

From Evolution to Humanism in 19th and 20th Century America

From Evolution to Humanism in 19th and 20th Century America

By

W. Creighton Peden

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



From Evolution to Humanism in 19th and 20th Century America

By W. Creighton Peden

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2015 by W. Creighton Peden

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-8057-4

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8057-2

In Memoriam

William Creighton Peden, Jr.
Mildred Newell Peden

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Introduction	1
Evolution to Humanism.....	3
Philosophical Traditions.....	5
Development of the Unitarian Church in America	9
Ralph Waldo Emerson.....	11
Formation of the Free Religious Association	13
Francis Ellingwood Abbot.....	15
William James Potter.....	19
Summation of Early Philosophical Thinking.....	23
Robert Ingersoll's Quotations.....	25
Mark Twain's Quotations.....	33
The Chicago School of Theology	37
Edward Scribner Ames.....	39
George Burman Foster	43
Gerald Birney Smith.....	47
Albert Eustace Haydon.....	51
Final Summation	55
Man's Adventure: A. E. Haydon's Radio Addresses	59
Man the Adventurer	60
The Universe as Background	64
Man Faces the Problems of the Early World.....	68
Learning the Art of Living.....	72
Changing the Rules of the Game of Life.....	76
Man's March to Mastery.....	80
Man's Wrestle with Evil	84
The Waste of Human Lives.....	88

Planning Man's Future.....	92
Man's Essential Task	96
Man Makes a Menace of Labels	100
The Symbols of Christmas.....	104
The Joy of Living.....	109
Man on the March.....	113
Modern Man's Task.....	116
Who Is Religious Today?.....	121
The Art of Comradeship	125
Man's Adventure in Ideas	129
How the Gods Were Born.....	133
How Man Used His Gods	137
The Adventure in Ideas—Modern Gods	141
Humanism.....	145
Humanism, Hope for Tomorrow.....	149
The Securities of Humanism.....	153
Living Religion Is Secular	157
Humanist Manifesto I	161
Humanist Manifesto II.....	167
Humanist Manifesto III	183
Notes.....	185
For Further Reading	187
Index.....	189

PREFACE

For the past fifty years, I have devoted my efforts to those in American philosophy and theology who accepted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and who were committed to the scientific method. In the 19th Century, my focus has been on the Free Religious Association, established in 1867, with primary attention on Francis Ellingwood Abbot, William James Potter, David Atwood Wasson, and Minot Judson Savage. In the 20th Century, my focus has been the Chicago School of Theology (1895–1958), with primary attention on Edward Scribner Ames, George Burman Foster, Albert Eustace Haydon, Gerald Birney Smith, Henry Nelson Wieman, and Bernard Eugene Meland. It is within the context of these thinkers that humanism evolved.

W. Creighton Peden
—October 2015

INTRODUCTION

The scope of this manuscript is the development of humanism in America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The focus is on those religious and philosophical thinkers who were part of organizations which were committed to the scientific method. We will demonstrate this development in the nineteenth century by noting the breakup of the new national Unitarian denomination in the 1860s, which led to the formation of the Free Religious Association committed to the scientific method. Emphasis will be given to the contributions of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, William James Potter, Robert Ingersoll, and Mark Twain. The views of Ingersoll and Twain will be presented using their quotations. F. E. Abbot was the philosopher of Free Religion, which undergirded the Free Religious Association.

It should be noted that western Unitarianism was primarily committed to F. E. Abbot's philosophy, which led to religious humanism developed by three ministers: John H. Dietrich, Curtis W. Reese and Charles F. Potter. For a discussion of this development of religious humanism, consult *American Religious Humanism* by Mason Olds.

FROM EVOLUTION TO HUMANISM

The development of “From Evolution to Humanism” in the United States will first explore the philosophical traditions that undergirded these developments, as expressed in the Free Religious Association (FRA) and the early Chicago School of Theology. Consideration will be given to the developments in the Unitarian Church in America, which led to the formation of the FRA in 1867. The focus on the FRA will center on two key founders, Francis Ellingwood Abbot and William James Potter. Following the World’s Congress of Religions (1893) and the adoption of Abbot’s “free religion” in a revised constitution for Unitarianism in 1895, the emphasis shifts to the early theologians at the University of Chicago Divinity School and the rise of humanism. George Burman Foster’s, Edward Scribner Ames’, Gerald Birney Smith’s, and Albert Eustace Haydon’s contributions and influences on the development of Humanism will be explored.

PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

Early religious settlers in the United States were primarily from the Protestant tradition which held to the total depravity of humans and the general Protestant orthodox Christian tradition. To a great extent this orthodox tradition was untouched by the Enlightenment. However, within the Protestant tradition, there were some who were influenced by the Enlightenment, especially by John Locke. This philosopher was very much involved in the struggle for the rights of the people, the rights of individual conscience, and in defense of religious liberty and toleration, although a disagreement concerning the Westminster Confession caused Locke to abort his plan to become a clergyman. However, he retained interest in a free, reasonable, simple, and vital faith.

Locke's view of humans as reasonable beings was the key to his philosophy. Since humans are reasonable, they should not be subjected to an authority, or to the routine of customs and institutions. In a letter titled *Toleration*, Locke called for political and religious toleration of diverse opinions, which would further enrich society and enhance human intellectual resources for discovering the truth.

In *Essay on Human Understanding*, Locke determined that reason and knowledge are the foundations of understanding, and are based on our experience that includes observation. Humans' senses convey the "sensible qualities" of things to the mind, being another source of knowledge. Locke labeled *sensation* as those ideas based solely on our senses. Experience enables us to understand our ideas because perception involves thinking, doubting, believing, knowing, willing and all other activities of the mind which undergird our understandings as distinct ideas.

Based on his emphasis on toleration, reasonableness, the rights of the individual and government, Locke fostered political and religious liberalism. Although "liberalism" is variously used, it essentially promotes humans' efforts to know the truth and through this process to become free. In political liberalism there is an attempt to discover more adequate systems of government, which will provide the opportunity for individuals to participate in a more fulfilling citizenship through reasonable shared responsibility.

The scientific method also demonstrates liberalism in its analysis of institutions and ideas and in seeking more adequate ideas and organiza-

tional structures. Locke's reasonableness conveys the basic principle of scientific thinking, as both study the facts which are the basis for any adequate conclusion. He respected common sense and expected average persons to understand sufficiently essential moral and religious notions, which enables them to be guided in their search for the good life.

In his essay *Government*, significantly influenced the American and the French revolutions and the subsequent democracies. His stress upon education as undergirding the success of a republican form of society also illustrates how intelligence and reason are necessary to the development of any expression of liberalism, including religion. Religious liberalism seeks to fulfill our deepest spiritual needs which are better understood and strengthened by both satisfactory ideas and organizational forms. Tolerance also bolsters liberalism by recognizing that human thought and experiment are fallible. This acknowledgement provides freedom for the development of more effective systems of thought and practice. Liberalism always fosters free inquiry and experimentation, as Locke proclaimed in his *Essay on Toleration*. Liberalism is the opposite of dogmatism and of any external authority based on tradition or supernatural claims.

Some of the prevailing conceptions of Locke's period did influence his theological views. He conceived of God as being separate from the world and never entertained the notion of an immanent God. This concept was later developed by the Deists into a radical form of a deity outside the world. Locke expressed a degree of literalism which created the problem between reason and scriptural revelation. He allowed for revelation beyond the limits of human knowledge, but he also asserted that reason is the foundation for determining the validity of all claims of revelation. For Locke, faith was ascent to the highest reason which he insisted, for a Christian, was affirmation that Christ is the Messiah. The New Testament's lack of *evidence* of Christ's miracles supported this affirmation by Locke.

Certainly Locke's ideas were not accepted without discrimination in America; however his philosophical attitude and definite method of inquiry, influenced by René Descartes and Francis Bacon, were a direct influence here on the Deists, Unitarians, Universalists, and on the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ. His open-minded approach, inquiring critical method, emphasis on reasonableness and education for human development served as guiding principles for religious groups, seeking an adequate foundation for America's developing democracy.

Among other contributions to the development of liberal religion in America was the analysis by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham that evolved the concept of a *self* no longer dependent upon some mysterious

theological soul. This *self* became a functional reality with its particular desires and satisfactions. Mill sought to liberate religion from metaphysics and dogmas by turning religion toward the idealization of humans' earthly life. Liberalism freed reason from being a mysterious faculty or power to being a process of practical operations for solving problems. By discovering that the complexities and capacities of the self are the basis for humans' rights, the liberal movement gave full recognition to social fulfillment involving a larger understanding and promotion of a free society.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Keeping in mind these philosophical influences, we turn to New England where the Standing or congregational Church held a Calvinistic theology which increasingly was coming under pressure. The growth of democracy endorsed individual initiative and responsibility, changes which also brought demand for greater freedom in religious exploration. Pressure was due also to the impact of critical biblical studies on theological issues. Equally important was the religious perspective provided by two generations of Arminianism, which viewed all humans as having the capacity to respond to God's promises and to do God's will. By the early 1800s, Arminianism, under the name of Unitarianism, had spread throughout New England with a momentum that was already creating an internal rift.

The division was between those considered as orthodox Calvinists and those Liberals, who supported biblical criticism and the Arminian view of human nature. As Unitarian liberalism evolved, the great majority endorsed a high Arian position, contending that Jesus was more than a man who came to save humanity and now intercedes with God on behalf of humans. Other Unitarians supported the Socinian view, which stressed the humanity of Jesus. Most of the Liberals stressed that was distinct from and subordinate to God, while also holding a primary belief that "Jesus is the Christ."

As Unitarianism evolved in the 1830s, at issue was whether liberal religion should be ultimately rational. The Protestant principle of the right to private judgment remained an essential notion for many who were seeking a religion in general free of Calvinism and other orthodoxy. The most noted exponent of this freedom was Ralph Waldo Emerson, along with a small group of other Transcendentalists, who said an emphatic *No* to rationalism. For the Transcendentalists, religion was a matter of intuition, emotion, and faith. Theirs was basically a pantheistic view which found God in all of Nature, including in humans. Important to these liberals, who preferred to be called radicals, was the right of private judgment. The Transcendentalists extended the exercise of this capacity to their personal communion with God.

Also critical was the issue between traditional Unitarians and the Transcendentalist radicals over humans' relationship with God. William E.

Channing had said that humans shared a likeness to God, but the Transcendentalists found God in themselves. An important radical in the 1850s was Theodore Parker, who was rejected by his fellow Unitarian ministers in Boston but was regarded by the younger radicals as their guiding light. David Atwood Wasson, invited to replace Parker at his Boston church, was also a Transcendentalist who would be active in the Free Religious Association, but never was able to deal completely with the impact of science upon his position.¹

While these intellectual issues were paramount in the development of Unitarianism, there was also a growing concern for establishing Unitarianism as a nationally established religion. Eighteen fifty-nine became a pivotal year for Unitarianism when Henry Whitney Bellows spoke to alumni at Harvard Divinity School, calling for a renewed commitment to a nationally organized Unitarian Church. He suggested “The Liberal Church of America” as its name. The Civil War interrupted Bellows’ plans, but in 1865, the first meeting of the newly organized National Conference of Unitarians was held, under his leadership. The proposed constitution contained in its preamble a commitment for Unitarians to be “disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.” These radicals were strongly against the preamble, since many stood on principle for the right of private judgment. Other Transcendentalists were totally against a relationship between the emerging national Unitarianism and Christianity. Bellows and the majority considered the radicals to represent a minor philosophical sect, which indeed was easily defeated when the national Unitarian denomination was formed in 1866.²

After the convention, riding back to Boston on the train were Edward C. Towne, William J. Potter, and Francis E. Abbot. These radicals were strongly opposed to authoritarianism in any form and particularly in their religious body. As they discussed the situation, they expressed the need for a spiritual anti-slavery society in which the radicals could be united. Octavius B. Frothingham, author of *The Religion of Humanity* and a senior Unitarian minister, was part of this “minor philosophical sect” of radicals. He reported to his congregation, the Third Unitarian Society of New York City, that the Convention was narrow, blind, and stubborn.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

As Unitarianism evolved in the 1830s, at issue was whether liberal religion could be ultimately an expression of supernatural rationalism. The Protestant principle of the right to private judgment remained an essential notion for many who were seeking a religion in general free of Calvin's emphasis on human depravity and of other orthodox doctrines and traditions. The most noted early exponent of this freedom was Ralph Waldo Emerson. For Emerson and a small group of Transcendentalists, religion was a matter of intuition, emotion, and faith. They held basically a pantheistic view which found God in all of Nature, including in humans. Important to these radical liberals, was the right of private judgment. The Transcendentalists extended the exercise of this capacity to their personal communion with God. Also critical was the issue between traditional Unitarians and the Transcendentalist radicals over humans' relationship with God. W. E. Channing had said that humans shared a likeness to God, but the Transcendentalists found God in themselves.³

Traditional Protestantism held a view of nature expressed in the Adam and Eve account. God had created the world and it was good. However, being tempted, Adam and Eve sinned, turning the ideal nature into a corrupt world with all humans sharing in the depravity of Adam and Eve, as well as being forced to till the earth in order to survive. Rejecting this view of the corrupt nature of humans, Emerson focused on and celebrated the fullness of nature as a dominant force, with God as the creator-spirit of nature and as the spirit that enables humans to respond to the ministry of nature. His approach to Nature was not empirical but was based on his inner feelings and intuitions. He found Nature in itself to be dumb and blind but able to teach moral lessons. Nature is spiritual only to those whose spirit enables them to respond to spiritual Nature.

Emerson contended in "Nature" (1836) that humans are conscious of a Universal Soul which he designated as Reason. Considering Reason in relation to Nature, he designated Reason as Spirit or Creator, which has life within itself. All spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols, with material forms pre-existing as ideas in God's mind.⁴ As humans seek to live a life in harmony with Nature, they come to know the primitive sense behind the permanent objects of Nature and to realize that the moral law permeates Nature. To the degree that humans understand the nature of

truth and justice, they become to some degree divine and become immortal, by learning that time and space are relations of matter.⁵

For Emerson, Spirit Nature provides the perspective of God as universal spirit, who speaks to humans in order to redeem their souls. Redemption is needed because humans lack unity within themselves, which cannot be realized until the demands of the Spirit are realized. The Spirit calls humans to create their own world. Emerson postulated: "As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, you will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit."⁶

Emerson, in *The Divinity School Address* (1838), attacked the Unitarian Church. He expressed "the sad decision convictions I share of the universal decay and now almost death of faith in society. The soul is not preached. The church seems to totter to its fall, almost all life extinct... The evils of the church that now are manifest... The remedy to their deformity is, first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul."⁷

FORMATION OF THE FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION

In the aftermath of the Unitarian Convention, many of the radicals refused to serve as Unitarian ministers under the new preamble; most of them joined the Free Religious Association (FRA). The FRA was formed in 1867, at a meeting in Boston's Horticultural Hall. To the surprise of the organizing committee, every seat in the Hall was taken, with many standing inside and outside the Hall. O. B. Frothingham was elected president and William J. Potter became secretary. It was Potter who in fact ran the organization. The purpose of the FRA was to promote the interest of "pure religion," to foster a scientific study of religion, and to increase the fellowship of the spirit. Membership in the FRA required one to be committed to the scientific method. Ralph W. Emerson was given the honor of being the first person to sign the membership book. The second president, Felix Adler, tried to get the FRA to become an active religious and socially correcting organization. When Adler's attempt to redirect the FRA to action failed, he resigned and started Ethical Culture.⁸ Among the early founders of FRA were members whose unofficial leadership was essential.

FRANCIS ELLINGWOOD ABBOT

The philosopher of “Free Religion” was Francis E. Abbot, who also was the organizing editor of *The Index*. This weekly publication was a parody of *The Index* of the Roman Catholic Church during the Inquisition. Initially Abbot’s *Index* served as the unofficial publication of the FRA and later as its official voice. Abbot’s Free Religion was based on faith in Nature and in humans; he sought to unleash natural religion from superstition, dogmatism, and from its ecclesiasticism. Free religion was providing the guiding principle, and also propagating enthusiasm for reform, to ameliorate the ills of society and to ennoble the lives of humankind.⁹

Members of the FRA expressed in *The Index* their perspectives on various social issues. The publication was committed to Darwin’s view of evolution, to the scientific method as the guide for thought and action, and to religious social causes.¹⁰ Abbot himself exemplified their dedication to social issues, when in 1873 he attended and addressed the convention of The National Association to Secure the Religious Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. He addressed the convention, contending that if they were successful, there would be a civil war with blood running in the streets. His experience at this convention confirmed for Abbot that America was in bondage to Christianity—that the political power of Christianity must be abolished. He brought away from the meeting the intention of organizing the Liberals in America, in order to combat Christianity’s political power.

Abbot published nine demands of liberalism: (1) for the taxation of all churches and ecclesiastical property; (2) no public money used in support of any chaplains; (3) no public funds used for sectarian educational and charitable purposes; (4) prohibited the use of the Bible in public education and of public support for religious services; (5) prohibited government support of religious festivals and holidays; (6) prohibit judicial oaths; (7) prohibit laws enforcing observance of Sunday; (8) prohibit laws that seek to enforce “Christian” morality; and (9) prohibit any privilege or advantage to Christianity or any other religion.¹¹ He called for Liberal Leagues to be formed in every town in America to limit the government’s support for Christianity.

The call for Liberal Leagues did not go unnoticed. By 1875, thirty leagues held a national organizational meeting in Philadelphia and elected

Abbot as President. Many on the Board were also active participants in the FRA and *The Index*. One hundred and seventy-two League members met in Philadelphia for the National Capital Liberal League Congress and took a stand against the use of the Bible in public schools and in support of taxing church property. Just two years later in 1877, the annual League's Congress had more than fifteen hundred in attendance and declared the need for a third national political party to combat those incursions of Christianity which subvert free religion. The League established this third party, nominating Robert Ingersoll for President of the United States and Abbot for vice-president. Both men declined the nomination, which ended the third party.

Abbot continued his support for Free Religion and against Christianity. In every issue of *The Index* he published Fifty Affirmations, ten of which explained free religion; the final nine expressing the limitations of Christianity. Free religion emanates from the Protestant Reformation in its religious protest against authority. Free Religion rejected external law and supported voluntary obedience to the inward law. It had faith in humans as progressive beings and sought complete human development for individuals serving the race. Finally, Free Religion supported universal education in order that every person might be in spiritual oneness with the Infinite One.

Abbot suggested that Free Religion is compatible with all historical religions that share the universal element. It differs from Christianity in that its emphasis is not on the Christ but on faith in Human Nature, not on support for the Church but on universal reason and the conscience of humans responding to the supreme law, not on Christianizing the world but on humanizing the world as one vast Cooperative Union, and lastly the FRA stood for the free development of the self as the self-sacrificing love of humans for their own sakes. For Abbot, Free Religion sought gradual growth beyond the child-like faith of Christianity's hope for spiritual perfection.¹²

Abbot was the first American philosopher to endorse in writing the insights of Charles Darwin. From his understanding of Darwin and of the requirements of the scientific method, Abbot accepted that to speak of God as being supernatural was no longer feasible, that scientifically God must be immanent in the universe. Science had provided the principle of the conservation or persistence of force and an understanding of *matter* as being *in a process* of becoming forms of action. He understood that evolution indicated the *becoming* process in the universe which explained the ever-present activity of *Mind*. God and Nature for Abbot were interchangeable.¹³ There is a Moral Harmony of the Universe to which

humans as moral beings must commit themselves in obedience to the laws of moral beings as they understand themselves. This position rejected Christian suppression both of the *self* and generally of humans' intellectual capacities.

Abbot's views were in fact an impeachment of Christianity. Although he appreciated the past good done by Christianity, he considered it a human product, now enduring a lingering death. Abbot spoke for those who viewed Christianity as already dead, viewed it as no longer proclaiming the highest truth, the purest ethics, or the noblest spirit. From this perspective, he impeached Christianity in the name of human intelligence, of human virtue, of the human heart, of human freedom, and of Humanitarian Religion. In general Abbot was proclaiming that Christianity's idea of God would drive those acquainted with modern knowledge to an absolute atheism.¹⁴ It is notable that in tract form, sixty thousand copies circulated of Abbot's Impeachment article.

How did Abbot's Free Religion impact the National Unitarian organization? By 1870, most ministers of the Western Unitarian Conference had accepted Abbot's free religion. Also key in this progress was Minot Judson Savage, a Unitarian minister and an active participant in the FRA and board member of the National Liberal League. Savage served on a committee of the National Unitarian Conference that suggested that the old preamble about Unitarians being disciples of Jesus be retained as *only* a historical document. This was embraced along with his idea that the new constitution be aligned with Free Religion and the Western Unitarian Conference. With Savage's changes, Unitarianism had adopted Abbot's Free Religion. Thus, Unitarians could or might not postulate a God.¹⁵

Abbot, a member of Charles Pierce's Metaphysical Club and whose publication *Scientific Theism* had been translated into German, was widely considered an authority among American philosophers. Charles Pierce reviewed Abbot's book in *The Nation* as a "scholarly piece of work, doing honor to American thought..."¹⁶ In *Scientific Theism* Abbot discussed and rejected both Nominalism and Idealism in light of the natural sciences' new epistemology. Philosophy's role, he projected, was to organize the facts and truths of the various sciences into one complete, comprehensive, and self-harmonious system.

Following Darwin's understanding of the *relations* of things being more important than the things alone, Abbot postulated *Relationalism* or *Scientific Realism* as an alternative position, Relations, which he believed to be true and novel. The principle of Relationism was undergirded by the following self-evident principles: 1. Relations are absolutely inseparable from their terms. 2. The relations of things are absolutely inseparable from

the things themselves. 3. The relations of things must exist where the things themselves are, whether objectively in the Cosmos or subjectively in the mind. 4. If things exist objectively, their relations must exist objectively; if their relations are merely subjective, the things themselves must be merely subjective. 5. There is no logical alternative between affirming the objective of relations *in* and *with* that of things, and denying the objectivity of things *in* and *with* that of relations.¹⁷

WILLIAM JAMES POTTER

William James Potter is the second key FRA figure to be considered. He also was a significant philosopher in the movement from Christianity to Free Religion. He was born in 1829, into a Society of Friends community, five miles from New Bedford, Mass. In his teens Potter would walk into New Bedford to attend lectures which exposed him to Transcendentalism. There he heard such noted thinkers as Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, James Freeman Clarke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Mann, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Sumner. Potter also held a strong anti-slavery position; and by the time he entered Harvard, where he met Abbot and Charles S. Pierce, he had developed a determined support for freedom of thought and the use of reason, especially in religion. He also strongly rejected reliance upon creeds, concluding that salvation is realized only as one seeks the highest ideals in daily life. It was possible, Potter reasoned, to reach this goal because each person's soul contained a spark of God's essence. Potter postulated that what society needed was a *new* church, with fresh views of religion.

After teaching for two years, Potter entered Harvard Divinity School, having decided to become a minister. After one year in Divinity, he opted for studies at the Universities of Berlin and Tubingen, spending a good deal of that time touring Europe. In 1859, Potter returned to the United States; on January 1, 1860, he became minister of the First Congregational Society (Unitarian) in New Bedford, Mass. During the Civil War, he also served on the Sanitary Commission. Following the creation of the National Unitarian Conference and its rift over Jesus as Lord and Savior in the preamble, Potter's name was dropped from the Unitarian list of ministers. Nevertheless he remained a minister in New Bedford. As a founder of the FRA and its secretary, he discovered within this community an intellectual home. By 1867, Potter's dominant interest was in the emergence of a universal religious fellowship. His aversion to creeds, doctrines, ceremonies and labels came to dominate his religious thinking, which led him to inform his congregation that he could no longer conscientiously administer the sacrament of communion. The congregation so appreciated and valued Potter's integrity that he received a unanimous vote of confidence over his stance on communion.¹⁸

Potter's defining view of the universe included all things and persons in existence. From science, he gleaned that the universe is intelligible

and improvable. Like Emerson, Potter grasped from Darwin's *Evolution* that there is a *vital force* or *Eternal Power* that undergirds and gives direction to world-forces. Potter called the creative power of the universe "God"—a vitality that reveals itself to humans through their outward senses and through the inner vision of the Spirit. However, for them the amount of revelation received was dependent upon each human's state of progress. Such human development would be determined by individual perceptions of truth as germs implanted by the creative power. These germs lead, he said, to growth of an elemental force within humans which in time becomes instinctive to the human mind. Potter reasoned that the human mind cannot *create* truth, the existence of which is independent of a perceiving mind. Since humans are products of the universe, directed by an internal power, their attributes must be involved in understanding the faculties of omnipresent energy. The universe is bound to have a moral character which is revealed in human perceptions of *right* and *wrong*, an intelligence that directs choices between moral alternatives. Thus, goodness is added to intelligence as attributes of Eternal Power.

Potter viewed religion as the relation between finite human power and an infinite Eternal Power. His doctrine of the divine immanence in all things applies to the human race and not to special persons. The incarnation of God he understood was the germ of moral intelligence and moral determination which has evolved in humans. The human capacities to differentiate between right and wrong, between love and hate, undergirded their deity concept, and they are able to comprehend something of God through reason. For Potter, God's incarnation means that God dwells in us, which means that we can never get away from divine law and our obligations of divine duty. Also, because God dwells in us, God is better able to comprehend our human limitations.

Potter also suggested that the order of nature serves as our primary teacher. This order of nature is to be understood as including everything that exists, that constitutes the physical universe. As nature has evolved, the mass of matter has separated into specific individual forms, with these forms remaining dependent on the original mass. In this manner strong species and individuals emerge in nature. Thus, evolution emphasizes growth, movement, and progress—involving persons in a natural moral growth. Humans possess liberty, within the limits of nature's laws, to grow and develop morally, mentally, and physically *in spite of* their limitations.

Humans are different from other animals in that their inward vital energy can be directed by reason toward beneficent ends. Potter employed the concept "temperament" to describe the differences of humans from