

This morning I would impose upon more than expected congregational kindness and indulgence as I venture to speak rather personally ~~and~~ about my years in the ministry. (I would not be speaking thus on ~~has~~ occasion except that I have been asked to say something at the minister's meeting, being held a week from tomorrow in Concord, Massachusetts, and I need to get my thought and remembrance somewhat geared in that direction. At that meeting I am supposed to be representative of and spokesman for those who have been in the Unitarian-Universalist ministry for twenty-five years. Someone else will say a little something as representative of those who have served fifty and more years in the Unitarian-Universalist ministry. In asking me to represent the twenty five year ministers, there must have been some misunderstanding and confusion, for I have been in the Unitarian ministry some several years longer than that. The misunderstanding and confusion undoubtedly stem from the fact that the Year-book of the Unitarian-Universalist Association lists me as having been ordained a Unitarian minister in 1940, which does make for an interval of twenty-five years. With that date as a base, not only did the executive committee of the Unitarian Universalists Ministers Association ask me to speak at the minister's meeting, but a few days ago the head of the department of the ministry of the Unitarian-Universalist Association sent me a form letter--- apparently sent to everyone else ordained in 1940--- which was pleasant enough, although somewhat ambiguous in its congratulations about having served twenty five years in the ministry.)

Prior to ordination in 1940, (how ever) and while still in theological school

I had served, if that term can be so loosely applied, a rather defenceless and long-suffering Universalist church some miles south of Boston over ~~the~~ ^{the} period say of 1930 to 1934. Thus, on that basis, I have been in the ministry some thirty five years. In 1934, I received ~~the~~ what for me was the almost completely incongruous degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology, but with that degree, I could have been ordained ~~as a~~ ^{as a} Unitarian minister in 1934, and thus on the basis of ~~ordinations~~ ~~what~~ ~~could~~ ~~have~~ ~~been~~ ~~ordination~~, I would now be credited with at least thirty one years in the ministry. However, when I received my theological degree in 1934, things were rough. We were in the depths of a widespread economic depression, and there were very few churches looking for Unitarian ministers. There were relatively few churches to begin with--- in Unitarianism and Universalism then being a period of decline--- and during the depression any minister in a church was holding on for dear life, and understandably so, since ~~their~~ ^{his or her} income at best, was small, and ~~they~~ ^{ministers} had nothing in the way of social security and scarcely anything in the way of a pension plan. Thus I had no great choice about the matter, and in the early fall of 1934, I was rather glad, mainly because it provided me with the opportunity to see something of the continent, to become minister of the struggling little Unitarian group in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Here I was minister for two years, paid nine hundred dollars a year, not by the Edmonton congregation, but by the American Unitarian Association and by the British Unitarian Association. I was not ordained, there being no Unitarian officials anywhere near

at hand for such a service, but ³ there was never any question that I was as fully a Unitarian minister as anyone else. And when I finally was ordained in 1940, while serving as minister of the Unitarian Church in Exeter, New Hampshire, it was done largely as a bow to custom, and it constituted little more than acknowledgement of what, in my case, had been actuality over some years.

So just how long I have been and will have been in the Unitarian ministry must ever remain somewhat uncertain, but most surely right now it constitutes a considerable bit more than twenty five years rather mechanically established by the year of ordination. It could not be too fussy about the matter, but I would like the record to ~~at least~~ ^{at least} include the two years I spent with the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, Alberta. Not only were they two intensive years, in many ways far more so than the three years spent in Exeter, New Hampshire, but I would also like to believe that what I collected from the American and British Unitarian Societies in the way of salary was not illegal gain collected under false pretenses.

33 about my ^{own} going into the Unitarian ministry, I have always been frank to
confess that I originally had no desire whatsoever in that direction, and from the point of view of personality and aptitude I was the least likely potential candidate for the ministry that could have been found on the North American continent. But when I had a chance to go to college, by way of a theological school scholarship, I readily seized the opportunity, honestly intent upon

fulfilling the one stated obligation of giving the ministry serious consideration. Bit by bit, and with no small amount of inner qualm, I became involved, and with the exception of Opere ^{and he was more fully trained} when I turned to teaching, I have remained with the ministry. So from that point of view, at least, I have more than fulfilled any obligation that was attached to the acceptance of ~~me~~ a theological school scholarship. What I got into school and through school and into the ministry was largely a matter of circumstantial fortune. Then the standards for both school and the ministry were rather easy going. They didn't admit obvious idiots, and they probably would have drawn the line at known arsonists and rapists. But otherwise there was a considerable amount of leniency, and it was only on that basis that I and some others of my generation ever got through ^{into} into the Unitarian ministry. Since then, and quite rightly so, there has been a tightening of standards, and ministerial candidates are now put through a series of intelligence and personality tests that would have virtually wiped out the Unitarian ministry if they had been applied in my day. Today we are trying to get some brains into the pulpit so as not to fall too far behind the intelligence in the pew, and we are trying to get ministers who if not completely emotionally and mentally healthy are at least aware of their neuroses and of their pre-psychotic and schizophrenic tendencies. Such we are assured may operate quite successfully as ministers, finding as one psychiatrist has phrased it, an "ambulatory

sanitarium" in the work of the ministry. And we are told rather reassuringly that serious nervous breakdowns now occur less frequently in the clergy of all kinds than in the average population, and only half as often as with lawyers and physicians. On the other hand, we are also advised that while the minister may be able to operate rather successfully, he may at the same time be driving his wife to the brink of psychosis and his children into neurotic reactions. Personally, I have no particular objection to the general over-all jacking up of standards, particularly since I managed to get under the rather non-existent wire years ago, and am no longer ~~greatly~~ threatened. But it does seem to me that there is need for some further rather radical thinking about the matter. Possibly, as someone has ~~rather~~ ^{somewhat} indelicately suggested, there should be along with all the testing of ministerial candidates, a ~~similar~~ like testing of congregations, and may it not be that the only real answer to the problems of ministers wives and children lies in a rigid requirement of celibacy for Unitarian and Universalist ministers. Or possibly we should completely dispense with the ministry. Numerous other groups, such as many of the Quakers, don't have ministers, and they apparently get along ~~rather~~ well with lay leadership. And we ourselves now have a considerable number of Unitarian ~~and~~ Universalist fellowships, which not only do rather well with lay leadership, but are so anti-clerical in their orientation that they can hardly stand the sight, much less the sermons, of even a Unitarian or a Universalist minister. With such a trend that was not wholly unknown in our denominational

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past, and is now rather widely re-established, why not go the whole way and dispense with ministers altogether. Such would resolve any number of problems--- the up-keep of theological schools, ~~the shortage of ministers,~~ the matter of church budgets, the psychiatric problems of minister's wives and children. And tough as it might be upon some or most ministers themselves, it would force some of them into readily justifiable work such as filling pot-holes, ^m and delivering milk, ^a and providing consolation from behind a bar.

In my years as a minister, ~~some of my days have been~~ ^{now moving toward an end}, I have never felt wholly comfortable about being a minister, (and if remembrance does not mislead me I believe that I feel less comfortable today than I did say thirty years ago.) I report this with no whining complaint, and with no maudlin seeking after sympathy, but simply as fact. In part, even in large part, this may be due to my own psychological make-up, to my fears, and anxieties, and feelings of inadequacy, and to my neurotic and psychotic tendencies-- all of which might make me feel just about as uncomfortable in some other position or some other job. I have long given up the notion that some seeming greener pasture would neatly shelter the blue-bird of happiness for me. Still, there are aspects of the situation that are more outward than that, and have a somewhat like effect upon other ministers as well as myself.

For one thing, many ministers, far beyond just Unitarian and Universalist ministers, resent the numerous barriers that others, rather than themselves, assume to separate them from the rest of mankind. They resent being thought

of as a third sex, and some of them have gone out of their way to indicate that they are not. They resent going into a social gathering, and being taken for a kill-joy. They resent being made a kind of vicarious moral standard for what others may feel guilty about doing, but do, with only condemnation of the minister if he sometimes seems to sway. Not long ago, for instance, I was in a very pleasant social gathering, and I was getting along very well with one particular gentleman who was a lawyer. The name Storm meant nothing to him, and over his drink he was somewhat more than ready to be sociable with just about anyone. Everything was going beautifully, until some well-meaning, but as it turned out rather blundering guest, came up and said, "Oh, do you know Reverend Storm?" Well, from that moment things went into a social eclipse. Not only was he a staunch Lutheran, which made me anathema in his sight, but he quickly made me know, over his cigarette and drink, that he could not comprehend, or even stomach, a so-called minister smoking a pipe and also having a drink. Well, I have nothing much to say for smoking-- it is a dirty, filthy, expensive, cancer-causing habit; and I have even less to say for drinking-- it is a personally ruinous, and socially disastrous disease; but least of all do I have anything to say for an obnoxious sanctimoniousness that would condemn ministers for ~~rather socially, or even stupidly, doing what~~ rather socially, or even stupidly, doing what others feel quite free to do.

Ministers, by a large I believe, work rather hard at trying to be decent, sociable, law-abiding, ethical individuals, but they are also human

which in and of itself absolves them from nothing, but does warrant their desire and belief that they be given a like consideration as anyone else when it comes to the matter of personal goodness. If they are specialists in the field of religion, as others may be specialists in the field of philosophy, or chemistry, or engineering, or anything else, that should make them no different than anyone else when it comes to the matter of weighing and judging ethical behavior. Not long ago, a large group of Presbyterian ministers disavowed, as many others have also done, the title of Reverend. They did so not so much because the ~~title~~ Reverend is so commonly used ~~ungrammatically~~ wrong, being an adjective rather than a noun, and not so much because it sometimes ends up in such shudderingly embarrassing substitutes as "rev", "reverent" and even "revenue", but because even when used grammatically right, it places the minister in a category to which he does not pretend to belong and separates him verbally, socially, and emotionally from everyone else. It was an Episcopalian, ^a chaplain at the University of Michigan's Medical Center, who made protest in the following poetic form:

Call me Mister, call me friend

A loving ear to all I lend,

But do not my soul with anguish rend,

Please stop calling me Reverend.

And that had its original version in a novel about an Episcopalian clergy-

men, in which the lines ran:

Call me Mister if you will,

Call me Rector, better still.

Or perhaps the High Church frill

Even Father brings no chill.

Mister, Rector, Father, Friend,

Names and titles without end.

But how that man my heart doth rend,

That blithely calls me Rev-er-end.

So, it is not only Unitarian ministers, but Unitarian ministers all the more, who would prefer being called "Mister", and would like to be considered as human beings, rather than being stuck in some category half way between man and God or halfway between man and a vague non-entity.

Again, after thirty years or so in the Unitarian ministry, I am less comfortable than ever before about what a Unitarian minister should be doing, and whether what he does is of any great value. Years ago a Unitarian minister in a rather small church with very few activities was somewhat up against the problem of seeming to be busy. There was a rather general opinion that he worked only one hour of the week and even then was greatly assisted by the Lord. And I have read of one minister in a New England town who feeling the cutting edge of such opinion, made a point of appearing at the railway

station every morning when the trains coming through to Boston were due. There-

by he sought to impress upon his parishioners as well as others that he was not still sleeping when they were starting off for their day's work. Today the problem in many of our large and growing churches is not that of seeming to be busy, but rather that of deciding where to be busy. Otherwise, as someone has written in a parody of some famous Gilbe t and Sullivan lines:

"I am the very model of the busy modern mihiister---

I have so many things to do it's getting to be sinister.....

... I have to meet the problems of the man who gets too mystical

And says that G_od has told him all his friends are atheistical,

I have to show the sexton how to spread a box of vigoro,

And tell the first Soprano that she isn't singing Figaro.

I have to tell the architect that he can't be too particular,

And soothe the hearts of those who wanted early Perpendicular.

I must convince the deacons that I'm clearly economical,

And never let my anecdotes appear too broadly comical.

(And never let my anecdotes appear too broadly comical.)

I rank as an apostle in Kiwanis and in Rotary,

And every drive for anything must have me as a votary.

In short, in matters preechable, or sociable, or sinister,

I am the very model of the muddled modern miiaister.....

It has long been my conviction, and to it I still hold, that the main function of a liberal minister is not that of being a community errand-boy, or a professional sprayer of ~~sermons~~ ^{points} over conventions and service luncheons, or a ground-keeper, or a financial wizard, or an organizational genius, or a social mixer, but rather ~~that~~ first and foremost that he ^{seeks} ~~seek~~ to have something to say on Sunday morning. If he says it well, so much the better, but basic is the matter of having something to say. In the liberal church this is essential, for the liberal church is not sustained by ritual, maintained by tradition, or held together by adherence to the Mass or to conversion as vehicles of salvation. But, this, in and of itself, is a terrifying responsibility. If the minister had nothing else to do except to just work on addresses, he would still face an over-whelming task of trying to say something stimulating and significant Sunday after Sunday. Bernard Shaw once likened the business of meeting a weekly deadline to a man fighting a windmill: "I have hardly time to stagger to my feet after a knockdown blow of one sail", he wrote "when the next one strikes me down." And Professor Luccock relating this to the deadly regularity of the Sunday sermon, made remark that "it is hard, indeed impossible, to be a Delphic Oracle of relentless steadiness, every Sunday shooting forth like Old Faithful with a stream of wisdom." The difficulty is compounded when in addition the minister is pressed by many other commitments, some of which he cannot avoid, and some of which he would not wish to avoid. Certainly he must do what he can to help individuals

in times of need and complexity, certainly he must do something in the community at large, certainly he must be in touch with some aspects of church organization and life. All this adds up to a rather sickening problem for the liberal minister, not solely in determining where to parcel out his time and energy, but in feeling free and justified in doing so. If he spends most of his time in his study, then he may seem to be doing no work at all, and be held to be derelict in other duties. And if he spends most of his time away from his study, doing organizational work and engaged in community activities, then he may well indeed begin to feel the blast of criticism for not doing enough work on sermons.

Involved in all this is a need for a much clearer demarcation of duties and responsibilities, and I am glad to see that something of a serious study is finally being attempted in this regard. Some months ago the Executive Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association had a meeting with Dr. Marshall Dimmock, then Moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association and Dr. Dimmock indicated that in his opinion "the most important aspect of the liberal minister's work is intellectual, that is, grasping the nature of things with his mind, and preaching or speaking his understanding so as to inform, inspire and integrate the awareness of those who hear him. The second most important aspect is pastoral, that is, meeting and aiding people in face to face encounter. The third most important is community responsibility,

although the danger here is that the minister will spread himself far too thinly in meeting this responsibility. And the fourth aspect of the minister's work is church administration. All four areas, according to Dr. Dimmock, are important, but if it is necessary to forward the preaching and pastoral functions by leaving community responsibility and church administration in lay hands then this should be done.

More particularly, beyond such discussion, the Executive Committee has engaged the services of Dr. Garrett Hardin, a biologist at the University of California to do a preliminary design for the study of the nature and needs of the Unitarian-Universalist ministry. Dr. Hardin has already indicated that in his opinion some of the duties the minister now assumes must be either dropped or delegated. But this raises the questions, which ones, how, and can any new order of duties be reconciled with the conscience of the minister and the expectations of the congregation? At our meetings a week from tomorrow, we will be asked to consider the carrying out and the financing of this study. It is hoped that such a study would help ministers to know their own expectations, and the expectations of congregations, and the relation of both to present realities; that it would point out some of our major sources of tension and indicate where the tension is helpful, where harmful; that it might indicate ways in which ministerial responsibilities are changing; and that it would come up with suggestions and recommendations as to how ministers and laymen might best pool their resources and share respon-

sibilities and thus help to make the liberal ministry a profession of continuing and growing relevance.

What such a study can do if ~~anything~~ to reduce the tension that exists between pulpit and pew remains to be seen. Such tension exists in many of our societies, and probably at some ^{time} or other, in most of them. It exists first of all because even with a free-pulpit and a free-pew, the minister, any minister, becomes a natural and inescapable target of criticism for what he says or doesn't say from the pulpit. He has to expect such criticism and hopefully he might seek to benefit from it. But the matter becomes a bit thick, when as has happened with me particularly over the past few months, he receives letters of resignation, some of them rather nastily worded, one part of which blasts him as a political reactionary and an economic conservative, and the other part of which blasts him as a left-winger who either deliberately or unwittingly is helping to turn over the country and the world to the communists. Undoubtedly no minister can please everyone, and he might as well operate on that premise. Still he cannot be so insensitive as not to have moments of concern about what kind of subjects he should tackle, and even greater moment-^{or} concern about what he may doing in the way of ruining a church or society. This can become a bitter struggle, which in some instances has brought about the near ruin of Unitarian churches and has caused no small number of ministers ~~to~~ to leave the ministry.

Second, there is tension and there is bound to be some tension, because the matter of what should be said from the pulpit can never be fully resolved. If it could be fully resolved, there would then of course, be no such thing as a free pulpit. We would have only a reading of the particular word, as is the case in the Christian Science Church. The position is sometimes, rather often taken, that the pulpit is free for the discussion of anything having to do with religion. But where, one begins to ask, does the subject and range of religion, which involves ethics, end? Does religion have only to do with transcendental speculations, with various historical concepts of God, with the so-called things of the spirit? Or does it take in the whole range of the quest for the good life, with not only reflection upon the nature of the universe but also upon the nature of man, with ^{also} not concern about the spirit of man but also about his ^N physical and mental and social well-being. Are economics and politics and business and sex and any number of other matters outside ethical judgement and religious concern? I find it impossible to believe that they are, and I would look upon any Unitarian pulpit that did not bring them under scrutiny, with as much honesty as possible, as having very little if any real justification for ^{its} ~~being~~ in existence.

One church pulpit committee once specified what kind of minister it wanted and what kind of sermons he should preach in the following terms:

"We want a minister who must know everything that has happened or is

happening in the world, who must have elegance of diction and passion of conviction, and will elegantly enlarge upon nothing in particular. His sermons must not be long enough to bore the nervous, excitable twelve-o'clock people who are in a hurry to get away, nor so short that those who have had a late breakfast will feel cheated. He must preach spiritual sermons. We confess we are not perfectly clear what we mean by this, other than the belief that spiritual preaching, owing to a high percentage of saccharine content, is less apt to disturb and irritate."

Undoubtedly that pulpit committee wrote with tongue in cheek, and yet there is some considerable bit of that expressed attitude in all too many of our Unitarian-Universalist churches, which is discouraging not only to many men in the ministry, but is discouraging enough to keep others from entering the ministry.

I never expected the ministry to be a bed of roses, and thus I have no great complaint about having gone through some rather rough stretches over thirty years ~~in the ministry~~. I haven't been particularly happy with the ministry, but I probably wouldn't have been any happier elsewhere. I have been fortunate however that in every Unitarian church of which I have served as minister, Edmonton, Alberta; Exeter, New Hampshire; Lincoln, Nebraska; and this Society there has been a relatively high respect for the freedom of the pulpit and a considerable sense of responsibility on the part of the members.

And along the way, I have been privileged, far beyond what otherwise I could have expected, to share the company and friendship of such members and other Unitarians across the whole continent. After thirty years in the ministry I am thoroughly convinced that it is in the warm associations with people that life's richest treasures are found. From this point of view, the Unitarian ministry has given me far more than I have ever been able to return. If along the way, however, I have been able to make some people more aware of the deeper and broader values of life, and if I have perhaps nudged some desire to develop individual potential; and if I helped some to find their way; and if I have been able to give support to some when life has seemed to tumble in, then perhaps I have made some worthy contribution and these thirty and more years in the Unitarian ministry have not been ~~entirely~~ ^{useful} ~~loss~~ on either side.

ORDER OF SERVICE

May 16, 1965

Opening Music: Sonata in A Minor, op. 1/4 Handel
 Larghetto, Allegro, Adagio, Allegro
 Lyle Nordstrom - Recorders
 James Adams - Harpsichord
 Helen Louden - Viola da Gamba
 Jennifer Mark - Soprano

Opening Words

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Hymn No. 66 "O Man, Acclaim Your Heritage"

Reading

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Interlude: Two Spanish Villancicos of the
 Renaissance
 O Dulce Milan
 Congoxa Mas Juan del Encina
 Soprano, bass recorder, viola da gamba

Aspiration

Solo: Nel Dolce Dell Oblio (Cantata) Handel
 Recitative, Aria, Recitative, Aria
 Soprano, Recorder, Continuo

Hymn No. 115 "O Star of Truth"

Offertory: Meditazioni Sopra 'Coeurs Desoles'
 * op. 67 Edmund Rubbra

Address: AFTER THIRTY YEARS IN THE MINISTRY
 Mr. Storm

Hymn No. 253 "Our Kindred Fellowships"

Closing Words

Closing Music: Allegro from Sonata in G Minor Bach
 Gamba, harpsichord

Thomas Nee, Director Sylvia Palmore, Organist

*Late comers may be seated

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today 12:00 Coffee Hour
 Monday 7:30 Orchestra Rehearsal
 Wednesday 7:30 Chorus Rehearsal

NEXT WEEK

Address: "How To Win Friends" Mr. Hultberg

Forum: To be announced

REMEMBER DST - Change your clocks next Saturday night before retiring.

You are reminded that all books from our Library should be returned no later than next Sunday, May 23. For summer reading any 10 books may be charged out for the entire summer for \$2.00 paid in advance.

Carl Storm and Karl Hultberg will be out of the city from the evening of May 23 until Friday evening, May 28, in order to attend the UUA Meetings in Boston.

All Couples Clubs members and other couples interested in forming a Couples Club are urged to come for a social evening at Jennings' Red Coach Inn, Saturday, May 22 at 8:30 P.M. There will be a table during coffee hour today for those wanting further information and desiring to make reservations.

Members and friends of the First Unitarian Society are cordially invited to the Picnic of the First Universalist Church on June 20 at Camp Christmas Tree in Mound. (There is a map on the bulletin board.) John Cummins will speak at 11 A.M. on "20th Century Superstitions". There are plenty of good facilities. Bring your own lunch. For bad weather cancellation, listen to WWTC at 8:30 A.M.

The Book Table has an unusually wide variety of materials available for your summer reading.

Volunteer workers are still needed for that "simple sticker job", whenever you have the time.