiently awaited its establishment on earth at the "second coming of the Christ."

21. Christianity thus appears as simply the complete development of Judaism,—the highest possible fulfilment of the Messianic dreams based on the Hebrew conception of a "chosen people."

CHRISTIANITY.

22. Christianity is the historical religion taught in the Christian Scriptures, and illustrated in the history of the Christian church.

23. It is a religion in virtue of its universal element; it is the Christian religion in virtue of its special element.

24. The Christian Scriptures teach, from beginning to end, that "Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God,"—that is, the Hebrew Messiah. This, the Christian Confession, was declared both by Jesus and the apostles to be necessary to salvation or admission into the "kingdom of heaven."

25. The Christian Church, from its origin to the present day, has everywhere planted itself on faith in the Christian Confession, as its divinely appointed foundation,—the eternal "rock" against which the "gates of hell shall never prevail."

26. The Christian Confession gradually created on the one hand the theology, and on the other hand the hierarchy, of the Roman Catholic Church. The process was not, as is claimed, a corruption, but a natural and logical development.

27. The Church of Rome embodies Christianity in its most highly developed and perfect form, as a religion of authority based on the Christian Confession.

28. Protestantism is the gradual disin-

tegration of Christianity, whether regarded theologically or ecclesiastically, under the influence of the free spirit of protest against authority.

29. "Liberal Christianity,"—that is, democratic autocracy in religion,—is the highest development of the free spirit of protest against authority which is possible within the Christian church. It is, at the same time, the lowest possible development of faith in the Christ,—a return to the Christian Confession in its crudest and least developed form.

30. Christianity is the religion of Christians, and all Christians are believers in the Christ.

31. The Christian name, whatever else it may include, necessarily includes faith in Jesus as the Christ of God. Any other use of the name is abuse of it. Under some interpretation or other, the Christian Confession is the boundary line of Christianity.

FREE RELIGION.

32. The Protestant Reformation was the birth of Free Religion,—the beginning of the religious protest against authority within the confines of the Christian Church.

33. The history of Protestantism is the history of the growth of Free Religion at the expense of the Christian Religion. As love of freedom increases, reverence for authority decreases.

34. The completion of the religious protest against authority must be the extinction of faith in the Christian Confession.

35. Free Religion is emancipation from the outward law, and voluntary obedience to the inward law.

36. The great faith or moving power of Free Religion is faith in Man as a progressive being.

37. The great ideal end of Free Religion is the perfection or complete development of Man,—the race serving the individual, the individual serving the race.

38. The great practical means of Free Religion is the integral, continuous and universal education of man.

39. The great law of Free Religion is the still, small voice of the private soul.

40. The great peace of Free Religion is spiritual oneness with the infinite One.

41. Free Religion is the natural outcome of every historical religion—the final unity, therefore, towards which all historical religions slowly tend.

RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO FREE RELIGION

42. Christianity is identical with Free Religion so far as its universal element is concerned,—antagonistic to it so far as its special element is concerned.

43. The corner-stone of Christianity is faith in the Christ. The corner-stone of Free Religion is faith in Human Nature.

44. The great institution of Christianity is the Christian Church, the will of the Christ being its supreme law. The great institution of Free Religion is the coming Republic of the World, or Commonwealth of Man, the universal conscience and reason of mankind being its supreme organic law or constitution.

45. The fellowship of Christianity is limited by the Christian Confession; its brotherhood includes all subjects of the Christ and excludes all others. The fellowship of Free Religion is universal and free; it proclaims the great Brotherhood of Man without limit or bound.

46. The practical work of Christianity is to Christianize the world,—to convert all souls to the Christ, and ensure their salvation from the wrath of God. The practical work of Free Religion is to humanize the world—to make the individual nobler here and now, and to convert the human race into a vast Co-operative Union devoted to universal ends.

47. The spiritual ideal of Christianity is the suppression of self and perfect imitation of Jesus the Christ. The spiritual ideal of Free Religion is the free development of self, and the harmonious education of all its powers to the highest possible degree.

48. The essential spirit of Christianity is that of self-humiliation at the feet of Jesus, and passionate devotion to his person. The

essential spirit of Free Religion is that of self-respect and free self-devotion to great ideas. Christianity is prostrate on its face; Free Religion is erect on its feet.

49. The noblest fruit of Christianity is a self-sacrificing love of man for Jesus' sake. The noblest fruit of Free Religion is a self-sacrificing love of man for man's own sake.

50. Christianity is the faith of the soul's childhood; Free Religion is the faith of the soul's manhood. In the gradual growth of mankind out of Christianity into Free Religion, lies the only hope of the spiritual perfection of the individual and the spiritual unity of the race.

MODERN PRINCIPLES:

A SYNOPSIS OF FREE RELIGION.

I. CHRISTIANITY AS A SYSTEM.

1. Regarded as to its universal element, Christianity is a beautiful but imperfect presentation of natural morality.

2. Regarded as to its special element, Christianity is a great completed system of faith and life—a coherent body of doctrines logically developed and organized as an historical power by the Christian Church. It claims absolute control over the collective life of society and the outward and inward

life of the individual. It rests this claim on the supernatural revelation of the will of God; that is, on the principle of **DIVINE AUTHORITY**.

3. The chief features of this system are the doctrines of the Fall of Adam, the Total Depravity of the human race, the Everlasting Punishment of the wicked, and salvation by Christ alone. Through the transgression of the first man, all human beings lie under the consuming wrath of God, and are condemned to an everlasting hell, from which the only escape is by the Atonement of Christ.

4. This system demands absolute and unreasoning submission from the human mind. It teaches that doubt is sin, and that disbelief is damnation. It everywhere condemns freedom of thought, and persecutes it in proportion to its power. It is the worst enemy of liberty, science and civilization, because it is organized **DESPAIR OF MAN**.

II. FREE RELIGION AS A SYSTEM.

5. Free Religion is a great and growing system of ideas, hitherto very imperfectly developed, but destined to become embodied in a world-wide Commonwealth of Man. It will claim absolute control over the collective life of society and the outward and inward life of the individual. It will rest this claim on the natural perception of truth by the universal human race; that is, on the principle of **HUMAN FREEDOM**.

6. The chief features of this system are the supremacy of liberty in all matters of government, the supremacy of science in all matters of belief, the supremacy of morality in all matters of conduct, and the supremacy of benevolence in all social and personal relations. It puts the Church on the level of all other institutions, the Bible on the level of all other books, the Christ on the level of all other men, leaving them to stand or fall by their intrinsic merits or demerits.

7. This system encourages the largest activity of the human mind, and asks no assent that can be withheld. It is the best friend of progress of every kind, because it is organized FAITH IN MAN.

III. ANTAGONISM OF THE TWO SYSTEMS.

8. Between these two great systems there exists an absolute conflict of principles, aims and methods. The one ruled the world in the Dark Ages of the past. The other will rule the world in the Light Ages of the future. Their battle ground is the Twilight Age of the present.

9. Free Religion emphasizes the *Unity of the Universe*, the *Unity of Mankind*, the *Unity of the Person*, and the *Unity of the Unities*.

IV. THE UNITY OF THE UNIVERSE.

10. Nature is an organic, living whole. All things are in harmony as parts of a perfect cosmos. All phenomena, physical and spir-

itual, are correlated in the unity of a perfect order.

11. The laws of Nature are elements of one underlying, all-permeating, all-comprehensive system of Law. Fixed and inviolable, from eternity to eternity they know no change. The belief in miracle is an infinite delusion.

12. The forces of Nature are modes of one omnipresent Energy, illimitable, uncreatable, indestructible—the cause of all metamorphoses and the life of all that lives.

13. Thus Nature is infinitely *many* in her phenomena, and absolutely *one* in her order, laws and forces.

V. THE UNITY OF MANKIND.

14. The origin of the human race is one, in virtue of a common descent from inferior types of being.

15. The nature of the human race is one, in virtue of the universal possession, in varying degrees, of the same fundamental faculties.

16. The destiny of the human race is one, in virtue of a slow but constant progress towards a universal and perfect civilization.

17. The human race ought to be a political unit, as a universal Republic of Republics based on the principle that the liberty of the individual is absolute except as limited by the equal rights of all individuals.

18. The human race ought to be a social unit, as a universal Co-operative Union based

on free industry and free commerce,—labor and capital being reconciled by the education of ignorance and the reformation of selfishness.

19. The human race ought to be a religious unit, as a universal Brotherhood of Man, based on faith in human nature and love for all human beings.

20. Thus the human race is one in origin, nature and destiny; and it ought to be one politically, socially and religiously.

VI. THE UNITY OF THE PERSON.

21. Every human being is an independent consciousness, manifesting itself on the one hand in numerous unlike faculties (sensation, perception, locomotion, passion, affection, will, reason, conscience, etc.,) and manifesting itself on the other hand in the absolute unity of personality (the *I.*)

22. Every human being ought to develop the unity of personality into the unity of character, based on the principle that the liberty of every faculty is absolute in the exercise of its natural function.

23. The unity of character requires that the Intellect shall make experience its point of departure, reason its road, knowledge its goal, and the love of truth its inspiration and guide; that it shall count all questions open that are not shut by positive demonstration; that it shall reject all answers which have no better basis than ignorant assumption or dogmatic authority; and that

it shall seek answers to all questions through the patient study of universal Nature according to the laws of scientific thought.

24. The unity of character requires that the Conscience shall govern all personal action by absolute and universal moral ideas (truthfulness, justice, benevolence, purity, honor, integrity, self-respect); that it shall speak in all places and at all times with the voice of absolute command; that it shall shine like a sun that never sets, flooding the soul with the light of an ever-beautiful ideal; that it shall unsparingly rebuke every betrayal of the right, encourage fidelity to it by approving smiles, and waken deathless aspiration towards it by unveiling the eternal possibility of virtue; and that it shall make the welfare of all a private duty to each, thus consecrating the private life to the public good.

25. The unity of character requires that the Affections shall irradiate life in all its relations with the splendor of unselfish love; that they shall make manhood more manly and womanhood more womanly by blending them in one pure and happy home; that they shall dignify existence with noble friendships; that they shall deepen the joy and lighten the grief of others by respectful and tender sympathy; that they shall reverence the good and pity the evil in every human soul, and broaden out into a mighty and self-forgetful love of universal man.

26. The unity of character requires that the Will shall serve the conscience and reason, and know no other law; that it shall master the passions and confine them to their lawful functions; that it shall be incorruptible in this servanthship, and unconquerable in this mastership; and that thus, harmonizing the animal and the spiritual, it shall bring the entire man into harmony with the laws of Nature.

27. The unity of character requires that the Sentiments and Imagination shall soar to the beautiful and sublime, and never trail their wings in defiling mire; that they shall venerate the truly venerable, delight in the magnificence of universal Nature, and thrill to its mysterious life; that they shall recognize the infinitude of the unknown, and add to the clear insights of science the deep glow of poetry and the deeper reverence of worship.

28. Thus the individual is one in the unity of personality, and ought to be one in the unity of a free, powerful and self-harmonized character.

VII: THE UNITY OF THE UNITIES.

29. The Unity of the Universe is repeated in miniature in the ideal Unity of Mankind; and the ideal Unity of Mankind is repeated in miniature in the ideal Unity of the Person. The macrocosm is mirrored in the microcosm.

30. The great inspiration of the nineteenth century is faith in these ideal unities as possible in fact. Its faith in Man is part of its faith in universal Nature; and its faith in universal Nature includes and necessitates its faith in Man.

31. The great endeavor of the nineteenth century, half-conscious though it be, is thus to reproduce the eternal harmony of Nature in the life of the race and the life of the individual, — to create a civilization grounded on universal reverence for freedom, truth, and the equal rights of all mankind.

32. The Universe is Many in One, and One in Many. Such also will be Humanity, when its ideals shall have been realized in the world and in the soul. The national motto of America has become the great watchword of the ages—

E PLURIBUS UNUM.

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