



IN HOC SIGNO VINCES!

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1.

On the cover of "Theologically Speaking" appears a symbol of Universalism, the design of which has been the subject of considerable discussion in the "Christian Leader" and elsewhere among our ministers during the past few months. Perhaps you have asked one or more of the following questions about it. This is an attempt to answer some of the questions that have been raised.

1. WHOSE IDEA WAS IT?

A small group of ministers meeting in "bull sessions" at the last General Assembly at Akron expressed a felt need for:

- a. Some way of appealing to the eye with a direct and simple emblem which would represent the central idea of Universalism.
- b. Some easily recognizable way of identifying Universalist Churches, literature, publications, etc., for promotional and advertising purposes.

2. HOW WAS IT DESIGNED?

For several months, those interested worked on the idea individually and the following summer after another meeting, a rough draft was submitted to an artist, Miss Julia Scamman, of the Wakefield (Mass.) Universalist Church, who indicated the proper proportions and put it in its present form.

3. WHAT IDEAS DOES IT PORTRAY?

The religion of the unities and the universals; that universalism is the important emphasis of religion for

2. today; that universalism is found in the highest development of all the world religions; that the universals transcend the partialisms of every religious faith, including Christianity; that Christianity has been an important step for us in reaching universalism; that universalism is a higher development than traditional Christianity.

4. WHAT DOES THE CIRCLE REPRESENT?

This is the all-inclusive circle made by a line without beginning and without ending-- that is, infinite in its conceptions. It is the ever-expanding circle that takes in all men, binding them in a universal brotherhood.

5. BUT DOESN'T THE CIRCLE, BY ITS NATURE LIMIT AND SHUT OUT?

No symbol is perfect. As the devil can quote scripture, so can people find objections to this symbol. It is possible to read into this symbol many interpretations. While it might be possible to represent universalism in some other way, no other ways have yet been found that are not more complex and they all present some difficulties. The circle has been used to represent infinity from the earliest Egyptian civilizations and so there is good historical precedence for this interpretation (if that be needed.)

6. WHY NOT PUT THE CROSS IN THE CENTER?

Because Christianity is not central or even necessary to Universalism. Christianity has been a partialistic religion all through history, insisting upon a divine saviour to which it had exclusive access, just as Judaism

3. has claimed a divine "Torah" and Mohammedanism a divine and exclusive prophet. The important feature of the symbol is the circle and not the cross.

7. WHAT HAVE THESE OTHER RELIGIONS TO DO WITH IT?

We recognize that there are universalists in all religions. Those who were at Akron (or who read the "Leader") will remember Rabbi Heller's address which indicates that he is such a person. We hope that some day some of these other universalists will use this same symbol, replacing the cross with the star of David, or crescent, or Buddha--the symbols of their religious heritages.

8. BUT ISN'T THE SYMBOL OFF BALANCE?

Yes, deliberately so. There is an artistic tension, a sense of incompleteness. We do not have a completed religion, based upon a closed book of revelation. Therefore a static symbol would not be adequate. This symbol represents the religious tension which is real in the world. Until the world is made perfect, religions should seek to create discontent with things as they are.

This fact also gives the symbol a functional value. It cannot be ignored. It compels attention. It forces people to ask questions about it, thus opening the way for a teaching of Universalism in answering such questions. All who have used this symbol can give abundant evidence of this fact. A commercial artist knowing nothing about its meaning has said that it is a perfect symbol from an advertising point of view.

9. HOW WIDE IS ITS USE?

That is hard to say, but it appears on many Universalist Church calendars, on letterheads received from different parts of the country; it is on the "Bay State Universalist," it is used on the altars of at least two Universalist Churches; and has recently been adopted as a symbol of universalism by the Massachusetts Universalist Convention of some sixty churches (although not all of them use it, of course). It is used on letterheads, calendars, bulletin boards; watch charms have been made; it is used on stoles, on pulpit robes and in many other ways. One minister rubber stamps it on all denominational literature which he distributes.

For too many years, we have effectively sabotaged our distinctive message by the use of symbols and liturgical materials which serve only to identify universalism with traditional Christianity. Here is a new symbol which is distinctly Universalist in its impact. "Theologically Speaking" suggest its use by all ministers in the Universalist Church who share in the thinking which it symbolizes.

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