

Unitarian Universalism: An Heretical History

Dave Weissbard, Sr. Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, Illinois [1993 video]

0	Struggle among Christians as to nature of Jesus: God or Man.
325	Council at Nicea – Resolve that Jesus was God. Affirmed the Trinity.
335	Council at Tyre – Reject Trinity. Affirm One God.
381	Council at Constantinople – Re-Affirm Trinity.
544	Clement of Alex – Loving God is inconsistent with concept of eternal punishment.
1415	Jan Huus – Preached in language of the people and promoted the non-sanctity of priests. (He was a Catholic priest.) Burned at stake in Prague.
1531	Michael Servetus – Publishes On the Errors of the Trinity. The Trinity is not scriptural. Angers John Calvin. 1553 Servetus burned at stake in Geneva.
1568	King John Sigismund (Transylvania) – Convenes Council at Turda. Edict of Turda declares that religious faith is a personal and private decision for all. ¹
1571	King John Sigismund dies.
1579	Francis David, King John Sigismund's court preacher, dies in prison.
1600's	John Milton, John Locke, and Isaac Newton shared Unitarian beliefs.

Unitarianism

Universalism

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1774	Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808) starts first Unitarian society in Great Britain. Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Priestly attend.	1774	John Murray ² (1741-1815) preaches universal salvation for all people. Anti-predestination. God is compassionate all equally.
		1778	First formal association of American Universalist societies. Reject belief in eternal damnation.
		1779	First Universalist Church founded by John Murray. Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of Declaration of Independence, is prominent Universalist.
1785	King's Chapel switches to Unitarian from Anglican when congregants join Minister James Thurman in rejecting the Trinity.	1785	The Universalist Church of America is formed.
		1790	Universalists first denomination in America to formally call for abolition of slavery.

¹ "... in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well, if not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve...."

² John Murray - A Calvinist preacher in England sailed to America after the death of his wife and baby. He is said to have sought help for his stranded ship from Theodore Potter, who prevailed upon Murray to preach Universalism on his farm. "Give Them Not Hell, Give Them Hope" was the title of his sermon.

1794	Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) discoverer of oxygen. Sails to America with Benjamin Franklin. Founded first Unitarian Church in America in North Umberland, PA.	1793	Hosea Ballou (1771-1852) rejects predestination and original sin; embraces universal salvation. Rejects doctrine of vicarious atonement, i.e., example of Jesus' life, not his death, leads to salvation.
1805	Dr. Henry Ware's appointment to Harvard Divinity School heightens conflict with conservatives, hastening separation of Unitarians from Congregationalists.	1805	Hosea Ballou publishes <i>A Treatise on Atonement</i> .
1819	William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) preaches at ordination of Jared Sparks. The sermon "Unitarian Christianity" becomes a foundational document of Unitarianism, which addresses the nature of Jesus, the goodness of humanity, and the place of reason in religion.		
	Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was a Unitarian. His version of the Bible included the sayings of Jesus, but excluded miracles and resurrection.		
1825	American Unitarian Association established. Notables include: Horace Mann, Dorothea Dix , Samuel Gridley Howe, Julia Ward Howe , Henry David Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell		
1838	Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) Graduates Harvard Divinity School.		
	Theodore Parker (1810-1860) Abolitionist. Declared the concept of a male God obsolete. Real Christianity is religion of Jesus, not <i>about</i> Jesus. ³		
1839	Henry Whitney Bellows (1814-1882) Minister at All Souls Church in NYC. Founder of Antioch College and National Sanitary Commission, which became the Red Cross.	1845	William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) Produced abolitionist newspaper <i>The Liberator</i> . Ran separate ads signed by 344 Universalist and 170 Unitarian clergy.
	William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Founded Unitarian School of Theology in PA, which later became part of the University of Chicago.	1852	Universalists founded Tufts College.
1860	Thomas Starr King (1824-1864) Son of a Universalist minister became a Unitarian minister in San Francisco. Present day UU School of Theology at Berkeley named for him.	1853	Hosea Ballou II (1796-1861) becomes the first president of Tufts College.

³ Parker asked, "Why should the truths of Christianity rest on the personal authority of Jesus, any more than the truths of geometry should rest on the personal authority of Euclid?"

1863	United as Christian liberals, Unitarians grow beyond Christian framework. Radical ministers feel unwelcome.	1862	Olympia Brown (1835-1926) ordained as Universalist minister. First woman ordained.
1897	William Channing Gannet (1840-1923) reunited conservative and liberal Unitarians on a non-creedal basis.		
1904	John Haynes Holmes (1879-1964) Unitarian minister of Community Church of NY. Among founders of ACLU and NAACP. A pacifist who put social gospel into practice.	1915	Charles Skinner (1881-1949) publishes <i>Social Implications of Universalism</i> . No static body of doctrine to hand down. Each generation must be won by a new battle.
1920s and 1930s – Humanism vs. Theism is the central theological debate.			
1933	Humanist Manifesto Drafted. A person can be religious with affirming belief in God. Education, not mysticism, is basis of salvation.	1935	Universalism rejects Biblical literalism and avows "faith in the authority of truth, known or unknown."
1950s	Unitarianism grows during the McCarthy era, as liberals faced persecution.	1942	The Universalist charter is amended to read: "to promote harmony among adherents of all religious faiths, whether Christian or otherwise."
1961 – The Unitarian and Universalist churches join in a single association. Dana McLean Greeley (1908-1986) was the Association's first president. ⁴			
A Covenant to Affirm and Promote:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. - Justice equity and compassion in human relations. - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth. - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. - The right of conscience and the democratic process within congregations and in society at large. - The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. - Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces, which create and uphold life. - Words and deeds of prophetic women and men, which challenge us to confront powers and structures characters of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love. - Wisdom from the worlds' religions, which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life. - Jewish and Christian teachings, which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. - Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science and warn us existence, and which us against idolatries of the mind and spirit. - Grateful for the religious pluralism, which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. 			

⁴ At the time of the merger there were 100,000 Unitarians, 70,000 Universalists, and 1,000 churches and fellowships in the U.S. In 1982, there were 135,000 total members, and in 1992 there were 148,000 members and 1,000 churches.