UNITARIANISM AS POETRY
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But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within, ---
The Present Crisis, James Russell Lowell

If we were to select a singular defining moment in the history of American Unitarianism, none stands out quite so much as William Ellery Channing's ordination sermon of Jared Sparks, in Baltimore, MD, on May 5, 1819. "Unitarian Christianity" is recognized as an anti-Trinitarian platform, but I believe it is more important in its method of coming to that conclusion.

> Our leading principle of interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men [*sic*], in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when he [*sic*] speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may say so, to the established rules of speaking and writing.[1]

While usually taken as a comment on sacred scripture, we may also consider it from an opposite angle. What does this say about "other books?" In rejecting any possibility of biblical inerrancy, Channing has conflated the Bible with other literature, and if the one be sacred, why not the other?

The Unitarians of the day welcomed the development of literature well before the orthodox, who suffered scruples about the perils of an 'unsanctified' literature.[2] While orthodox clung to the security of inerrant scripture, the liberals of early nineteenth century New England embarked from such secure moorings. And turned to poetry as an opening on the sacred.

This literary turn has been much remarked. "The early Unitarian movement in New England," states Cooke, "was literary and religious rather than theological."[3] While Lawrence Buell, in his *The Literary Significance of the Unitarian Movement*, warns against seeing this as the total picture – he reminds us of Andrews Norton, and we could add Henry Whitney Bellows – he does not disabuse us of this opinion. Indeed, his point in the essay is to emphasize the importance of the Unitarian context for the emergence of Transcendentalism. He reminds us that Unitarian minister and Channing protégé Orville Dewey preached

> books, to be of religious tendency, to be ministers to the general piety and virtue, need not be books of sermons… *Whatever* inculcates pure sentiment, whatever touches the heart with the beauty of virtue and the

> blessedness of piety, is in accordance with religion; and this is the Gospel of literature and art.[4]

This Gospel of Literature and art culminated in poetry. For Perry Miller, the Transcendentalists took from the Unitarians that theology was dead, "corpse-cold".

> Therefore this revival of religion had to find new forms of expression instead of new formulations of doctrine, and it found them in literature. It found them in patterns supplied by Cousin, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle.[5]

William Ellery Channing called forth these new forms of expression. In his *Remarks on National Literature*, an inspiration to Emerson, he urged Americans to develop their own voice in all forms of literature.[6] Of poetry he said little, only "Poetry is useful, by touching deep springs in the human soul."[7]

He amplified this remark in his *Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton*. Poetry is the voice of the soul. Milton's power over language "belongs to the soul."[8] He knew well the "rights, and dignity, and pride of creative imagination."[9] Creative imagination at times seems to be not only the soul speaking, but the divine:

> Of all God's gifts of intellect, he [Milton] esteemed poetical genius the most transcendent. He esteemed it in himself as a kind of inspiration, and wrote his great works with something of the conscious dignity of a prophet.

When inspired the question is well asked, who speaks, and of whom? Channing continues

> We agree with Milton in his estimation of poetry. It seems to us the divinest of all arts; for it is the breathing or expression of that principle or sentiment, which is deepest and sublimest in human nature; we mean, of that thirst or aspiration, to which no mind is wholly stranger, for something purer and lovelier, something more powerful, lofty, and thrilling, than ordinary and real life affords.[10]

The entire future is wrapt up in the soul as a germ, or principle. Such mighty energies lead it to struggle against the "bounds of its earthy prison-house, and seeking relief and joy in imaginings of unseen and ideal being." Such an understanding of human nature not only explains the contradictions of human nature, but "carries us to the very foundation and sources of poetry. He who cannot interpret by his own consciousness what we now have said, wants the true key to works of genius."[11] Such a person cannot delve the "secret recesses of the soul,, where poetry is born and nourished, and inhales immortal vigor and wings herself for her heavenward flight."

The goal of the Unitarian moralists, as Daniel Walker Howe reminds us in his UNITARIAN CONSCIENCE[12], was the formation of character. It is stunning to me to keep this in mind as I read the inspired Channing recount that "framed for progress … there must be creative energies, powers of original and ever-growing thought; and poetry is the form in which these energies are chiefly manifested."[13] Writing then of Milton, and we cannot be sure if Milton is but a mirror for him, Channing not only describes the poet as shaman,[14] but also as the pinnacle of Unitarian character formation.

In his exaltation, Channing voices another issue. The poet's prison house is not to be overlooked. Poetry lifts the mind "above ordinary life, gives it a respite from depressing cares, and wakens the consciousness of its affinity with what is pure and noble." In bringing us back to "the spring-time of our being," the great tendency is to carry the mind "beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life;"[15]

This precedes world-weariness. Poetry opens a different level of awareness. ""There is a wisdom, against which poetry wars, the wisdom of the senses, which makes physical comforts and gratifcations the supreme good, and wealth the chief interest in life." A divide opens, for "the fictions of genius… throw new light on the mysteries of our being." For in "poetry, when the letter is falsehood, the spirit is often profoundest wisdom."[16] The chasm opens to the very courts of knowledge, Poetry "is needed to counteract the tendency of physical science, which, being now sought, not, as formerly, for intellectual gratification, but for multiplying bodily comforts, requires a new development of imagination, taste, and poetry, to preserve men from sinking into an earthly, material, Epicurean life."[17]

THE HEART AROUSED provides a modern description of this bifurcation. David Whyte's fine read seems to me to be bit extreme at times, suggesting the split is between 'work' and 'soul' "If work is all about *doing*, then the soul is all about *being….* If work is the world, then the soul is our home."[18] It was one of the greatest poets, Rainer Maria Rilke, who wrote that "there is nothing happier than work."[19] Well or poorly defined, the fissure is there. Whyte urges us to acknowledge this split, "Accepting the presence of this chasm we can begin to deal, one step at a time, with the continually hidden, underground forces that shape our lives, often against our will."[20]

This gap which Channing and Whyte regard has led to more than unhappiness. In her BATTLE FOR GOD, Karen Armstrong uses this distinction as the basic theoretical framework for understanding the rise of fundamentalism in the modern world. Using the terms *Mythos* and *Logos*, Armstrong argues that modernity rests upon a loss of understanding of the proper role of these two ways of knowing, and, more particularly, a dangerous confusion of them.

Armstrong describes the different spiritual lives of those in traditional societies and in contemporary society. In the past, "two ways of thinking, speaking and acquiring knowledge" evolved which, following the Danish theologian Johannes Sloek, she calls *mythos* and *logos. Mythos* is primary, rational *logos* is founded in dreaming *mythos*, providing the context of meaning, recalling origins and the foundations of culture. Whyte is speaking from this domain when he says the poet's voice needs to be raised in the market's din, "because poetry asks for accountability to a human community, for rootedness and responsibility even as it changes."[21] Whyte adds, "poetry is the art of overhearing ourselves say things from which it is impossible to retreat."[22] Practical matters were the domain of *logos*, which was equally important in traditional societies. *Logos* was the rational, pragmatic, and scientific thought which enables us to perform efficiently in the world.[23] Following upon Capps in THE POET'S GIFT, my most pastorally useful distinction between *mythos* and *logos* is that *mythos* seeks acceptance, *logos* demanding explanations,[24]

Because of the death of myth in our society many feel adrift. Rational, scientific language rejects the offerings of *mythos* as illusions, self-delusions, and superstition. On one hand, Armstrong says "Newton could only see the Trinity in rational terms, had no understanding of the role of myth, and was therefore obliged to jettison the doctrine."[25] On the other hand, if science condemned myth, some modern religions, totally confusing *mythos* and *logos,* have come to proclaim themselves as an alternative science, Protestant fundamentalists have "turned the Christian myths into scientific facts." They have lost "touch with the intuitive and the mystical, losing touch with the unconscious, deeper impulses of the personality."[26] In my opinion, the doctrines of Biblical inerrancy and Papal infallibility result from this confusion, or perhaps competition is the better word.

American Unitarianism was the first faith to accept the challenge of modernity.[27] It is my contention in this paper that these intellectuals, at least in the first generations of Unitarians, managed to maintain a balance of *mythos* and *logos,* addressing the modern fragmentation of truth by accessing the roots of *mythos* through poetry.[28]

The rise of the modern world was as much economic as intellectual. In one of her articles on the 'war on terrorism,' Armstrong wrote

> We cannot understand the present crisis without taking into account the painful process of modernization. In the 16th century, the countries of Western Europe and, later the American colonies embarked on what historians have called "the Great Western Transformation." Until then, all the great societies were based upon a surplus of agriculture and so were economically vulnerable; they soon found that they had grown beyond their limited resources. The new Western societies, though were based upon technology and the constant reinvestment of capital. They found

> that they could reproduce their resources indefinitely, and **so could afford to experiment with new ideas and products**.[29]

When Channing says, as we repeat in the gray hymnal, selection number 652, “That the great end of religious instruction is not to stamp our mind upon the young, but to stir up their own,” he is speaking from this new, this ‘modern’ point of view. When Jarolsav Pelikan edited THE WORLD TREASURY OF MODERN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, he included Russell Lowell’s “The Present Crisis,” as “a battle hymn in the modern campaign for human rights.” Lowell gave as eloquent expression to the innovative spirit of modernity as I have heard:

> New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth;
> They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;
> Lo, before us gleam her camp-fire! we ourselves must Pilgrims be,
> Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,
> Nor attempt the Future’s portal with the Past’s blood rusted key.[30]

The rise of capitalism was among these new duties, and Channing did his share. Raised in a leading New England mercantile family, he knew well the needs to reproduce resources. He himself was involved in an important aspect of this, the development of trusts. A brother-in-law was a spendthrift at a time when the economic/Unitarian elite of Massachusetts was developing new laws to protect family fortunes.[31]

Not all Unitarian ministers were born and raised in the commercial centers of New England. Ephraim Peabody, minister at King’s Chapel from 1845 to 1856, was raised in the traditional society of the New Hampshire hillside and provides an illuminating example of ambivalence to poetry. His wife, Mary Ellen Derby, was the granddaughter of Elias Haskett Derby, a leader in the Salem maritime field of the West Indies and China trade and America’s first millionaire. Describing his parents marriage, Francis Greenwood Peabody requires the same distinction that Armstrong makes about traditional and modern cultures. He remarked “The husband remains an unworldly and spiritual seer; the wife a cultivated and masterful woman, of worldly experience and charm; and the two traditions of New England, the idealism of the hills and the commercialism of the cities, find themselves happily joined in the common desire for service.”[32] (Page vii)

These ‘two New England traditions,’ were perspectives, one from which Peabody saw things, the other in which he worked. The elder Peabody developed a close and life long friendship with Rev. Frederick Turell Gray and saw how the commercialism of New England impacted the spiritual landscape. Beginning in seminary Gray was committed to Joseph Tuckerman’s vision of a ministry at large for Boston. Peabody and Gray came to know each other as Gray was practicing the ministry at large and Peabody developed a life long concern for the poor and the Benevolent Fraternity. In a sermon before the Fraternity, he

remarked that “from the Chapel in which Tuckerman first ministered dates a new era in the moral history of large cities.”[33]

The city acquired its own moral agency in Peabody’s perspective. The city added something new to the history of poverty, beyond elements found anywhere such as alcoholism and mental illness. “Various permanent causes [are] at work in a large city to create and keep up a large and even growing class of men.... In a city all men run into classes.. [some of which] furnish material for mobs and popular violence.” Given his position in the two traditions, we are not surprised to hear Peabody’s perspective, “Thus culture invariably increases need. It awakens the sensibilities, it gives them a keener edge, it multiplies their demands, it carries a man out of himself, and connects his well-being with a constantly enlarging circle of influences external to himself – making him at the same time more self-subsistent and more dependent.”[34] The increasing demands of culture and civilization, the frenzy of urban life emphasized for Peabody the need for revealed religion. The advancing intellectual life of the times, so exciting to a Parker or Emerson, only convinced Peabody that “There is but one conceivable way in which we can have any sufficient and reliable assurance of a future life, and this is through revelation.” [35]

Yet Peabody was a man of exquisite poetic sensibilities. His son saw this as an essential aspect of his father’s character. As we consider this picture of the father, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that Francis Greenwood Peabody was, among other things at Harvard University where his bother-in-law, Charles W. Eliot, was President, the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and one of the leaders in developing the social gospel.

In describing the poetic trend of his Father’s character, Peabody turns to the great British Unitarian Martineau who affirmed “the close affinity, perhaps ultimate identity, of religion and poetry.” Peabody adds that “the poets have gained a permanence in religious influence which the theologians can hardly claim.” The only example of Peabody’s poetry the son gives is entitled the “Skater’s Song.”

> Away, away, o’er the sheeted ice,
>   Away, away, we go;
> On our steel-bound feet we move as fleet
>   As deer o’er the Lapland snow.
>
> But as for me, away, away,
>   Where the merry skaters be,
> Where the fresh wind blows and the smooth ice glows
>   There is the place for me.

The Harvard professor of morals seems to give first place to poetry, F. G. Peabody stating that “the most permanent teaching is likely to be conveyed by

the most unintended self-expression, and … a lyric of the soul may out live a proof of God." He quotes his father's description of the recesses of the soul, taken from his sermon "Chambers of Imagery," "come and by that door to which all have the keys enter these halls of imagery within the human soul."[36]

Yet for all this celebration of the imagery of the soul, Ephraim Peabody was ambivalent. One of his parishioners at King's Chapel, Samuel Atkins Eliot complied a memoir of his beloved pastor after his demise. Not quite complaining, he does say that while his poetical tendencies would show themselves in magazines, "his people would have been quite willing he should have given them the reins a little more freely."[37] Eliot adds that Peabody gave his time and reflection "less and less to the imagination and more to the reality of life and duty."[38] Peabody expresses his own ambivalence to the poetic in his ordination sermon of Samuel Osgood in 1841,

> It is a good work to gratify the taste of men, to nourish and feed the sentiment of the beautiful. But this is the work of the poet, the artist, the literary man. The minister who should make this his object, trifles with the souls of those who repose confidence in him.[39]

Peabody, a child of the idealism of the New England hills, saw clearly that in this modern world all is fluid. He sought to keep his soul moored in revelation, and rejected the turn to poetry as primary access to *mythos* which many Unitarians around him were making.

Perhaps part of Peabody's reluctance was Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists. I have never thought much of Emerson as a poet. Yet his poem 'The Rhodora' has been a favorite since high school.

The Rhodora:
On Being Asked, Whence is the Flower?

> In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
> I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
> Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
> To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
> The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
> made the black water with their beauty gay;
> Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
> And court the flower that cheapens his array.
>
> Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
> This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
> Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
> Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
> Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!

I never thought to ask, I never knew:
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

Emerson attributed “much importance” to Channing’s essay on Milton.[40] We are then not surprised when we find the same shamanic description of the poet. “All that we call sacred history attest that the birth of a poet is the principle event in chronology.”[41] If you want an intimate peek of the recesses of the soul, of currents of *mythos*, Emerson’s “The Poet,” is ready at hand.

Twice he tells us that poets are ‘liberating gods.”[42] “They are free, and they make free.”[43] Their source is that “*dream*-power which every night shows thee is thine own.”[44] Recalling moments of transcendence, Emerson describes the intoxication of the poet, “suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him. Then he is caught up into the life of the Universe, his speech is thunder, his thought is law.” The poet must surrender to such moments, trusting “the divine animal who carries us through this world.”[45] Perhaps no distinction between *mythos* and *logos* is more compelling than time itself. Poetry “was all written before time was.”[46] This aspect of *mythos* is implicit in THE RHODORA, beauty requiring no excuse. Hyam Plutzik makes it his theme:

Where time is not, event and breath are nothing,
Yet we who are lost in time, growing and fading
In the shadow of majesty, cannot but dumbly yearn
    For its stronger oblivion.[47]

The soul knows no elitism, though. If Luther preached up the priesthood of all believers, and Adams the prophethood of all the faithful, then Emerson comes into his own with the poetical nature of all. “… every man is so far a poet…”[48] And again, “The people fancy they hate poetry, and they are all poets and mystics.” If poetry is an opening upon the soul, then each must have the poet’s soul. Emerson proclaims the universal access which poetry gives to the soul. Poet and mystic dip into the same spring.

> Here is the difference betwixt the poet and the mystic, that the last nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false. For all symbols are fluxional; all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horse are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead. Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for an universal one.[49]

Continuing, Emerson finds the error of religious hierarchies in making the symbol “too stark and solid.” The mystic, seeking to moor his soul in the divine, navigating by reflected light, sails into the confusion of *mythos* and *logos* which damages us today.

Emerson's example inspired many. Himself calling for an American voice, others spoke. I have mentioned Lowell. Among the ministers of the day, the first minister of the Unitarian church in Newport, RI, Charles Timothy Brooks, was a recognized poet and still today an acknowledged translator of German poetry, especially famed for his translations of Goethe. One of his parishioners, Julia Ward Howe, provides one of the clearest examples of the emergence of poetry from the deeps of the soul. Having told James Freeman Clarke that she had tried many times to set new words to the tune of John Brown's Body, she woke in the gray dawn of morning twilight, with the lines of The Battle Hymn of the Republic forming in her mind. She rose from her bed, knowing that if she did not write them down then, she would forget them by morning.

The intellectual impact of War Between the States was, in part, that scientists became the leading American intellectuals. Yet this poetical turn remained, as we saw in F. G. Peabody who was Professor of Christian Morals from 1886 until 1912. Much the same attitude as Peabody's is voiced by John Haynes Holmes. It seems most likely that my meditations on this subject began when leading BUILDING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY. Dick Gilbert included in the session on God the wonderful quote from Holmes, "But when I say 'God,' it is poetry and not theology."[50]

I had hoped to continue this train of thought to the present day. With that in mind I issued an invitation to members of Greenfield Group to send me sermons which relied in some fashion on poetry. Only one person took me up. I want to thank Dick Fewkes for sending along "A Service … Based on the Poetry of Robert Frost." While the sample is small, there is strong suggestion that we continue to rely on poetry to cleans the doors of perception. Dick stands in witness:

> When I was a student at Andover Newton, Jack Mendelsohn, recently called as minister to the Arlington Street Church, was invited to preach at chapel services. I don't remember much of anything he sad, but I've never forgotten the title of his address, "The Theology of Robert Frost." I know the theology professors were not impressed with the topic – the theology of a presumably light weight nature poet – but I was curious to hear what he had to say.

Oops! this just in. In between drafts I received another sermon from amongst ourselves. Susan Suchocki Brown's sermon title, "Poetry, Literature, Art as a Way To Find The Divine," states her point of view. A stronger statement might be "… as a way to be Divine." Given the paucity of response to my request, I am wondering if poetry is important to many of us. How far do we agree with Frank Hall when he writes in NATURAL SELECTIONS, "The poems in this collection have helped me the way the Torah helps my rabbi friends, and the gospels help my Christian friends"?

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In the fluidity of the modern world, Unitarianism has turned to poetry to lead its members to drink at the well of *mythos*. While Emerson was the great lyric essayist in this living tradition, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the one in that generation to delve so deeply into the recesses of the soul. I have long been impressed that Carl Jung used Longfellow's THE SONG OF HIAWATHA in the study which marks his divergence from Freud. Jung found in the poem much material adapted to bring into play the abundance of ancient symbolic possibilities, "latent in the human mind"[51] If any of you get to lead my memorial service, I ask that one of the readings be from that,

> I am going, O Nokomis,
> On a long and distant journey,
> To the portals of the Sunset,
> to the regions of the home-wind,
> Of the Northwest-Wind Keewaydin.
>
> One long track and trail of splendor,
> Down whose stream, as down a river,
> Westward, westward, Hiawatha
> Sailed into the fiery sunset,
> Sailed into the purple vapors,
> Sailed into the dusk of evening.
>
> Thus departed Hiawatha,
> Hiawatha the Beloved,
> In the glory of the sunset,
> In the purple mists of evening,
> To the regions of the home-wind,
> Of the Northwest-Wind Keewaydin,
> To the Islands of the Blessed,
> To the kingdom of Ponemah,
> To the land of the Hereafter.

No ultimate answers have been given. The question remains, as Amiri Baraka put it in "Snake Eyes,"

> That force is lost
> which shaped me, spent
> in its image, battered, an old brown thing
> swept off the streets
> where it sucked its
> gentle living.
>   And what is meat

to do, that is driven to its end
by words? The frailest gestures
grow like skirts around breathing.
We take
unholy risks to prove
we are what we cannot be. For instance,

I am not even crazy.[52]

We who are left wandering down the street may hope more might be said. Yet in the pulpit, we stand in that living tradition of Milton, Channing and Emerson, the shamanic poets. Standing there, leading the thirsty to drink, we may find solace in words that Channing spoke as he nourished himself on Milton's poetry. He found there "a power in the soul to transmute calamity into an occasion and nutriment of moral power and triumphant virtue."[53]

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[1] William Ellery Channing, SELECTED WORKS, David Robinson, ed, Paulist Press, 1985; page 72.
[2] Lawrence Buell, NEW ENGLAND LITERARY CULTURE: From Revolution Through Renaissance, Cambridge University Press, 1986; page 39.
[3] George Willis Cooke, UNITARIANISM IN AMERICA, Boston, A.U.A., 1910; page 415.
[4] Quoted in Lawrence Buell, *The Literary Significance of the Unitarian Movement*, in Conrad Edick Wright, ed, AMERICAN UNITARIANISM, Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1989; page 165.
[5] *Ibid.,* page 169.
[6] Channing, op. cit., page 166ff.
[7] *Ibid.,* page 177.
[8] William Ellery Channing, THE WORKS OF …, Boston, James Munroe and Co, 1843; Vol I; page 4.
[9] *Ibid.* page 5
[10] *Ibid.* page 7.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Daniel Walker Howe, THE UNITARIAN CONSCIENCE: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861; Cambridge, Harvard Univ Press, 1970.
[13] Channing, Works…, *op cit.*, page 8.
[14] Buell, NEW ENGLAND LITERARY CULTURE, *op cit.*; page 71. Remark regards Emerson.
[15] Channing, Works…, *op cit.*, page 9.
[16] *Ibid.*, page 10.
[17] *Ibid.*, page 11.
[18] David Whyte, THE HEART AROUSED: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul In Corprate America, New York, Currency/Doubleday, 1994; page 20.
[19] Quoted in Robert Hass & Stephen Mitchell, INTO THE GARDEN: A Wedding anthology, New York, HarperCollins, 1992; page 155.
[20] Whyte, *op cit.,* page 5.
[21] *Ibid*, page 10.
[22] *Ibid*, page 287.
[23] Karen Armstrong, THE BATTLE FOR GOD, New York, Knopf, 2000; pages xiiiff.
[24] Donald Capps, THE POET'S GIFT: Toward the Renewal of pastoral Care, Louisville, Westminster/John Knox, 1993; pages 74ff.
[25] Armstrong, *op. cit.,* page 69.
[26] *Ibid.*, page 355.

[27] William R. Hutchinson, THE MODERNIST IMPULSE IN AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM, Cambridge, Harvard Univ Press, 1976.
[28] While I do not mention it in the text, my argument is much influenced by Salman Rushdie, "Is Nothing Sacred?" IMAGINARY HOMELANDS, London, Granta Books, 1991; page 422. Rushdie writes:

> What appears plain is that it will be a very long time before the peoples of Europe will accept any ideology that claims to have a complete, totalized explanation of the world. Religious faith, profound as it is, must surely remain a private matter. This rejection of totalized explanations is the modern condition. And this is where the novel, the form created to discuss the fragmentation of truth, comes in…. The elevation of the quest for the Grail over the Grail itself, the acceptance that all that is solid *has* melted into air, that reality and morality are not givens but imperfect human constructs, is the point from which fiction begins. This is what J.-F Lyotard called, in 1979, *La Condition Postmoderne*. The challenge of literature is to start form this point, and still find a way of fulfilling our unaltered spiritual requirements.

[29] Karen Armstrong, "Ghosts of Our Past," **Modern Maturity,** January/February 2002, volume 45w number 1, page 46. Emphasis added.
[30] Jaroslave Pelikan, THE WORLD TREASURY OF MODERN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, Boston, Little, Brown and Co, 1990; page 593ff.
[31] Frank Carpenter, "Paradise Held," **NEWPORT HISTORY**,
[32] Franics Greenwood Peabody A NEW ENGLAND ROMANCE (Houghton Mifflin, 1920); page vii.
[33] Ephraim Peabody, A Sermon Before the Ben Frat... 1846, page 14).
[34] Ephraim Peabody, CHRISTIAN DAYS AND THOUGHTS, page 17.
[35] Ibid, page 19.
[36] F.G. Peabody, REMINISCENCES OF PRESENT-DAY SAINTS, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1927; pages 1ff.
[37] Samuel A. Eliot, SERMONS WITH A MEMOIR OF EPHRAIM PEABODY, Boston, Crosby, Nichols & Co, 1857; page xv.
[38] *Ibid.*, page xxx..
[39] Ephraim Peabody, THE OBJECT OF MINISTRY, A Sermon Preached at the installationof Samuel Osgood, December 29, 1841.
[40] Edward Waldo Emerson, ed., THE COMPLETE WORKS OF RALPH WALDO MEERSON, Boston, 1903-4); 10:339.
[41] Ralph Waldo Emerson, THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF…, Brooks Atkinson, ed, New York, Modern Library, 1968; page 324.
[42] *Ibid.*, page 334 & 335.
[43] *Ibid.*, page 335.
[44] Ibid., page 339.
[45] Ibid., page 332.
[46] Ibid., 332.
[47] Carruth, page 347.
[48] Emerson, THE SELECTED WORKS…, *op cit.,* 332.
[49] Ibid., page 336;
[50] Quoted in Richard S. Gilbert, BUILDING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY, 2nd edition, Boston, UUA, 2000; page 47. The full quote reads: "But when I say 'God,' it is poetry and not theology. Nothing that any theologian ever wrote about God has helped me much, but everything that the poets have written about flowers, and birds, and skies, and seas, and the saviors of their race and God … has at one time or another reached my soul . More and more, as I grow older, I live in the lovely thought of these seers and prophets. The theologians gather dust upon the shelves of my library, but the poets are stained with my fingers and blotted with my tears. I never seem so near truth as when I care not what I think or believe, but only that these masters of inner vision would live forever."

[51] C.G. Jung, PSYCHOLOGY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS, Princeton University press, 1991; page 335

[52] Hadyen Carruth, ed., THE VOICE THAT IS GREAT WITHIN US, New York, Bantam Books, 1970; oae 688.

[53] W. E. Channing, Works, op cit., I:20.