

The world has many religions, and hundreds of divisions and sects within them. It would appear sometimes that many different gods wever vying for man's attention and devotion. In the babble of persuaders seeking to lead us to salvation through a particular door, one can easily become confused. Which is the right road to God? What is Truth?

Did you know that every religion, large or small, began with a personal experience of one individual? One person had a vision, a revelation, an awakening. That person's life was transformed by the consciousness of a unique relationship with the Infinite. One revelation, one mystical experience, one changed life--and a religion was born. Rarely has a religion been consciously and deliberately started. In each instance, there was one moving experience followed by the natural urge to convey the "truth" to others--to help others make the same inner discovery and share the same experience. Thus did the Buddha begin his mission of teaching, as did Mohammed, and Jesus. In every case the founder had but one objective--to help others find the same relationship with God as he had found. His was a mission of uniting people to God, a mission of unity. The word religion stems from a word meaning "to tie, to connect". All religion is actually a uniting work. The key word is unity.

In the evolution of each religion, the founder gathers disciples around him, trains them and then sends them forth to spread the "good news" of the new relationship to God. There is little organization, little form or ritual or dogma. The teaching is simple and compelling. Throngs of people follow and listen. Many are helped and healed. Then the founder "moves on" to a new experience. The disciples and those whom they train begin to organize for efficiency. They codify the teachings for simplicity. They add symbols for teaching purposes. As the movement becomes more widespread, ecclesiastical bodies are formed and a priesthood is created. Years pass...and we find buildings that are monuments to the founder, ritual that is a worship of the founder, theology that tells and retells the mystical experience of the founder. All religions tend in time to become so caught up in a religion of form that the communicants no longer really communicate with God, and the religious experience ceases gradually to reach the heart and heal the body.

In his famous Divinity School Address in 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson inflamed the religious community when he asked, in effect, "Why should we not have a first-hand and immediate experience of God?" Today a growing number of individuals are asking the same question. Why should we not discover the presence and power of God in ourselves today, as Jesus discovered the presence in himself in his day? He said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto the Father."

When Jesus was asked to sum up his concept of religious law, drawing upon the basic truths he had learned in the synagogue as a child, he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus knew that love is that which harmonizes, integrates, and unites. Love is unity. This unity is what religion is all about. Love breaks down all barriers, destroys all walls, fills in all gulfs wipes out all sense of separation and isolation. Love makes possible the awakening of the higher consciousness in man and leads to a first-hand experience of God. The word is unity, and love brings about unity.

The key to the great power of Jesus was his consciousness of unity, his relationship with God. No one could tell where man left off and God began in Jesus. Perhaps we cannot tell this in any man. Every man must ultimately emphasize his own unity by proclaiming for himself "I and the Father are one." Unless we understand Jesus' idea of unity, we have lost the key to his teachings. Without this unity principle, the whole Christian religion becomes a religion about Jesus, not of Jesus. It is the unity principle that explains the true meaning of the Christ, the idea of

of man's sonship. Christ is not a person, but the level of the particularization of God into man, the focal point through which all the attributes of God are poured out into livingness in you and me. It is man's true "hope of glory" and the key to his health and success. Perhaps the word Christ is only defined by the word unity--the unity of God and man.

One of the deepest mysteries of life is that every individual in the world stands alone; he lives his life alone and can never really be united with anyone. Each person lives in a separate world, the world of his own thinking. Just as no two atoms ever really touch one another, no matter how compact the substance, so no two individuals ever completely touch one another, no matter how closely they may be thrown together. Even in the most nearly perfect union of man and woman, there are always some reserves, some barriers, something withheld. It is only through the highest form of love that these barriers are occasionally dissolved. And this is right, for each is an individual, and individuality must not be smothered by possessive love. As Gibran puts it, "Let there be spaces in your togetherness."

However, there is a sense in which all individuals rebound into one great whole--regardless of racial, national, or individual differences. It is a spiritual unity. It cannot be defined or explained in finite terms. It can only be sensed or felt, for "spiritual things must be spiritually discerned." The understanding of this unity cannot be conveyed by creeds, nor enforced by religious devotion; yet, it is intuitively felt by everyone. Love lays hold of this unity, friendship senses it, forgiveness responds to it, justice honors it, and peace proclaims it. It is a unity of the spirit, a unity in terms of common roots, a common relationship with the eternal.

Unity is the fundamental law of the universe. The word universe means "the whole body of things." Every part is a unity of the whole, and there is a unity of all the parts. The scientist works with his laws, the musician with his chords, the mathematician with his equations, the religionist with his spiritual concepts. However, all are on the quest for Truth, searching on different levels, and reporting their findings in different words.

It is the consciousness of this unity with God, with life, with all intelligence and all substance, that is man's only basis for security and his sole hope for fulfillment. Without this consciousness he will falter and fail at every turning of life's way. Armed with this consciousness, this awareness, he will achieve the only purpose of religion--to help man know this secret. In a very real sense there is only one church in the world. It is that place of relationship within every man where the human merges into the divine. Here each person can "enter in and close the door" and feel the peace and power and transforming influence of the activity of God in himself. This he can feel no matter what church he belongs to or what temple he worships in. The word is unity.

The Unity Center is devoted to the spread of this idea that the great and only strength of the world and the men within it is their unity with God. Unity preaches this gospel to all people, across all religious and denominational lines, seeking not to convert people from one ecclesiastical organization to another, but rather to help them to be "transformed by the renewing of the mind." No matter what your religious affiliation may be, or even that you may not feel yourself to be religious at all, the sole purpose of Unity is to help you to have "a first-hand and immediate experience of God." There is something within all of us that asks this question with Emerson. There is a dynamic answer for you. The word is unity.