

In 1841, Unitarian Rev. Theodore Parker wrote that:

“Christianity — that is, in that portion of Christianity which is preached and believed — there seem to have been, ever since the time of its earthly founder, **two elements, the one transient, the other permanent**. The one is the thought, the folly, the uncertain wisdom, the theological notions, the impiety of man; the other, the eternal truth of God. These two bear perhaps the same relation to each other that the phenomena of outward nature, such as sunshine and cloud, growth, decay, and reproduction, bear to the great law of nature, which underlies and supports them all. As in that case, more attention is commonly paid to the particular phenomena than to the general law; so in this case, more is generally given to the Transient in Christianity than to the Permanent therein.

It must be confessed, though with Sorrow, that transient things form a great part of what is commonly taught as Religion. An undue place has often been assigned to forms and doctrines, while too little stress has been laid on the divine life of the soul, love to God, and love to man. Religious forms may be useful and beautiful. They are so, whenever they speak to the soul, and answer a want thereof. In our present state some forms are perhaps necessary. But they are only the accident of Christianity; not its substance. They are the robe, not the angel, who may take another robe, quite as becoming and useful.”

Excerpt from Theodore Parker’s A Discourse of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity: Preached at the Ordination of Charles C. Shackford, in the Hawes Place Church in Boston, May 19, 1841 was first published as a pamphlet, “Boston, Printed for the author [by Freeman and Bolles] 1841.”

**Building on Parker’s distinction between the “robe” and the “angel,” consider: what feels permanent about UUCB and its mission?**

**Is there a permanent UUCB substance that needs to be preserved whatever changes may happen?**