

## Unisoul

*A study guide on the Unitarian Universalist Tradition*



With the help of Caroline Fenderson and Jeffery Harper, the original version of UNISOUL was produced in 1972. One page was red. Another green. Red yarn was inserted in each copy to bring home the "scapegoat image." Later, two reprints were done in Berkeley, California, the last titled, The Unitarian Universalist Tradition. This edition presents the same information, and is intended—like those before it—to bring a richer understanding of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist to both newcomers and long-time venerates.

Richard Boeke,  
16 St. Mary's Gardens, Horsham RH1 2 1JP, UK

## I. WHERE DID IT ALL START?

**W**here did it all start? Where did it all begin? Star gazers meditate on the beginnings of earth. Biologists muse on the beginnings of life. And we ponder, “Where does man appear in the dust of the centuries?” Our search into history is more than play. The jumble we call now is the outpouring of great currents of the past. If we are to judge and think and choose, we need to examine the currents. By knowing their motion through the centuries, perhaps we can direct them a little closer to the heart's desire.

To early man, the world seemed full of spirits and demons. He sought their power in visions that he might cope with hunger and fear. In anguish, wonder, desire, and hope religion began. Out of dreams came fated names for his gods:

To each the name was heaven sent,  
 Baal, and Ram, and Zeus and Set,  
 Amaterasu, Masaka, too.  
 With bloody rocks and sin's taboo  
 to Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva raise,  
 to Al, our altar's fateful praise.  
 To the gods of earth and sky,  
 Man thundered forth his questing cry:  
 “Hi, Old Man, me you see,  
 Something good give me.”

Each group of men called their gods” true” and the others “false.”

After many years in India, Rudyard Kipling wrote:

“My brother kneels, so saith Kabir, To stone and brass in heathen wise,  
 But in my brother's voice I hear  
 My own unanswered agonies.  
 His God is as his fates assign,  
 His prayer is all the world's—and mine.”

Round this world, men and women still cease work, and in quiet seek prayerful renewal. When the names of the gods fade, and they are one with ancient wonder, then the fullness of life is theirs.

### **Your Turn**

- ④ Are some religions true and others false?
- ④ Can you be religious without believing in God?
- ④ What do you think of this idea, “There never was a false religion, unless you would call a child a false man.” Is it possible to judge the truth of a religion? Are religions that practice human sacrifices true? What about religions that teach killing in war for your country is right?
- ④ Name some things you do believe in.
- ④ Some people would say the essence of those things they believe in is what they call God. How would you pray to such a God? Is such prayer more a matter of listening? Such listening can be called meditation. Is there a need for this practice of meditation in solitude? In community?

## II. The Law and Jesus

The source of all religion can be seen as springing from man's effort to deal with the real or imagined forces that affected his life. But different experiences produced different forms. Would the people who lived by the Nile River imagine the same God as those living in the desert? As these forms developed they became as different as though they were formed on different planets.

There is almost as much difference between the religions of the Far East and the religions of the Western half of the world. Today, Unitarian Universalists draw from all traditions, but our beginnings are in the religions of the West.

There were many Gods in the West: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Babylonian, and Norse. But it was the Jewish tradition of God that came to dominate the Western World. The Bible records the development of this idea of God. To find the core of the Jewish image of God we move to the story of Moses in the book of Exodus. Here we find the three elements of our ancient God:

- 1) God is like a powerful King.
- 2) God gives Laws. (The Ten Commandments)
- 3) Man sins. He breaks the laws. He must sacrifice to gain God's forgiveness.

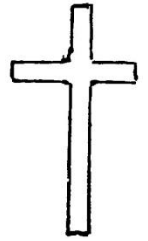
Many people in bondage have felt a kinship to the Hebrews in slavery in Egypt. Remember the old spiritual, "When Israel was in Egypt's Land?" In the Passover, Moses led the people out of Egypt with the hope of a Promised Land. In the desert they accepted a covenant with God called "The Ten Commandments." But often they broke these commandments. To be at one with God again they made sacrifices of atonement (*at - one - ment*). Have you ever done something wrong and wished that you had a way to make it right? This is what most sacrifices were for. (There were offerings of thankfulness, too.)

Each year as the summer ended, the Jewish people felt the need to get rid of the sins of the past year and make a new start. They celebrated the "Day of Atonement" with two goats. One was killed as a sacrifice to God. The other was called the "scapegoat." Symbolically they placed the sins of the community on the scapegoat by tying a red ribbon on his horns. Then, after they had put all the "blame" on the scapegoat, they drove him out of town and off a cliff to death. You have probably felt like a scapegoat at some time in your life when others tried to put all the blame on you.

Jesus was born into this Jewish tradition. In his time the Jewish people were under Roman rule. Like Moses he wanted to lead his people from bondage. So he came to be called a Messiah, or Christ. The title Christ is a Greek word that means the same as the Hebrew word Messiah. As we look back almost 2,000 years, the record seems so strange that some doubt he ever lived. The Gospels were written years after his death. Mark, the earliest gospel, says nothing of his birth, and in its original form leaves us with only an empty tomb at his death.

But from these records it is clear that Jesus was a man who loved and forgave the outcast and fallen. In these days of pain killers it is strange to read that he willingly faced pain. Jesus was willing to die on the cross for what he believed in. And he said: "If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me."

The cross became the great symbol of self-sacrifice.

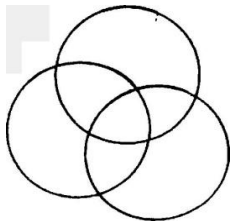


While no single teaching of Jesus was new, the force of his personality and message created a new religion:

- 1) Jesus taught people to think of God as a loving father.
- 2) After his death, his disciples taught that he was the Son of God, “the Word made flesh,” and that his sacrifice was atonement for all sin.
- 3) Even though Jesus was no longer physically present, his followers found his love remained. This they called, “the Holy Spirit.”

At one church school there is a story that a boy could not believe that Jesus was a Jew. He went home and asked his father. His father answered, “Yes, Jesus was a Jew.” The boy said, “Maybe Jesus was a Jew, but I’m sure God’s a Unitarian.”

In the early days of Christianity it seemed God was a Unitarian. For Jesus approved the words, “The Lord our God is one God.” and he prayed, “Our Father, who art in Heaven” ... and he said, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good save God ... Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve.”



While Unitarian Universalists respect Jesus the man, most reject much of the religion about Jesus. As the Christian Church developed in the centuries following the death of Jesus, they started teaching that faith in Christ was the only way to salvation. They combined the idea of Father, Son and Holy Spirit into a God they called “The Holy Trinity.” In 325 A.D. a Church Council at Nicaea affirmed the Trinity as the true teaching of the church. All who would not agree were judged heretics and condemned to death. Emperor Constantine was not baptized till he was dying, for baptism washed away all sin.

### Your Turn

- Ⓢ What do you think of the religion of law?
- Ⓢ Think of a time when you were a kind of scapegoat. How did it feel to be blamed for everything?
- Ⓢ Pilate asked, “What shall I do with this man called Jesus?” What shall you do with Jesus?
- Ⓢ What is the Kingdom of God? Did it arrive? How does it compare with your vision of a better world? What sort of vision of a better world is worth working for?
- Ⓢ Do we need forgiveness? How do we find it? What do you seek forgiveness for? What or who do you need to forgive?
- Ⓢ Some Unitarians do not believe in God the Father or God the Son, but they still believe in God the Holy Spirit. What about you?

### III. Purgatory and Martin Luther

**A**s the church became stronger, the Roman Empire fell apart. The “Dark Ages” came and Europe was filled with war and superstition. Religion became less concerned with this life and more concerned with the hope of heaven. The Church leaders believed that Christ had given them the “Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Many believed that the word of the Pope was strong enough to send you to heaven or to hell.

The Church taught that between Heaven and Hell there was a place called Purgatory. If you were a Christian, you went to Purgatory and worked off the sins you had committed. Every good deed shortened your time in Purgatory.

And of course the best of good deeds was giving money to the Church. Church fund raising was easier in those days!

The Church leaders got very rich and kept building bigger churches. Meanwhile the Black Death was sweeping through Europe. Frightened men and women gave gifts feeling that each day might be their last. To increase the income of the Church, the Pope proclaimed that gifts might shorten the time of those already in Purgatory. Monks walked through France and Germany proclaiming:

“Who would see his own mother  
in the flames of Purgatory,  
when for a small gift  
she might be set free.  
When the coin in the coffer rings,  
The soul from Purgatory springs.”

Whenever the rich and proud are not concerned with the common people, the stage for revolution is set. This revolution started as a hammer stroke. On Halloween in 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther said the idea of buying your way into Heaven was contrary to the teaching of Jesus. To prove this he nailed a list of 95 arguments to the door of his church in Wittenburg.

With Luther, the Hammer became a symbol of freedom. “The hammer stroke of Luther... if I had a hammer, I’d hammer out freedom.” His action marked the beginning of the Reformation. In the West, it was the end of the Power of one Church to set up rules for all men.

The teaching of the Reformation was spread by the books that came from a new invention, the printing press. Now men could read for themselves. They no longer needed to depend on authorities for their faith. While Luther kept many of the dogmas, his hammer stroke was the beginning of freedom of religion in the Western World. Princes supported him with their armies, and this time the heretics could not be crushed.

Luther believed that no earthly authority could speak for his God. He believed that faith was a matter of personal encounter. He helped us win the individual freedom we know now. His God was “above all earthly powers.” Luther loved music and encouraged singing in church. He wrote these famous words:



“A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing:  
Our helper he amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing...”

### **Your Turn**

- ④ Imagine that you lived in the dark ages. What is your image of the Universe? Does it include demons?
- ④ How does this view of the world make you feel?
- ④ The printing press enabled the Reformation in Luther’s time. What tools are capable of having a similar effect today? Is another reformation necessary? Is it happening?
- ④ What place does singing and ritual have in our (Unitarian) church today?
- ④ The followers of Luther rejoiced in singing “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” What is the music of rejoicing in our church?

#### IV. CALVIN, SERVETUS, AND FRANCIS DAVID

Like Luther, John Calvin was a leader of the Reformation. Calvin started out as a lawyer. But from his study of law he turned to the study of Divine Law. He wanted to know the cause of events and the rules that govern human destiny. He preached often from the Ten Commandments. From his study of the Bible he wrote four thick volumes called *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Many people followed his teaching and the city of Geneva, Switzerland came under his domination.

In his teaching, Calvin was very logical. First of all, he said, if God is God, he is all-powerful. That's logical, isn't it? If we say that God is not all-powerful, he's not God any more. Secondly, Calvin said, if God is all-knowing, he knows everything ... past and future. That's logical, isn't it? Calvin said, if God is all-powerful, and if he knows everything, everything that happens is determined by God. Calvin not only believed in destiny, he believed in predestination. He taught that God has already chosen some people to be eternally saved, and others to be eternally damned. And there is nothing whatever that an individual can do about it.

You might think, "if everything is fate, why worry?" But it didn't work out that way. Calvin said that there are certain signs which indicate whether you are saved or damned:

- 1) Are you regular in your attendance at church?
- 2) Are you honest? Do you avoid sin?
- 3) Hard work and prosperity are signs of God's favor on you.

Suppose you went to a wild party Saturday night, then woke up Sunday morning and remembered what Calvin had said? You might think, "If I don't go to church. I'm damned!" What a way to increase church attendance. Churches were packed in Geneva. Who can sleep with the thought that Hell is becoming more certain for him? Calvin's teaching produced the hardest workers and most regular church-goers the world has ever seen.

In 1511 another man named Michael Servetus was born in Spain. He traveled to Germany and to France where he became a doctor. In his studies he discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood. That is, the blood goes from the heart to the lungs, then back to the heart and out through the body. But he also discovered that the Bible does not teach that Jesus is God. He wrote a book on the Errors of the Trinity. Many copies of the book were burned. Servetus had to change his name and hide.

Several years later he was captured by Catholic authorities in France. He escaped, but his route took him through Geneva where he was caught on Sunday morning at church. At Calvin's insistence Servetus was condemned as a heretic, and burned at the stake. As he died he said, "O Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have pity on me!" One of Calvin's fellow ministers said, "If he only would say, 'Jesus, Thou Eternal Son of God,' we could cut him free." But Michael Servetus would not change his mind. On October 27, 1553 he died before the Cathedral of Geneva.



The teaching of Calvin spread through the Reformed Church of Holland and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Many of the Puritans who came to New England were Calvinists.

The example of Servetus also lived. Many Protestants rejected what Calvin had done. Burning at the stake was a method of the old religion they were trying to reform. The example of Servetus did much to reduce the penalty for heresy in Protestant countries. Also, in small congregations in England, in Poland, and in a far-off part of Europe called Transylvania, his words were repeated. Within 15 years after his death, Unitarian Churches began in Poland and Transylvania. After one hundred years the Polish Churches were destroyed, but eighty thousand Unitarians live in Transylvania today.



## DRACULA A UNITARIAN?

Actually we have little information on the church membership of Count Dracula of Transylvania. But it is true that the oldest Unitarian movement in the world is in Transylvania. There in 1568 Francis David began a church free from Dogma and proclaimed "You need not think alike to love alike." And the Unitarian King issued an edict of religious liberty, "There shall be no compulsion in matters of religion."

The leading figure of the Unitarians of Transylvania was Francis David. He had been Lutheran and a Calvinist minister. But in his quest for truth he became a Unitarian. The King of Transylvania was converted to the new faith. Legend has it that one of the Unitarians said, "Now let's make everybody Unitarian." Francis David replied, "There shall be no compulsion in religion." The Unitarians did not follow the example of their oppressors. At the Diet of Torda in 1568 the King approved one of the first modern statements of religious freedom.

In 1571 the only Unitarian King in history died from a carriage accident. The new ruler recognized the Unitarians, but restrictions started. Meanwhile Francis David was still developing his thought. Some Protestants opposed prayers directed to the Virgin Mary. Now, Francis David opposed prayers to Jesus! He said, "The Bible shows that God alone should be the object of worship." He proclaimed the full humanity of Jesus; A trial ordered him placed in prison. There he died on November 15, 1579. In Francis David, two basic principles of Unitarianism were established:

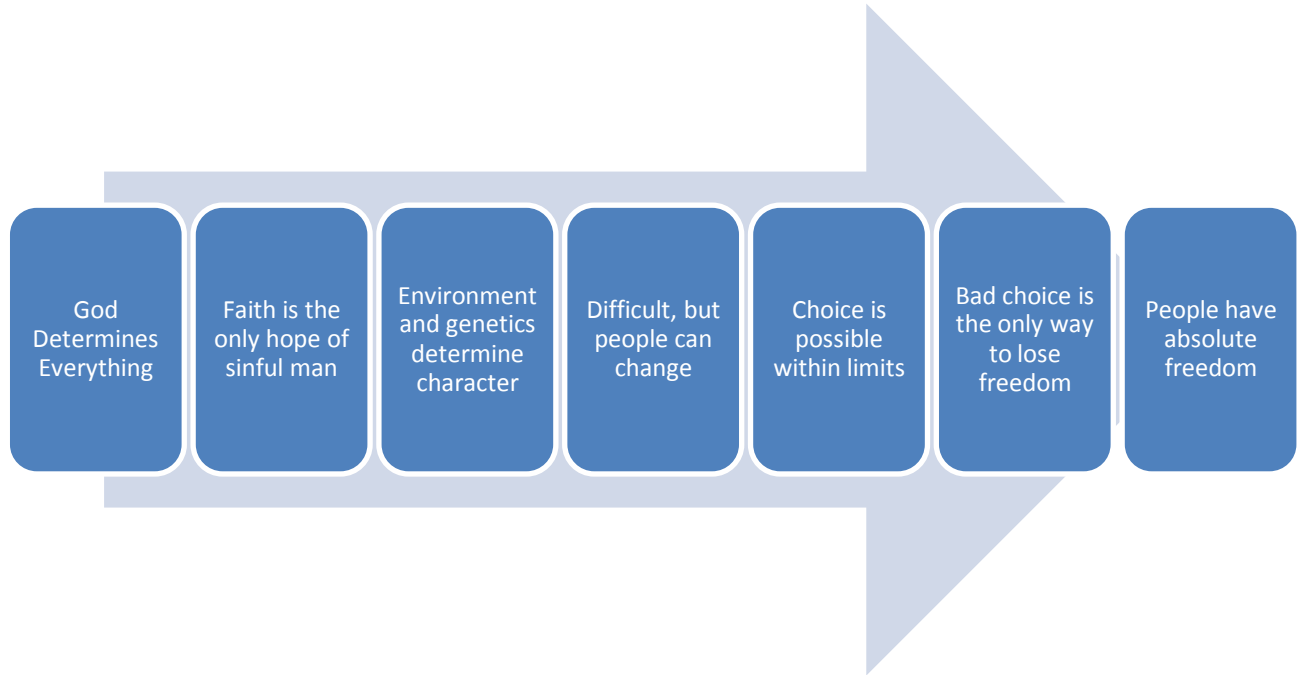
- 1) **Open-mindedness:** He continued his open-minded search for truth even when he knew it might mean his death.
- 2) **Tolerance:** He believed in freedom of religion even when he had the power to be intolerant. In one of his sermons he made a statement that Unitarian Universalists still repeat today:

***You need not think alike to love alike***



### Your Turn

🕒 Where are you on the following scale?

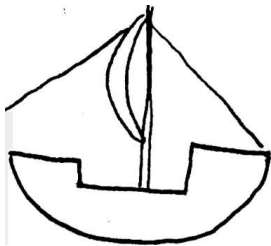


- 🕒 Where do you think Calvin would fall? Servetus? David?
- 🕒 If you substitute the word "economics" for "God", and the word "Communism" for "faith", where do you think the Communists would fit on this scale?
- 🕒 Jesus and Servetus were willing to die for their faith. Yet when the astronomer Galileo was threatened with death, he publicly said he was wrong (even though he thought he was right). Is any faith worth dying for? Jesus once said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends." Are there people who sacrificed for your life? What about the soldiers who died in World War II? Korea? Vietnam? Kuwait? Iraq? Afghanistan?
- 🕒 Is it determined that human beings will always fight wars? Is there any way to change this?
- 🕒 Are there other forms of determinism? Biological? Psychological? Others? How do these affect us?

## V. PILGRIMS, PURITANS AND WITCHES

**A**fter the Reformation began, many different religious groups organized. They killed each other for the sake of greed and creed. Missionaries and money were the twin causes of war. Those who believed in baptism by immersion were drowned by those who did not. One wit reasoned that if you believe that immersion is the true path to salvation, then if you die by drowning, you must believe that you will go straight to heaven.

In England the religion changed back and forth with each ruler so often, it's no wonder many lost their heads. Henry VIII wanted a new wife so he started a new church. Then, with a change of rulers, the Archbishop who wrote most of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer was burned at the stake. Later rulers sought to unify England in one church. But both Catholics and separatists refused to join. Some, like John Bunyan, went to jail. Others hid near Sherwood Forest of Robin Hood fame. One group fled to Holland, and then decided to seek their "promised land" in the new world of America.



On board ship they signed the "Mayflower Compact" of self-government: "We combine ourselves together into a civil body politic ... unto which we promise all due submission and obedience." The Pilgrims reached land in what was soon called New England. It was December 1620 when they came ashore, as the longest and coldest night of the year approached. Many died that first winter.

In the spring a peaceful Indian taught them how to plant corn. As the summer ended, the harvest was good, and the Pilgrims celebrated "Thanksgiving." About 80 Indians came to help them eat. But the Indians did their part by bringing deer to the meal.



The Pilgrims established the principle of self-government in the towns and churches of America. The church which the Pilgrims founded continues today in two branches, one Unitarian and the other Congregational, both with the principle of self-government.

Following the Pilgrims, others came to settle in New England. Civil War broke out in England and the King was beheaded. Many fled for their lives to the new land. But with them came the fear and superstition of Europe. When Roger Williams did not agree with their religion he was driven out of Massachusetts to Rhode Island.

The Puritans of Boston wanted their faith pure. They followed the teaching of Calvin. The Quakers who followed George Fox were seen as special enemies. A Quaker who insisted on preaching in Massachusetts would have his ear cut off and his tongue bored through with a hot iron. In 1660 three Quakers were hung on the Boston Common. One was a woman named Mary Dyer, who said, "My life availeth not in comparison to the liberty of the truth." Today her statue is in front of the Massachusetts State Capitol.



The Puritans also feared witches. In England some suspected witches were tried by water. If they floated they were judged to be witches and condemned for the Devil was holding them up. If they sank they were judged to be ordinary mortals and set free, provided, of course, the group holding the trial hauled them up before they drowned.

In the year 1692, north of Boston, at Salem, Massachusetts, the most famous American witch trial occurred. Some teenage girls were caught playing with a Black woman's idea of witchcraft. To escape being accused, they accused others. (Remember the scapegoat?) Almost two hundred people were accused. At least twenty of these were put to death. One man over 80 years old refused to take part in the mockery of a trial. He refused to make any statement. An old ballad tells the nature of his death:

“Giles Corey was a Wizzard strong, a stubborn wretch  
was he,  
And fit was he to hang on high  
upon the locust tree.  
So when before the magistrates for trial he did come,  
He would no true confession make, but was completely  
dumb.  
'Giles Corey,' said the Magistrate,  
'what hast thou here to plead,  
To these that now accuse thy soul  
of crimes and horrid deed?’  
Giles Corey, he said not a word,  
no single word said he;  
'Giles Corey,' said the Magistrate,  
'we'll press it out of thee.’  
They got them then a heavy beam, they laid it on his  
breast;  
They loaded it with heavy stones, and hard upon him  
prest.  
'More weight,' now said this wretched man, 'more weight,'  
again he cried,  
And he did no confession make, but wickedly he died.”

Giles Corey died September 16, 1692. One hundred years later when the First Ten Amendments to our Constitution were adopted, this “Bill of Rights” prohibited the use of cruel and unusual punishment. Remembering the Quaker s hanged on Boston Common, the First Amendment proclaimed freedom of religion.

The witch hunt in Salem became a symbol for unfounded accusation: whether of witchcraft or communism. The memory of the witch hunts became a force in freedom from superstition. Next to the old house in which the witches were tried, today in Salem you will find the Unitarian Church. And if you walk a few blocks, you will find the Universalist Church that was founded in 1805.

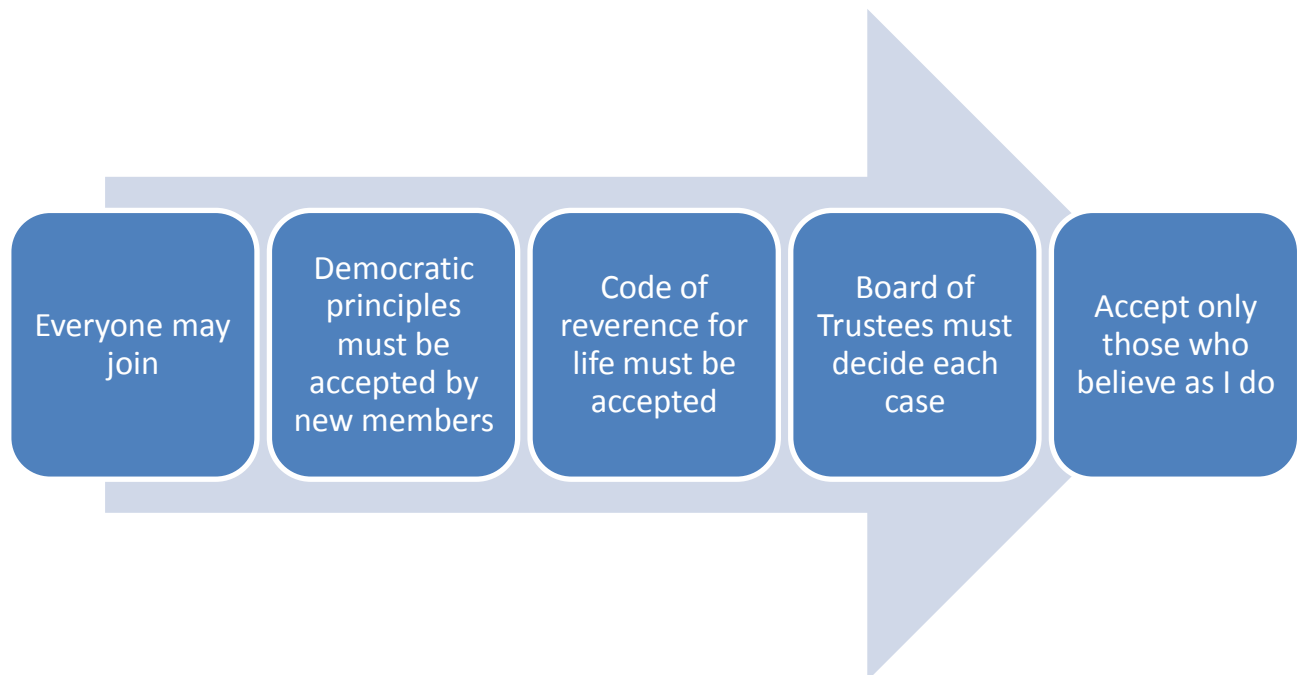


## HORATIO ALGER A UNITARIAN?

Yes. In fact he was a Unitarian Minister. Today we think there's more to life than rags to riches. As Unitarian John Marquand wrote, "There's a point of no return" at which we must decide whether we live for money or make money to live."

### Your Turn

- Ⓢ Do we still have superstition today? What about the elevator button to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor in some buildings? How do you feel when a black cat crosses your path? Do you walk under ladders?
- Ⓢ What do you think of people today who say they are witches? Should they have a right to practice their religion? Does it matter what the object of their worship is?
- Ⓢ Most Unitarian Universalist Churches have an open membership book. Suppose a self-proclaimed witch wanted to join. Should she be allowed to sign the membership book? What about a self-proclaimed “devil worshipper?” A “skinhead?” Someone who is against gay marriage?



- Ⓢ Discuss your choice with others. Are their opinions different? How do you feel about that?

## VI. PRIESTLEY, ADAMS AND JEFFERSON

Through men like John Milton and Isaac Newton (both were Unitarian in theology), a love of Freedom and of Science developed in England. One man who combined these loves was Joseph Priestley, born in 1733. He became a minister, but as his ideas changed, he had to change churches. He wrote books in theology and science. He went to London to meet Benjamin Franklin, and with Franklin's encouragement wrote a history of electricity. As a result of this book, other scientists elected him to the Royal Society, and he was called to a larger church in the city of Leeds.



### A PRIESTLY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST?

**Not quite. But Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, was a Unitarian Minister. Our faith shares an open search for truth like that of science. Thus, many scientists, including Harlow Shapely, George Wald, and Linus Pauling, were Unitarians.**

The location of his home in Leeds was as unconventional as his religion. He lived next door to a brewery. Priestley was puzzled by the process of fermentation. In the evenings he often went to the brewery with his testing devices. You can imagine what the neighbors said to his wife and to his church... But Priestley continued his research. And he presented the world with the discovery of oxygen and the invention of carbonated water. Oxygen opened the doors of modern Chemistry, and carbonated water became our "soda pop" and cola. The Royal Society gave a medal and a patron gave him money.

But he was not content with honor and security. When the American Revolution broke out, he supported the colonies. The issue divided England then as much as the Vietnam War divided America in the 1970s. His patron withdrew support, and Priestley moved to a church in Birmingham, England. Like another minister in London, he began to openly preach as a Unitarian. He wrote books showing that early **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX** but so did his opposition. His support for the French Revolution was the end. A mob burned his house and destroyed his laboratory. In the three days that followed, over one hundred houses and a dozen liberal churches were torn down or burned. Priestley fled for his life. His friends in America encouraged him to come there. In 1794 he settled in Pennsylvania.

Dozens of American leaders heard his preaching. The Unitarian thought that was stirring in New England came to open expression. By his courage Priestley opened the way for thousands to say freely what he said as an outcast threatened with banishment or death. In our church we honor him as a founder of our faith. In science he is remembered each year as the American Chemical Society gives its highest award: the "Priestley Medal."

Two Presidents of the United States were influenced by the teaching of Priestley. In their later years both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson acknowledged that they were Unitarians. Both John Adams and his son, John Quincy Adams, were members of First Parish (Unitarian) in Quincy, Massachusetts (where they are buried). Jefferson could not find enough Unitarians near his home in Virginia to start a church, so he wrote, "I must be content to be a Unitarian by myself." After retirement, Jefferson and Adams exchanged letters on religion. Here is what they wrote:

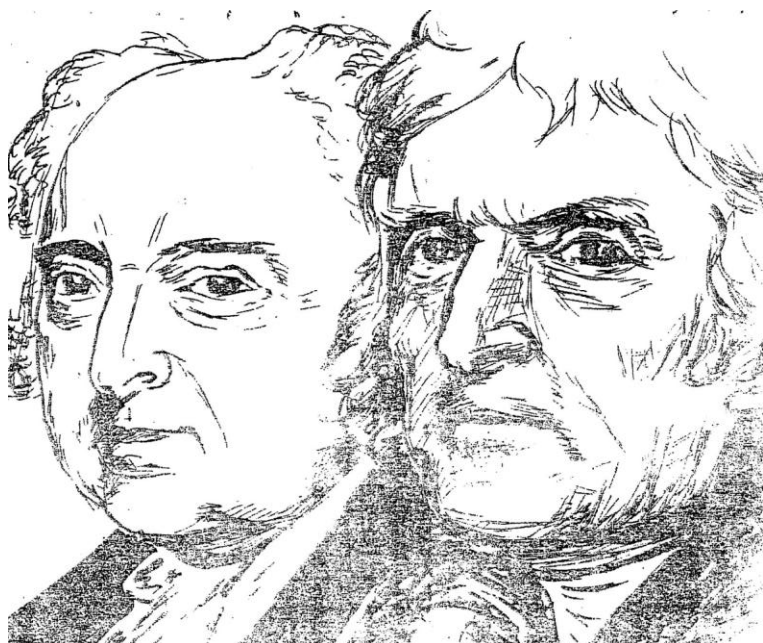
**ADAMS WROTE TO JEFFERSON:** Hope springs eternal. Eight millions of Jews hope for a Messiah more powerful and glorious than Moses, David or Solomon. Hundreds of millions of Muslims hope for a prophet more powerful than Mahomet. Hundreds of millions of Christians hope for a millennium in which Jesus is to reign for a thousand years... You and I hope for splendid improvements in human society and the condition of mankind.

**JEFFERSON REPLIED:** ...Calvin's religion was demonic. If ever a man worshipped a false God, he did... The day will come, when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. We may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this...

**ADAMS WROTE:** For more than sixty years I have been attentive to controversies between Calvinists and Arminians, Trinitarians and Unitarians...I think I can say I have read away bigotry. I am in perfect charity, your old friend, John Adams.

**JEFFERSON:** The craft, the power and the profit of the priests... sweep away their gossamer fabrics and they would catch no more flies. We should all then, like the Quakers, live without an order of priests, moralize for ourselves and follow the oracle of conscience.

**ADAMS:** I must hate myself before I can hate any of my fellow-men, and that I cannot and will not do. From the bottom of my soul I pity my fellowmen. Fears of life and punishments after death seem to have possessed the souls of all men. But fears of pain and death do not seem so unconquerable as fears of what is to come hereafter. How mankind should submit to be governed as they have been is to me a mystery... Without virtue, there can be no political liberty.



### MILLARD FILLMORE WAS A UNITARIAN

Not all presidents were considered great, and not all were Unitarians! But we're glad Thomas Jefferson and John Adams chose to affiliate themselves with our faith.

**JEFFERSON:** The flames kindled on the 4th of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them. God bless you and give you health, strength, and good spirits and as much of life as you think worth having.

JOHN ADAMS AND THOMAS JEFFERSON BOTH DIED ON THE SAME DAY, JULY 4th, 1826. IT WAS THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

## VII. THE IMPACT OF OTHER RELIGIONS

**M**embers of Unitarian Universalist churches are sometimes described as having "the religion of reason." It is true that we try to be logical about our faith. But then John Calvin was logical about his faith.

We think about our experiences. As new experiences come into human life they tend to change the starting point of our thinking. Some thinkers believe that it was the printing press combined with the discovery of America that made the Reformation possible.

At the beginning of the 19th Century three new experiences were starting a revolution in human life and thought that is still continuing.

1. First was revolution itself. Revolutions in America and France destroyed the old concept of the "Divine Right of Kings." As men canceled "God Save The King" from their prayer books, they also questioned the old creeds and dogmas.
2. The second revolution was in science and technology. Newton, Priestley and other scientists brought a new understanding of the universe. James Watt developed the steam engine for railroads and factories. The "Industrial Revolution" began. In 1859 Darwin published The Origin of Species. His theory of evolution changed the whole human concept of God and creation.
3. The third revolution came from the growing knowledge of other religions. The encounter with India and China was as strange as contact with intelligent life on another planet would seem to us today. Unitarians and Universalists had been trying to discover "pure Christianity." From the impact of Oriental thought, now some sought to preach the "religion of humanity."

The following readings from an actual Unitarian worship service offers a way for us to learn from other religions.

### **Choral Introit**

Gautama Buddha

"Be Ye Lamps Unto Yourselves:"  
 Be ye lamps unto yourselves;  
 Be your own confidence.  
 Hold to the truth within yourself  
 As to the only lamp.

**Hymn** 402 "My Country Is The World" (standing)

### **Dialogue Reading:**

Unto the Church Universal, which is the depository of all ancient wisdom and the school of all modern thought;

Which recognizes in all prophets a harmony, in all scriptures a unity, and through all dispensations a continuity;

Which abjures all that separates and divides, and always magnifies brotherhood and peace;

Which seeks truth in freedom, justice in love, and individual discipline in social duty;

And which shall make of all sects, classes, nations and races, one fellowship of men -

Unto this church and unto all its members known and unknown throughout the world, we pledge the allegiance of our hands and hearts.

**HINDUISM:**

“There was a king's son, expelled in infancy from his native city, brought up by a forester. Growing up to maturity, he imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race in which he lived. One of his father's ministers discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul ... from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and it knows itself to be Brahma.”—quoted by Henry Thoreau in Walden

“The spiral leads upward to only one Reality. We rise from servanthood to friendship to Sonship. We rise through purgation. We rise into illumination and upward to creative purpose. The spiral leads from self-consciousness to union with the All, from self-love to love of God. Then our ego dies and we are born. We empty ourselves of self and the spirit fills us.”—quoted by Marcus Bach in Strangers at the Door

**Dialogue Reading from the Bhagavad Gita:**

The wise see knowledge and action as one; They see truly.

Take either path and tread it to the end: The end is the same.

There the followers of action meet the seekers after knowledge in equal freedom...

Who burns with the bliss and suffers with the sorrow of every creature, Making his own each bliss and sorrow.

Him I hold the highest of all the learned.

Who sees his Lord within every creature Deathlessly dwelling within the mortal: That man sees truly.

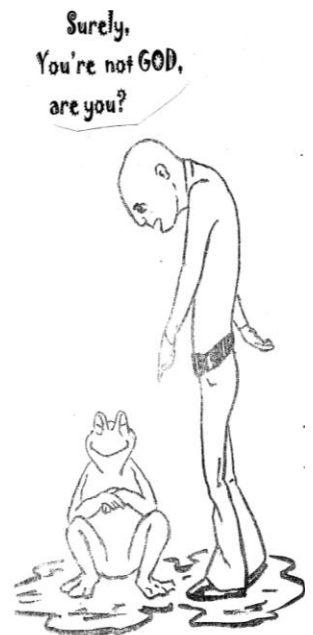
He who dwells united with God, with Brahman, Calm in mind, regarding all men with equal acceptance; he loves me most dearly.

The growing knowledge of Eastern Religions is having a shattering effect on the idea of Christianity as “the only way” of salvation. Many could not accept the thought that Gandhi “would go to hell” because he was not a Christian.

MAHATMA GANDHI ONCE WROTE THESE WORDS: “It was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian... If God could have sons, all of us were his sons. I could accept Jesus as a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. The pious lives of Christians did not give me anything that the lives of men of other faiths had failed to give. If I could not accept Christianity either as perfect, or the greatest religion, neither was I convinced of Hinduism as such. If untouchability could be part of Hinduism, it could only be a rotten part.”

**BUDDHISM:**

“I could never make a good Buddhist if it was obligatory to bow my head and my spirit before the gong-beat of punctuated meditation. I could never assimilate the pious pulse: “Om Mane Padme Hum,” repeated with every step I took, nor flick a prayer wheel as I passed, nor hang my hopes on a weeping willow tree in the form of prayer flags. But when I reflect that on the other side of the world there are people who, like me, talk of Suchness





rather than of Godness, and who put in the foreground of that Suchness a deserted beach, a sea with no storm and a lonely sea-bird turning on invisible air, then I am linked hand in hand with them, and do not feel guilty about my own godlessness.” –Leonard Mason in UU Views of World Religions

This is the original vow of the Buddhas:

“By the Buddha-way which I walk,  
I desire universally to cause all creatures  
To attain the same Way along with ‘Me.’  
The Buddhas, the honored ones,  
Know that nothing has an independent existence  
And that Buddha-seeds spring from a cause  
So they reveal the One-Vehicle.  
All things abide in their fixed order,  
The world abides forever.” –From the Lotus Sutra (Myoho-Renge-Kyo)

#### **Dialogue Reading from the Kalama Sutra:**

Do not believe what you have heard;  
Do not believe in traditions just because  
They have been handed down for generations.  
Do not believe in anything just because  
It is rumored and spoken of by many;  
Do not believe just because the written statement of some old sage is produced;  
Do not believe in conjectures;  
Do not believe in that as truth to which you have become attached by habit.  
But after observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason,  
and is conducive to the good of all,  
Then accept it with your mind  
And live up to it with your life.

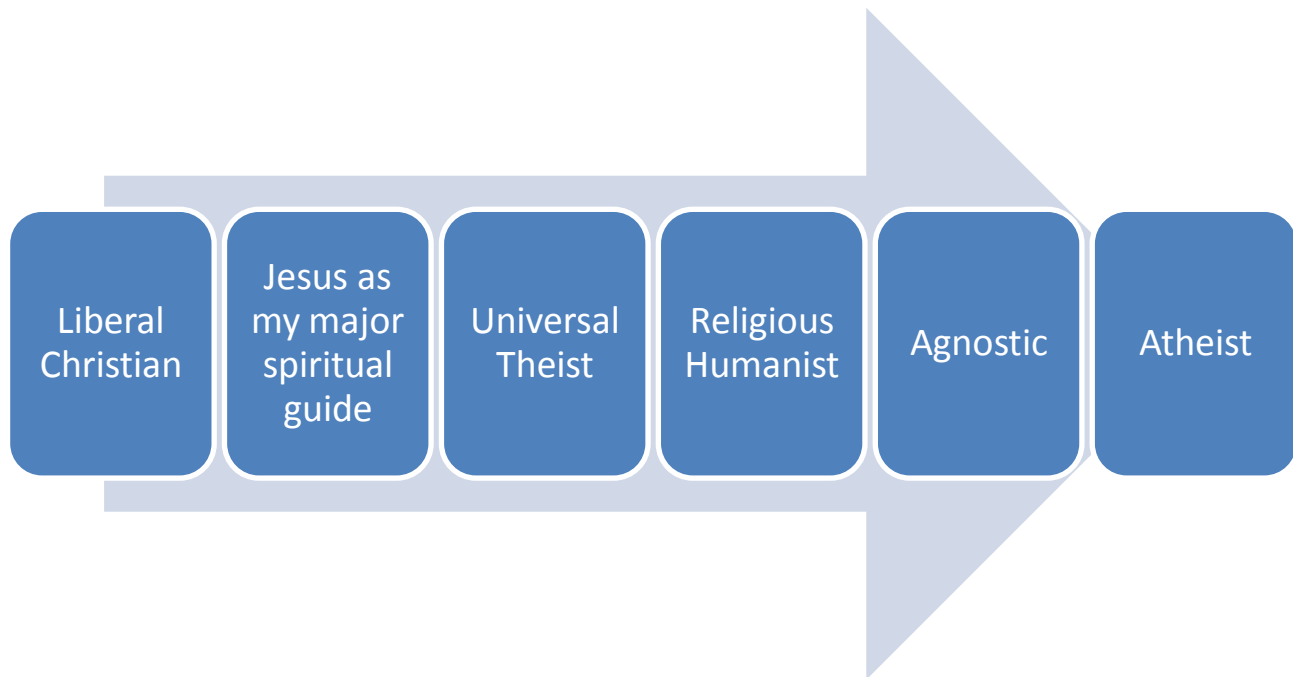
#### **TAOISM:**

The *I Ching*, the Book of Changes, is a brilliant problem-solving device. A problem generally consists of being caught in local cyclic thinking. To consult the oracle, the wisdom of chance, is to step out of the cycle of no-change... You now have an alternative set of solutions that owe nothing but proximity to your problem. You make the associations, you find the way out. It's prayer. – Whole Earth Catalog, Fall 1969

He who adapts shall be preserved.  
He who bends shall be straightened.  
He who empties shall be filled.  
Who wears himself away shall be renewed.  
Who humbles himself shall be exalted. Who exalts himself shall be abased.  
Hold fast to three precious things: gentleness, economy, humility.  
With gentleness I can be daring.  
With economy I can be generous.  
With humility I can be great in service. The words of truth are always paradoxical.  
--Lao Tze in the Tao Te Ching

### Your Turn

- From the impact of the three revolutions, liberal religion opened to include a wider range than just Christianity. How would you identify yourself on the following scale:



- Discuss your answer with others. What do you have in common?
- Do you think the American Revolution and the Industrial Revolution had any effect upon religious thought? Do you think temporal events should affect religious beliefs?
- In what way did the theory of evolution affect man's idea of God?
- How would the ideas you just read compare with those in a traditional Protestant or Catholic Church?
- One Buddhist text begins, "All we are is a result of what we have thought." Do you agree with this idea?
- What is the relationship between our thinking and the world in which we live? How does one determine the other?
- Is the Tao Te Ching right in saying, "The words of truth are always paradoxical?" What do you think of the paradoxes from the Tao Te Ching, quoted in the reading? Are they true?
- Much of Eastern Religion is based on solitary meditation. Tradition says that Buddha sat under a tree for days until revelation came to him. Have you ever tried to sit in silence searching for revelation? For how long? What happened?

## VIII. PHILOSOPHY AND IMMANUEL KANT

**R**evolutions and the impact of other cultures brought a renewed quest for self-understanding. “What is truth?” In our Western World at the beginning of the 19th Century the main answers were:

- a. The one Church for the Catholics.
- b. The one Bible for the Protestants.
- c. Discover the truth from the method of dialogue that started in Greek philosophy. By exchanging ideas, discover the right idea.
- d. Most scientists agreed with an English thinker named John Locke. He said, “Experience is the source of all understanding.” To Locke, the mind of a child was like a blank sheet of paper. Sight and sound made impressions. These impressions became the basis of thought.

As men questioned the one Church and the one Bible, the ideas of Greece had a great influence. Churches were built to look like Greek temples. Many dialogues took place like the exchange of letters between Jefferson and Adams. Do you know what two Greek words the word “philosophy” comes from?

The man who changed the method of liberal thinking never joined one of our churches and never came to America. His name was Immanuel Kant. He was a teacher in Konigsburg, Prussia (Germany). Kant once said that every person has three basic questions:

- 1) “What can I know?”
- 2) “What should I do?”
- 3) “What may I hope for?”

Kant's contributions to philosophy may be seen in terms of these three questions.

1) **What can I know?** John Locke had said all knowledge comes from sense experience. That the mind is like a blank page which slowly fills up with the record of experience. “To know” means to know objects. “Right knowledge” is that which truly represents objects. Some early Unitarians were Deists. They thought that when we understood the laws of the universe, we would be thinking God's thoughts after Him.

The first major work of Kant attacked this idea of “object centered” knowledge. Kant believed that his insight was similar to that of Copernicus. In the time of Copernicus, people believed that the sun revolved around the earth. Copernicus put forward the idea that the earth revolves around the sun! So Kant said the central thing in knowledge is not objects, but mind. Objects don't give us knowledge. Rather the ideas of the mind make our experiences understandable. For Kant, the first task of philosophy is not to understand objects, but to understand the mind: to understand the forms of thinking. This knowledge was apart from or transcended any particular experience, so Kant called his philosophy, “Transcendental.” In America this idea was developed by the New England Transcendentalists such as Ralph Emerson.

Kant believed that just as we can never know everything about another person, so we can never know everything about an object. To understand objects, we put them in the framework of cate-

gories. First of all, to see the world we put on the “spectacles” of space and time. Space and time are not “out there.” They are categories the mind uses to make what is “out there” understandable.

Kant's idea of space and time was a cue that helped Einstein develop his Theory of Relativity. In Einstein's theory, space and time vary with relationship to the speed of light. For Kant, logic and mathematics were other “spectacles” of pure reason that helped us make sense out of what is out there. To Kant, “perceptions without conceptions are blind.” From this “mind centered” point of view, Kant went on to say what we cannot prove: He said we cannot prove the existence of God or the immortality of the soul. The basic principle of his refutation is simple: “Thinking doesn't make it so.”

What do you think? By pure logic can you prove or disprove the existence of God or life after death?

2) **What should I do?** The second major contribution of Kant dealt with the question of morality. Kant thought that there must be some rational way to judge between right and wrong. Otherwise man would be a slave to his appetites. Kant argued that reason was valuable and that each man was a center of reason. Therefore he said the basic principle of ethics is, “Always treat a man as an end in himself, never as a means only.” Kant's “Golden Rule” can also be stated this way: “If the principle of your action became a universal law applied by everyone, would it still produce a livable society?”

Kant's argument for the dignity of man became a force in the struggle against slavery. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker used the idea of Kant in his sermons. Abraham Lincoln read these sermons and the thought entered history, “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.”

What do you think of Kant's ethical argument? What do you think of Philip Wylie's revision: “Live now as though you were going to live in the future.”

3) **What may I hope for?** Kant reversed the old pattern of deriving ethics from religion. He does not say, be good to please God or save your soul. He believed that the evidence does indicate human freedom, but that we need faith because the fulfillment of morality is impossible in a single lifetime. Kant wrote, “The death of dogma is the birth of morality ... Christ has brought the kingdom of God nearer to earth; but he has been misunderstood; and in the place of God's kingdom, the kingdom of the priest has been established among us... The true visible church is that which exhibits the moral kingdom of God so far as it can be brought into existence by men.”

For Kant the signs of true religion were: “universality, morality, and freedom.” To what extent does our church live up to these?

Kant's hope extended from religion to government. He took the signpost of a Dutch innkeeper as the starting point for his essay, *To Eternal Peace*. The sign contained these words and a graveyard! Wars of revolution were breaking across Europe. Kant hoped for an end to the folly of man. He set down principles calling for “no secret treaties, no standing armies, and xxxxxxxxxx of free states. His thought was one inspiration of the League of Nations and the United Nations. In our divided world, world federalism may seem to be impossible. Kant might reply with his dictum of freedom, “I ought, therefore I can.” In the conclusion of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant expressed his faith: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and ever increasing wonder and awe... the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”

**Your Turn**

- Ⓢ Thousands of liberals have adopted a religion much like Kant's expression of reverence for nature and the moral law. How does this compare with your own religion?
- Ⓢ Review Kant's three questions. How would you answer them?
- Ⓢ How did Copernicus change our conception of our universe? How did Kant make the study of man the center of philosophy?
- Ⓢ Many people are color blind. If you were color blind, how would this change the way you see things? In experiments, psychologists have shown that people's expectation changes what they see. Your eyes tend to focus on things that concern you. And you tend to ignore things that you are not interested in.
- Ⓢ In the same way your hopes affect what you see and what you do. Notice how a team loses spirit when they seem to have no more chance of winning the game. What does it mean when someone says, "The cards are stacked against me?" Millions of people turn to astrology to learn what "the fates have in store" for them. What do you think about the future? Are the cards stacked against you?
- Ⓢ What you believe about the future affects your choices each day. "Liberty or death" was the cry of the American Revolution. They believed they could win liberty. Their hope changed their perception of their world. The ideal of increasing the real freedom of man has remained the central value of liberalism.
- Ⓢ Isaac Newton developed the concept of "the law of gravity" and other ways of understanding nature. Kant looked for a new Newton who would discover "the laws of human history." Karl Marx believed that he found these laws in economic determinism. Do you think there are such laws?
- Ⓢ Refer to the chart below. Which do you agree with? What are your thoughts on Freedom and Determinism? Would a different answer change your behavior? How?

	<b>Man Slave of Determinism</b>	<b>Conditional Freedom</b>	<b>Determined Evolution to Freedom</b>
<b>Theological</b>	God determines everything. Man naturally sinful. (Calvin)	Man slave of instincts. But faith in Christ can give freedom. (John Wesley)	The progress of mankind onward and upward forever. (19 <sup>th</sup> Century Unitarian)
<b>Economic and Social</b>	Mankind bound to cycle of starvation and war as population grows to exceed food supply. (Thomas Malthus)	Freedom is possible through obedience to the moral law. (Kant)	Economic forces move history from the rule of the few to the communal society in which all are free. (Karl Marx)
<b>Psychological</b>	Conditioning determines thought. You are what you are trained to do. (Ivan Pavlov)	You are free to use psychological conditioning to determine the sort of people you want. (B.F. Skinner)	Human beings are naturally good, and will choose to be good when there is psychological freedom to do so. (Carl Rogers)
<b>Your Answer</b>			

## IX. BOSTON AND CONCORD, EMERSON AND PARKER

*“And this is good old Boston,  
The home of the bean and the cod,  
Where the Lowells talk only to the Cabots,  
And the Cabots talk only to God.”*

Boston, and nearby Harvard University, became the center of Unitarian thought in America. By 1825 over a hundred Congregational churches had become Unitarian, and the American Unitarian Association was established. King’s Chapel, the oldest Episcopal church in New England, had become Unitarian during the Revolutionary War, and also joined. A few Unitarian churches were started as far away as South Carolina, but for the most part, “Unitarianism was the worship of God in the vicinity of Boston.”



**NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN  
WAS FROM A UNITARIAN  
FAMILY**

**Not all our efforts for peace are wise or successful. But in these days of total destruction, no war can be considered a success. So like Unitarians Adlai Stevenson and cartoonist Bill Mauldin, we try to work for peace a little more wisely.**

At the time, most Unitarian churches continued to baptize babies and give communion. One Unitarian minister refused to give communion, and as a result he left the Second Church of Boston, and moved to Concord to make his living by writing and lecturing. His name was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Today, most Unitarian churches have given up these Christian rituals. Some Christian thinkers say that “Unitarians have thrown out the baby with the bath water.” What place do you think ritual has in our church?

Like Kant, Emerson believed that there were universal laws. As there was a law of gravity, so there was a moral law. He said, “Trust thyself, every heart beats to that iron string.” Self-reliance and nature were the two poles of his philosophy. His lecture on “The American Scholar” was both an affirmation of the unity of mankind and a call for Americans to develop intellectual freedom from Europe.

Emerson wearied of preachers who gave dry sermons about the past: “It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake.” In Concord his spirit spread over the community. For years Concord was the heartland of liberalism in America. Here during the Revolution the British were turned back by the Minutemen. At the dedication of Concord Bridge, Emerson wrote :

*“By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.”*

He gave words of calm wisdom to America: “The only way to have a friend is to be one.”

Emerson often went back to Boston to speak. One minister he influenced was Theodore Parker. Like Emerson, Parker studied German philosophy and Eastern religions. He became convinced that the truth of Christianity did not depend upon the Bible or even on Jesus. What was true in Christianity

was true because it was right, not because of some special revelation. In his sermons, Parker held that religion rests on “great truths which spring up spontaneous in the holy heart.” He associated with an experiment in communal living at Brook Farm. He hid fleeing slaves in his own house and supported John Brown’s violent revolt against slavery.

### Your Turn

- ④ Do you think that Parker was right in supporting illegal violence? When would violence for a righteous cause be justified today?
- ④ While Unitarians continued to reject a creed, by 1900 many shared in this affirmation of faith:

"We believe in the Fatherhood of God  
and the Brotherhood of Man,  
the leadership of Jesus,  
salvation by character,  
and the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."

- ④ Write your own affirmation of faith. As a “warm up,” read the following, taking turns if you are part of a study group. **LAUGHING AT OURSELVES**

Unitarians believe that man could find God's goodness. Thus man was too good to be damned. UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE THAT, IF GOD WAS ALL LOVING AND ALL POWERFUL, IN THE END HE WOULD SAVE EVERYONE.

Unitarians left Christianity to become Boston Brahmins who saved themselves. Some thought they followed Confucius, for they stressed good taste and reverence for one's ancestors. UNIVERSALISTS ORDAINED WOMEN, FREED SLAVES, AND SAID, “YOU'LL BE SAVED EVEN IF YOU DON'T COME TO CHURCH.” THEN THE MINISTERS WONDERED WHY NO ONE WAS IN CHURCH. Unitarians replaced the chalice with a coffee cup. Their ministers knocked down idols, then climbed in the pulpit. Most Unitarians worshiped a blank wall. It represented thinking at a dead end.

SOME UNIVERSALISTS LEFT UP THE CROSS TO KEEP THE MINISTER IN HIS PLACE. OTHER UNIVERSALISTS PUT UP A COLLECTION OF SYMBOLS SO THAT THEY COULD THINK ABOUT A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING AND NOT MUCH OF ANYTHING.

Unitarians were atheists with children and a religious hangover. When they died, instead of going to heaven, they joined the discussion group about heaven.

UNITARIANS AND UNIVERSALISTS FOUND THAT BOTH WERE DISTINGUISHED BY THE OPEN MIND AND THE WILLINGNESS TO STAND FOR A CAUSE, NOT BECAUSE IT WAS POPULAR, BUT BECAUSE IT WAS RIGHT.

Both have a bit of the old Puritan drive. We jump up to be counted again and again to prove that we “keep the faith, baby.”

SO IN 1961 THE TWO TRADITIONS JOINED TO BECOME THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION.

To be Universal in fact as well as name, we join with religious liberals in 20 countries in the International Association for Religious Freedom.

DESPITE HUMAN FOLLY, WE AIM FOR ONE WORLD IN WHICH ALL MAY LIVE IN PEACE.

## X. WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Some of you may be asking, where are the women in this story? Of course, they were there all the time giving birth, taking care of the home, and influencing their children. Every man had a mother. But as African Americans sought freedom from slavery so many women sought to be full citizens in the world.

Florence Nightengale was one such woman. As the broken bodies came back from the "Charge of the Light Brigade" ("Into the valley of death rode the six hundred."), women were there to care for them because Florence Nightengale had brought women from England and established nursing as an acceptable profession for them. Nightengale was a Unitarian, but she made no religious distinction in her work. She said, "I am so glad that my God ... is not a Romanist or an Anglican, or a Unitarian. I don't believe that he is even a Russian, though his events go strangely against us."

On her return to England she established a training school for nurses. She worked for the improvement of hospitals and decent treatment for colonies. From her inspiration the International Red Cross was established.



A RELIGION OF  
THE HEART AND  
MIND

Sometimes we're a bit compulsive about doing our share. But a tradition of great women has set a high standard for us. Clara Barton, Dorothea Dix, and Elizabeth Gaskell were all a part of our fellowship. That early leader of Women's Liberation, Susan B. Anthony, attended our church in Rochester, New York.

In America many women learned of her work. One of these was Unitarian Dorothea Dix who had successfully campaigned for prison reform in Massachusetts. As the Civil War broke out she offered her services, and she was made Superintendent of Army Nurses. After the war she gave the rest of her life to the improvement of mental hospitals.

A Universalist woman continued the work of Dorothea Dix. For 15 years Clara Barton campaigned for American recognition of the International Red Cross. When she succeeded, she became the first President of the American Red Cross. Today, the women of our church continue her work at Clara Barton Camp in Massachusetts.

Susan Anthony wore bloomers instead of dresses in her campaign for women's rights. She was born a Quaker, but she attended the Unitarian Church in Rochester, New York, for most of her life. She eventually gave up the bloomers, feeling the right to vote was more important. And one day with over a dozen women, she defied the law and voted. The judge convicted her and fined her a hundred dollars which she never paid.

As a result of her efforts, colleges were opened to women. And a decade after her death, the Constitution was amended to give women the right to vote.

In 1863, the Universalists were the first church in America to ordain a woman minister, the Reverend Olympia Brown. She spoke on behalf of women's liberation:

"It can be no possible advantage to a man that his mother was socially a toy, financially a dependent, politically a slave. On the contrary, the stream cannot rise higher than its source, and if



women are fettered, dependent, ignorant, their sons will be narrow in mind, craven and cowardly. When women are free and independent, and by experience in the business of the world, shall have grown into the stature of true womanhood, then, indeed, we may look for a race of noble men such as the world has never seen.”

### Your Turn

- ② Think of a woman who has had a great influence on your life. What qualities would you use to describe her? Are any of these qualities shared by some of the women mentioned in this chapter?
- ② What do you think of applying Darwin’s theory of “survival of the fittest” to society? Are some people, in the “natural order” just more “fit” (and rich and powerful) than others? Like Jesus, do you believe that the poor (and the oppressed of all kinds) will always be with us?
- ② The word “liberal” comes from a Latin word which means “free.” The poet Edwin Markham wrote:

“Two things,” said Kant, “fill me with breathless awe:  
The starry heaven and the moral law!”  
But I know a thing more awful and obscure –  
The long, long patience of the plundered poor.

Some liberals think that if you treat people fairly and obey the law, you are doing your share. Do you think it is necessary for liberals to work for the liberation of others? (i.e., immigrants, women, people of color, homosexuals, disabled...) Can you achieve your freedom without helping others to achieve theirs?

- ② Do you think there will come a day when we will be a society of equals? Are we evolving to be a “unisex,” “unicolor,” and “unilanguage” society? How would you feel about that?

## XI. UNISOUL LITERATURE

Unitarian Universalism is not learned by simply letting someone tell you about it, but by doing it for yourself. There are many Unitarian Universalist poets. Sooner or later most every student hears:

“You're a poet and don't know it,  
but your feet show it.  
They're Longfellows.”

The brothers Longfellow were both Unitarians and poets in their own fields: one in literature and one in religion. As Emerson sought to establish American philosophy, so Henry Wadsworth Longfellow sought to establish American poetry. His poems seem from another age now, but we remember that age partly because he wrote of it:

“Listen my children and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.”

“Westward, westward Hiawatha  
Sailed into the fiery sunset,  
Sailed into the purple vapors ...”

Henry Longfellow also wrote hymns such as “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” but the real hymn writer in the family was his brother, the minister, **Samuel Longfellow**. As Unitarians broke from orthodoxy they needed new songs. Samuel Longfellow wrote the words to over fifty of these. His hymns were not of sin and redemption, but of life and the unity of mankind:

“o Life, that maketh all things new,”  
“Light of ages and of nations ...”

James Russell Lowell's words against slavery became our hymn, “Once to every man and nation,” and “Men whose boast it is that ye come of fathers brave and free.”

In our own time Unitarian Universalists have listened to the songs of Carl Sandburg, the irony of William Carlos Williams and e. e. cummings, and the grace of Mary Oliver.

There were many other Unitarian writers: Louisa May Alcott, Oliver Wendell Holmes, frontier poet Bret Harte, and even Horatio Alger. Many, like Hendrik Van Loon, wrote history. Others, like Steinmetz, wrote of their discoveries in science. There were educators like Horace Mann and Charles W. Eliot. There were politicians like Neville Chamberlain and Adlai Stevenson.

We found kindred souls outside our own tradition. From Hinduism Gandhi and Tagore taught us our common bond with all humanity. From Japan Buddhists and Shintoists joined our International Association for Religious Freedom. And in Africa Albert Schweitzer accepted honorary membership as a Unitarian Universalist. As a young man he had denied the dogmas of Christianity and left his



### ARE ALL POETS UNITARIAN

Of course not. However, as poets reach for a universal note, they tend to think our way. Carl Sandburg and William Carlos Williams shared our faith. So did the brothers Longfellow. Mary Oliver and e.e. cummings have Unitarian heritage.



### A NON-CONFORMIST AHEAD OF HIS TIME

One of our most honored men was only able to sell a few of his books in his own lifetime. He was a friend of Emerson and lived near Concord, Massachusetts. His name was Henry Thoreau. One passage of Emerson inspired him, "Whosoever would be a man must be a non-conformist."

lived."

For Thoreau, possessions often became the owners of men: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." He said, "Wake up ... Simplify." Almost a teacher of Yoga, he wrote:

"Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships, after a style purely his own... we are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood."

From the self he calls us to nature. In the fight against pollution, Thoreau's spirit lives. For those who seek more and more he wrote: "Why should we be in such desperate haste?... If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."

Though it may seem strange, the largest audience for this man of non-violence came when he spoke on behalf of the rebellion of John Brown: "These men in teaching us how to die, have at the same

philosophy books to become a jungle doctor. The Paris Mission Society he served forbade him to preach, so he became known as "the man with talking hands." For him it was not enough to serve with words. He had to serve with his life. As he looked for words to formulate the ethic he served on an African river he thought of the phrase, "Reverence for Life." This fusion of morality and reverence for nature is commonly accepted by Unitarian Universalists today.

Henry Thoreau resolved not to conform but to find out about life for himself. He had a love for humanity as well as for nature. He refused to pay his tax because he opposed the extension of slavery it represented. As a result in 1846 he spent a night in jail. From that experience he wrote an Essay on Civil Disobedience which became an inspiration to men like Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

When he was arrested, Thoreau had already started on the two years that he spent at Walden Pond. He built his own house and raised his own food. And he put down notes for a book to be called Walden. In Walden he quotes from the Vedas and the wisdom of China. There is a touch of a Hindu holy man about him as he follows his self-examination:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life... and not when I came to die, discover that I had not



### STEINMETZ A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER?

Yes, for many years the wizard of electricity taught in a Unitarian Church. Like Charles Steinmetz, most Unitarian Universalists today come from other traditions. The scientific opening of the universe has led our faith from dogma to a "religion of discovery."

time taught us how to live.” Two years later Thoreau himself was dying. His aunt asked him whether he had made his peace with God. Thoreau replied, “I never knew that we had quarreled.”

At the funeral service at the Unitarian Church in Concord, Emerson said, “No truer American existed.”

### **Your Turn**

- ② Look through the poems and hymns of these liberal poets. Find one that you like and try to identify why it speaks to you.
- ② If you are part of a study group, take turns reading one another’s favorite poems. How does the voice or style of the reader affect your understanding of and reaction to the poem?
- ② Most Unitarian Universalist services are primarily composed of readings and a talk. Based on the exercise above, what advice would you give to a reader at our church service?
- ② Some churches give congregations a full text of what is going to be read. Do you think this would improve the understanding of what happens in our services? Many Protestants bring their Bibles to church so that they can follow the Bible reading. What could liberals do that would be as helpful?
- ② Unitarian architect Frank Lloyd Wright said, “form follows function.” What would you like the function of our church buildings be today? What corresponding shape should our new buildings have? What attracted you to the Unitarian Church? What do you think might attract others today?

## XII. YOUR OWN RELIGION

The thought of the 19th century was changed by revolutionary experiences. Now as we enter the 21st century our thinking is changing to cope with new experiences.

What are the experiences of today that are shaping our thinking? A glance at the common headlines in newspapers, magazines, news shows, and the Internet will give you ideas about what is important to us today.

Some believe that the experiences of World War II marked a turning point in history more important than the birth of Jesus. In World War II came the Death Camps of Hitler, the Jet plane, the Atomic Bomb, the founding of the United Nations, and the beginning of freedom for many nations in Africa and Asia. How important are these experiences to you? Are they overshadowed by the Vietnam War? The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq? The “war on terrorism?” How do these events affect the choices you make in life?

The years to come will bring more changes. Our religion cannot offer you a prepackaged set of answers. We can offer you a community in which you can share your quest and your fulfillment. The method is our message. It is the method of discovery. Neither the world nor your thought and action is fixed. Discovery comes as you apply your imagination to produce the sort of experiences you want. “To dream the impossible dream ...”

The essence of religion cannot be learned by reading about it, or even by talking about it. What is “it?” Some say “it” is all superstition. A Buddhist proverb says, “Books are but the tracks that life leaves behind. The object is to catch the beast itself.”

Jesus quoted the Hebrew book of Leviticus to say, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Leviticus 19:18)

The Hindus say, “Thou art that;” your soul in essence is the same as the soul of all life.

The Buddha proclaimed the interdependence of all things and taught us to help free others from suffering.

In the 19th century Emerson wrote: “It is one light that beams from a thousand stars. It is one soul that animates all men.”

In the 20th century Carl Sandburg wrote: “There is one man in all the world and his name is All Men.”

In like fashion Albert Schweitzer taught that the basic principle of ethics is “Reverence for Life.”

So in the Unitarian Universalist tradition we learn reverence for the common life, for the UNISOUL that animates all life.

Our love also extends to those who will come after us. Our ethic teaches us “To live now as though we were going to live in the future.”

At the heart of religion is your meditation in solitude. Buddha went so far as to say, “All we are is a result of what we have thought.” Our religion is not just Buddhism or just Christianity. Nor is Unitarian Universalism just the history of what has happened. As Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is

among you.” Our religion is what we love and the way we live our life. Our religion flows from the centering of life we find in meditation.

Our heaven and hell is the journey of life itself. To discover the joy takes concentration. This is why we worship together and seek in solitude. The following words can be read as a kind of meditation. Make yourself comfortable and take your time contemplating each sentence.

### **Your Turn**

**AN EXERCISE IN MEDITATION** (If you are in a group, have someone “lead” the meditation by reading the following, slowly, pausing between each phrase.)

By the practice of meditation we learn to get rid of hate,  
to forgive ourselves, to forgive others, not to hang onto distracting thoughts.  
Empty yourself of words, pictures, tensions.

Look at one place, one flower, one tree, until the words, dreams, worries leave your mind.

Listen to music until your “I” vanishes and there is only music.

Take deep breaths. Cherish the present moment.

In this present moment you are a part of the universe made alive.

... sit silently for one whole minute ...

We live in three temples,  
the temple of self,  
the temple of others,  
the temple of the world.

Our relationship to each temple  
is fashioned after the god we worship.

May the temple of self be nourished by the care we take for body and mind. May the temple of others be nourished by the love we give in listening and in action.

May the temple of the world be nourished by our work to overcome ugliness and to contribute to beauty.

Now, in this moment, may we sense our love of self, our love of others, our love of the world.

### XIII. EPILOGUE

Our little book on the Unitarian Universalist tradition is coming to an end. Hopefully, you have discovered some things that made the study worthwhile.

To open this last session, please write your answers to these review questions. Please give your real feelings and opinions. If you are in a study group, compare your answers with others in the group after you have finished. Don't change any of your answers just to conform!

1. Who created God?
2. Why do we have scapegoats?
3. What Unitarian Universalist poets or authors do you like?
4. What new experiences are changing your life today?
5. What is the difference between Hell and Purgatory?
6. Why was Servetus burned alive?
7. Why were witches punished?
8. List some achievements of Joseph Priestley.
9. How did you identify yourself on the scale at the end of Chapter 7?
10. What answer did you give to the scale of freedom and determinism at the end of Chapter 8?
11. Are all people created equal?
12. What affirmation did you write at the end of Chapter 9?

Does anyone know all the answers? Are they the right questions? Are they the same questions you would have asked to discover what people got out of this book? Did you get the “right” answers? Some religions think that they have all the answers. Some people believe that they must have certainty in order to live. And they accept creeds that give them the “right answer.” Do you think that anyone else can give the right answer to the questions of life for you? In our church we learn to live with uncertainty. As we learn from life and from each other, we may change our opinion. Rather than teaching you the right answers, we try to help you learn to ask the right questions. Thus Unitarian Universalism is called a “religion of discovery.”

## For Further Reading

Discovery comes in many ways: through experiments, through work, through meditation, in going to school, and in just trying to live with people. One way it comes is through reading books. We scratched the surface of the history of the Universalist Church and of Boston Unitarianism, so first a few books on our tradition. (You will note that most are from the Unitarian Universalist publishing house, Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.)

Cassara, [Universalism in America](#) (Beacon)  
Cheetham, [Unitarianism and Universalism](#) (Beacon)  
Marshall, [The Challenge of a Liberal Faith](#) (UUA)  
Parke, [The Epic of Unitarianism](#) (Beacon)  
Scott, [These Live Tomorrow](#) (Beacon)  
Wright, [Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism](#) (Beacon)

Emerson said, “Instead of wondering that there is a Bible, I wonder that there are not a thousand.” In addition to the Bible itself, through the years most liberals collect a number of books that become their “Bibles.” Here are a few books that have become important to many of us. Perhaps you will find that some of them become important to you:

Downs, [Books That Changed The World](#) (Mentor)  
Erikson, [Childhood and Society](#) (Norton)  
Fromm, [The Art of Loving](#) (Bantam)  
Gibran, [The Prophet](#) (Knopf)  
Lindbergh, [Gift From the Sea](#) (Signet)  
Saint-Exupery, [The Little Prince](#) (Harcourt, Brace and World)  
Schweitzer, [Out of My Life and Thought](#) (Mentor)  
Smith, [The World's Religions](#)  
Thoreau, [Walden & Essay on Civil Disobedience](#)  
Thich Nhat Hahn, [The Miracle of Mindfulness](#)  
Viktor Frankl, [Man's Search for Meaning](#)  
Anthony de Mello, [The Song of the Bird](#)  
W.C. Smith, [Faith and Belief](#)  
Howard Thurman, [The Mood of Christmas](#)  
M. L. King, Jr., [Strength to Love](#)  
Iboo Patel, [Acts of Faith](#)  
R. N. Brock & Rebecca A. Parker, [Saving Paradise](#)  
Karen Armstrong, [The Spiral Staircase](#)