

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations take time at the start of the church year in September for a “Bring a Friend Sunday” service, which is designed to introduce folks to the basics of who Unitarian Universalists are and where we come from.

Welcome to our “Bring a Friend Month”—and feel free to share this issue of *Quest* with a friend or family member who might be interested to know who we are. *Quest* is always online at www.clfuu.org/quest.

Hold on to Your Hats: All of Unitarian Universalist History in Just Under Two Thousand Words

BY JANE RZEPKA, SENIOR MINISTER, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP



Well folks, here we are, Unitarian Universalists who, on occasion, are called upon to explain ourselves. Our uncle asks about the new-fangled questionable religion we’ve stumbled into—he’s never heard of it before—and it sounds a little sketchy to him. The guy across the hall thinks we’ve joined a cult that someone dreamt up ten minutes ago. The mom of our child’s friend wants to be supportive—or maybe just tolerant—but not supportive enough to recognize a religion that has no grounding in history—that’s her impression, anyway.

Maybe this will help—notes about our history—which could, of course, be sliced and diced in any number of ways. Certainly I would like to have included more continents, more diversity, more nuance, indeed, more technical accuracy. I especially would like to have included information about those countless courageous founders whose names and contributions are lost to us. But still, the history that follows might help with that uncle of yours.

Our particular history features generations and generations of people who seem first to lose their religion, and then, by means of private struggle and personal risk, find new ways of being religious. Our founders were doubters, thinkers, people for whom integrity counted for something. Through processes of theological reinterpretation and revolution, they found ways to continue their religious lives.

Our first notable ancestor was an Alexandrian named Origen. It was the early Third Century, when Christians were persecuted. Origen, at age seventeen, his father imprisoned and then killed as a Christian, was willing to accept martyrdom himself for his religious faith. But his mother thwarted his plan of leaving home and risking his life by hiding all his clothes. Origen went on to become a dedicated scholar, devoting himself single-mindedly to the pursuit of Christian truth through the use of reason. The more he studied the Bible, the more he began to doubt the usual notion of the existence of heaven and hell. Origen believed that everyone, not just Christians, not just “good” people, would find redemption. It was the “ultimate reconciliation of all souls with God,” it was “universal salvation,” it was “universalism.” Origen’s writings were eventually condemned as heretical, but Universalism lived on as a thread in our liberal history.

Another Alexandrian, a century later, was the first to champion the simplicity of God and the humanity of Jesus: Arius. The creed recited in many Christian churches today



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History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are.

—David C. McCullough

A monthly for religious liberals

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affirming Trinitarian doctrine and Christology was created to counteract the teachings of Arius!

And then there was Pelagius, the Fourth Century English monk. At a time when Augustine insisted on the total depravity of human nature, Pelagius, bless him, courageously advocated moral free will and spiritual liberty. Pelagius was well-respected at the time, and while Augustine clearly had the upper hand, Pelagius posed a real threat to the Church's doctrine of innate corruption. There is no doubt that Augustine won the debate. But again, a thread of faith has persisted: we have the ability to choose good over evil. We have Pelagius to thank for that theological position.

cradle of European Unitarianism. Sixteenth Century. Faustus Socinus. Socinus was the trusted theologian in a group of non-Trinitarian liberal congregations in Poland devoted to religious liberty, reason, and tolerance. The movement spread rapidly, attracting many of the most enlightened and gifted minds of that age. But they were persecuted—the “Socinian heresy” was stomped on, and Socinus himself was attacked in the streets of Krakow, his mouth filled with mud and his face smeared. Eventually, broken by the attacks, he died. Meanwhile, over in Transylvania, having adopted the Unitarian views of his court preacher, Ferenc Dávid (Francis David), the Unitarian king John Sigismund declared the

chapel were attacked and burned. He escaped by the skin of his teeth and, tempted by an invitation from his friend Thomas Jefferson, sailed to the United States in 1794, bringing his Unitarianism with him.

John Murray. The late 1700s. Another Englishman, a Universalist. Murray's life in England had begun to fall apart. His only child died, and then his wife, followed by his three sisters and his mother. He lost his job and landed in debtor's prison. When he got out, he resolved to go to America to seek a new life. John Murray did just that, and wound up on a ship that was eventually grounded on a sandbar off the coast of New Jersey. While the ship's crew waited for a fair wind and a high tide to move them along, Murray went ashore, where he met a farmer—Thomas Potter. It so happens that this Thomas Potter had built a chapel nearby, and was just waiting for a preacher who believed in universal salvation to appear on the scene. Potter became convinced that God had sent John Murray to preach in his chapel. Murray, however, was not at all convinced. Potter said, “The wind will never change, sir, until you preach for us.” And Murray's ship remained stuck until Sunday, when Murray began his preaching career, bringing Universalism to the colonies.

It was a religion that praised God and preached a loving theology of inclusivity in heaven and also here on earth. Therefore, Universalists devoted themselves to prison reform, building schools, temperance, pacifism, and women's rights (ordaining Olympia Brown to the Universalist ministry in 1863). We now have Unitarianism and Universalism on the American continent. It is the early Nineteenth Century, and Calvinist orthodoxy, straight from the Puritans, is the status quo. Universalists, with their universal salvation, offered relief from the Calvinist notion of damnation. Hosea Ballou became the Universalist's greatest leader through his public speaking and

“We are a church in which growth is not only permitted but encouraged—growth in thought, growth in sensitiveness to moral values, growth in courage to put religion to work in the world.”

A big jump now to the Reformation, where our hero is a Spaniard named Michael Servetus. I have mixed feelings about Servetus. Here we have a nineteen-year-old kid who takes on both the Catholic and Protestant authorities. They believe in the Trinity; and Servetus says, and I quote, “Your Trinity is a product of subtlety and madness. The Gospel knows nothing of it.” He was brilliant and intemperate. He infuriated the Inquisitors as well as Calvin. They gave him chance after chance to moderate his views, but he insulted them repeatedly, until, finally, Calvin had Servetus burned at the stake. Personally, I wish Servetus had seen fit to proceed with a little more caution and save himself. He did clearly prove there is no Trinity taught in the Bible, and that was important for a new theology. But I wonder, had he lived, where his theology would have taken him—and us.

Now to Poland and Transylvania, the

first edict of religious toleration in 1568. You've heard the phrase, “We need not think alike to love alike”? That was Ferenc Dávid. In Transylvania, liberal congregations survived and continue to survive over 400 years later as Unitarian churches.

England. Eighteenth Century. Religious liberals here knew about Socinianism: they advocated Socinian tolerance of differences in belief, they applied the Socinian test of reason to religious doctrines, and preached the Socinian concept that Jesus was simply a man. Here we come upon Joseph Priestley, discoverer of oxygen, Unitarian minister, and espouser of a number of liberal and unpopular causes, including the French Revolution. Priestley gave intellectual brilliance to the development of Unitarian religion and stimulated a mushrooming of Unitarian institutions. But established church leaders became exasperated, and they inflamed a mob. Priestley's home, laboratory, library, and Unitarian

publications, spreading the seeds that Murray had sown.

Unitarian-oriented clergy began more and more to sit up and take notice of Calvinistic pessimism about human nature. The prevailing theology in the culture forced religious liberals to come to grips with their own theologies of human free will, dignity, and rationality. William Ellery Channing confirmed the presence of the new theological movement, and rallied the liberals together as a theological group. By the third decade of the Nineteenth Century, many of the Puritan Congregational churches began to call themselves Unitarian.



Every generation of American Unitarians has questioned the religion they inherited. Almost as soon as American Unitarianism was established, a young generation of Transcendentalists — Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker among them—changed the liberal religious orientation from one of empiricism and historicism to a religion of direct intuition. Unitarianism drifted away from belief in Biblical revelation and the sole inspiration of Jesus.

The Universalists did retain the Christian basis of their faith more completely. But they, too, changed over the years, and by the early decades of the Twentieth Century, Universalism emphasized the notion that evil is the result of “unjust social and economic conditions.” Universalism, according to reformer Clarence Skinner, was economic and social as well as spiritual.

The generations continued, and our religion continued to evolve. The rise of the Humanist movement among the Unitarians was an attempt to reformulate liberal theology on non-theistic grounds. Universalists moved from their longstanding emphasis on universal salvation to an understanding of Universalism as universal religion—

“boundless in scope, as broad as humanity, as infinite as the universe.”

By mid-century, the leadership of both Unitarianism and Universalism recognized the advantages of combining efforts through consolidation. The proposed merger was controversial for both Unitarians and Universalists, each quite naturally fearing a loss of tradition and identity. But finally, in 1961, the plan was overwhelmingly ratified by the individual congregations and then by the American Unitarian Association Annual Meeting and the Universalist General Assembly.

Generation after generation, Unitarian Universalists continue to examine the religion, reshape it, persist in it, and find joy in it. Frederick May Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association from 1937-1958, said, “one of the most interesting aspects of our history is the process by which the radicals of one generation have come to be regarded as ‘100% Unitarians’ by succeeding generations. The truth of the matter is that we are a church in which growth is not only permitted but encouraged—growth in thought, growth in sensitiveness to moral values, growth in courage to put religion to work in the world.”

My colleague Jack Mendelsohn offers us this benediction (adapted):

We have inherited quite a religion.

It is lived. It is not just a set of bromides and pietisms. It is a serious effort to conduct life according to principles and ideals.

It is emotional, heart-swelling. It is even naive. In spite of uncertainty, it does not rule out leaps of faith.

It is free, not bound by tradition, inheritance, geography, nor the passing parade.

It is first-hand, a personal experience.

It is responsible. It does not try to escape the consequences of decision.

It is growing. It never thinks of itself as perfected and final.

It embraces humility, recognizing that faith is not certainty where there is in fact mystery.

It is compassionate. It understands that religions universally wrap their essence in myth. It reaches to grasp and appreciate the truths bound up in the myths of other believers.

It is tough on its possessors, committing them to sacrifice, but it is tender toward those who disagree.

It is social, struggling to realize its own vision at community, national and world levels.

It is radiant, blessing its possessor with courage, serenity and zest.

This is our history, and also our hope. ■

What parts of our history offer special meaning to you? What needs highlighting that I didn't even mention? What are your favorite UU history references? Let us know at clf@clfu.org.

Interested in learning more about Unitarian and/or Universalist history? Have a look at:

www.25.uua.org/uuhs/duub — Biographies of important Unitarians and/or Universalists

www.sksm.edu/research/uu_history.php — Online historical materials provided by Starr King School for the Ministry

www.geo.sunysb.edu/uu-history/links.htm — A variety of links to UU historical materials from the Web site of the UU Fellowship at Stony Brook

www.harvardsquarelibrary.org

www.unitariansocieties.org.uk/historical/hsindex.html ■



We asked longtime CLF member, the Rev. Stefan Jonasson, for permission to print the letter he wrote to his parishioner, Avery. Avery had asked him to respond to a question that would help her write a paper for her World Religions class. (You will note that Rev. Jonasson serves a Unitarian congregation, distinct from Unitarian Universalist, as it is located in Canada.)

A Letter to Avery

BY STEFAN JONASSON, MINISTER, UNITARIAN CHURCH IN ARBORG, MANITOBA, CANADA, COORDINATOR OF SERVICES TO LARGE CONGREGATIONS FOR THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION, AND CLF BOARD MEMBER

Dear Avery,

I'm happy to do my best to help out with the information that you need for the paper for your World Religions class. I have to say I am most intrigued. You ask:

What exactly are the outlines of being a Unitarian and living a Unitarian life?

Some Unitarians would say that the outlines of our faith and of living faithfully as a Unitarian are contained in our much-loved seven principles, and I would be hard-pressed to quarrel with that view, for the thought of them moves me in my faith

But when I think about the essentials of our faith and what it means to live as a Unitarian, I always come back to the affirmation written by James Vila Blake, which we recite almost every Sunday:

Love is the spirit of this church
And service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

The wisdom contained in these few words is as old as the mountains and as

fresh as the last snowfall. When Blake wrote these words as the "covenant of fellowship" for the Third Unitarian Church of Chicago in 1893, he meant to distill the essence of our liberal religious faith into the most precise, concise and inclusive statement he could come up with. More than a century later, after tens of thousands of sermons by thousands of ministers and lay preachers, after several denominational commissions and countless books on



the subject, I've yet to read or hear anything that states it better.

"Love is the spirit of this church." This marks our continuity with the Jewish and Christian traditions, which, from the Hebrew prophets to Jesus, taught that the sum total of religious teaching could be encapsulated in what was called the Great Commandment: To love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love your neighbour as yourself.

Now Avery, many Unitarians no longer believe in God, at least not in the way that most people in the world do, but I don't think that that is the essential point. I believe the Great Commandment, which we perpetuate in the first line of our affirmation, is really calling us to love something beyond ourselves and someone beside ourselves. So it seems to me that it's enough to love the Earth, which is our home, or Life itself, which is so mysterious and grand. The Mahatma Gandhi once said that his only god was Truth, and that too would be worthy of our transcendent affection. The only thing

we can really say about God with any confidence is that we're not it!

Loving our neighbours as ourselves can be more challenging, since some of our neighbours can be so damned annoying—or worse. Yet, when we affirm "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," we are making the bold claim that there is something in every human being, however hidden it may sometimes be, which is worthy of our reverence and affection. And even if the light within another is barely a spark, yet can we encourage it to burn more brightly and clearly and warmly.

But the most difficult love of all, I think, is loving ourselves. Yet loving ourselves is essential, for our capacity to love God—or Earth, or Life, or Truth—as well as our capacity to love our neighbours, is grounded in the ability to love ourselves. We cannot see the worth in others until we see what is worthy within ourselves. We cannot honour the dignity of others until we can see the dignity in our own lives. When we strive to love ourselves, to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to love the commanding reality in our lives which calls us forth from who we are to what we may yet become, whatever we may choose to call it, then we can be said to be living in the spirit of our tradition.

"And service (is) its law." We live at a time when far too many people serve only themselves. Indeed, if I weren't as familiar with the past as I am, I might mistakenly worry that we live in the most selfish age in world history. So many people define themselves by the possessions they own or by the mindless pleasures they pursue. While encouraging us to be happy and to seek our own individual satisfaction and fulfillment, our Unitarian faith also encourages us to make service to others central to our religious practice, including serving the well-being of the planet, with its varied creatures and natural wonders.

“This is our great covenant.” It is not a creed or required set of beliefs that bind Unitarians together into a faith community, but rather a “covenant” we make to be mutually supportive of one another. A covenant, in my mind, is simply a deeper and more spiritual word for “contract” or “agreement,” such as when we speak of the covenant of marriage. It is an agreement to be a community, which each one of us enters into of our own free will.

“To dwell together in peace” means that we seek to be respectful of one another, even when we may disagree, and that we eschew violence or coercion, whether physical, mental or emotional. What could be more ridiculous, for instance, than trying to force someone to believe something through threats or intimidation? It is far better to persuade someone that something is true (or not) through carefully reasoned arguments and vigorous conversation! “We need not think alike to love alike,” said one of our early leaders in Transylvania, Francis David. So it is that tolerance has long been a central tenet of Unitarians. But I think that we can never be fully at peace without justice as well, so I believe that dwelling together in peace calls us to work towards a just and generous society in which all people share in the world’s riches.

“To seek the truth in love” implies that we are forever called to expand our knowledge and understanding, endeavouring to be intellectually, emotionally and spiritually honest with ourselves and with one another. Unitarians strive to believe things because they are true, rather than claim that things are true merely because we believe them! Evidence is more important to us than the claims of authority, which lead us to

ask, “how do we know something is true?” Even the wisest person can be wrong, so it is always important to consider the evidence and then use our own judgment to arrive at conclusions about what the evidence means. If seeking the truth implies that we are a curious people, then seeking the truth in love reminds us that we should be humble in our assertions and respectful of others in our search for the truth.

“And to help one another.” Almost everything that happens in a church involves something we could each probably do by ourselves, if we really wanted to, although I think that such radical

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individualism and solitariness tends to impoverish us. There is something about joining together in a religious community which enriches the spiritual quest. Moreover, it is only when we are in conversation with others that our mistaken views are challenged, corrected and refined. Because human beings are social creatures, we seek out the company of others and find meaning in helping one another and in being helped by one another. We are stronger together than each of us is alone.

This is what I think it means to live a Unitarian life: to strive to live up to and into the affirmation we share with one another each Sunday when we gather, so that love will indeed be the spirit of our church and that, together and alone, we will spend our lives in service to the world.

Good luck with your university assignment! ■

Stefan

The CLF is an Official UUA “Welcoming Congregation”



At their last meeting, the CLF board of directors unanimously voted to request official Welcoming Congregation status from the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns. In a letter from the UUA, the Rev. Keith Kron, Director of the Office of BGLT Concerns, said, “It is with great pleasure that I inform you that your congregation may be recognized officially as a Welcoming Congregation.”

Dan Kane, the CLF’s ministerial intern, put together a report for the board that was later submitted to the UUA. The report, entitled *Woven into the Fabric*, contained many of the materials created by and for the CLF that show the CLF’s ongoing commitment to BGLT concerns. From the report: “We all began our conversations from a place of recognizing the fact that being “welcoming” and “affirming” of BGLT folks, families and their concerns is woven into the very fabric of the CLF itself. Hence participating in the Welcoming Congregation Program is not as much about making the CLF a welcoming congregation as it is confirming and institutionalizing that fact.”

Many thanks to Dan for his excellent work, and to Pam Oliver-Lyons and Dan Schlorff, and the other CLF members before them, who have so strongly promoted the idea that the CLF should be an official Welcoming Congregation. You can read the whole report at the CLF’s new Welcoming Congregation page at www.clfuu.org/welcoming, or call Lorraine at the CLF office for a copy (617-948-6166). ■

CLF Library



The CLF Library loans a wide variety of books, curricula, DVDs and CDs, and is available to CLF members,

CYF members, and most Church on Loan contacts. Here are some easy steps for requesting material:

- Go to www.clfuu.org
- Click on **Resources**
- Click again on **CLF Library**
- Browse to your heart's content.

Don't know what you want? Contact the CLF Librarian, Beth Murray, for help: bmurray@clfuu.org or 617-948-6150. Once you know what you want to borrow, just let Beth know the title, via email, telephone, or by mail. Some recent additions to the library include:

Sonata for Voice and Silence

Mark Belletini (Skinner House, 2008)
The brief pieces in this meditation manual offer poetic reflections on the life of the spirit.

In Nature's Honor: Myths and Rituals Celebrating the Earth

Patricia Montley (Skinner House, 2005)
Explores the common ground of human rituals and the impetus that has moved people to invent and perform them.

A Wind Swept Over the Waters

John Nichols (Skinner House, 2007)
Reflections on 60 favorite Bible passages.

Articulating Your UU Faith

Barbara Wells and Jaco B. ten Hove (adult curriculum, UUA, 2003)
A five-session course on how to develop a concise way to describe your Unitarian Universalists beliefs.

Sources: A Unitarian Universalist Cantata

(CD, DVD and musical scores)

Words by Kendyl Gibbons, Music by Jason Shelton
(World premier audio recording at the First Unitarian Church, Nashville, TN, 2006; video recording from the UUMN concert in Clearwater, FL, 2007)

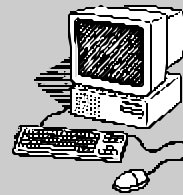
Sources: A Unitarian Universalist Cantata is a multi-movement choral work which engages our theological diversity through a musical exploration of the six sources of our living tradition. It is a celebration of Unitarian Universalism, a statement about who we are today and where we are headed in terms of our self-understanding as people of faith.

Requiem (CD)

Music by Clif Hardin (2006)
First commissioned and performed in 1993 at River Road Unitarian Church, Clif Hardin's "Requiem" is a musical portrayal of the experiences surrounding death and dying through settings of texts ranging from the timeless words of Ecclesiastes to 20th century poets. ■

Shared Interest Groups

Looking for a way to connect with a small group of CLFers who share your interests? Shared Interest Groups are email lists that gather around a particular theme. For instance, our newest Shared Interest Group is our Religious Naturalist List, for CLF members who would like to discuss a theology that puts the natural world at the heart of the sacred. We also have a wide variety of other email-based groups, from those for retirees or parents of kids with special needs to those for UU Christians, Humanists, or Pagans. You can find a complete list of our Shared Interest Groups, and request to



join one, under the "online community" menu at www.clfuu.org. ■

Get *Quest* via the CLF Website

We need your help. If you feel comfortable receiving *Quest* electronically, please let us know.

Last year, non-profit postage rates in the United States skyrocketed by 40%, so the CLF has taken, and continues to take, a huge financial hit each month in paying to mail *Quest*. The only way to save money on postage is to ask members to read *Quest* online or print it out in your own homes. If you elect to receive *Quest* electronically, the CLF office will send you an email reminder each month with a link to the new issue of *Quest*. We can save almost 25 cents in postage for every copy we don't send in the mail (and much more for those outside the United States), in addition to our savings on the printing costs. Add to that the savings to the Earth on paper, ink, and fuel for transportation, and reading online becomes a "green" choice in more ways than one!

If you would like to subscribe to the electronic *Quest* list, please email Iris Hardin, membership administrator and *Quest* production manager, at ihardin@clfuu.org, or call her at 617-948-6170.

And remember, *Quest* is always on the CLF website before the end of the month at www.clfuu.org/quest. ■

September 2008

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Jane's sermon on the front page got me thinking—for a lot of my life I've been someone who thinks that history is, well, kinda boring. I know I'm not the only one to hold that opinion. What's the point of remembering dates on a timeline, or knowing that So-and-So fought the battle of Such-and-Such? After all, as the saying goes, "That was then, this is now." Or, to put it a different way, "That was them, this is us."

But the thing is, "them" really is "us." Bad grammar aside, what I mean to say is that it's easy to think of people 2000 or 200 or even 20 years ago as being a different kind of people, old-fashioned people who weren't anything like we are now. And, true, they didn't have MP3s or X-Boxes or even in-line skates. But they were still people, not so very different from who we are today. Maybe the problem with looking at history is that we put the accent on the wrong place in the word. Maybe instead of staying "HI-story," we should pronounce it "hi-STORY." That way we would be more likely to remember that what we're talking about is stories, stories of people who had a lot of the same questions and problems and issues that we have today.

For instance, there are plenty of Disney movies about kids (or cute animated animals or cars or whatever) who struggle with whether to stay true to themselves or whether to hide who they truly are and what they truly think in order to fit in and be popular. But Disney certainly didn't invent that story line, and they don't necessarily even have the best versions of the plot. Consider Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister in the 1800s, who came to



believe, unlike most ministers of his day, that the real authority for understanding religious truth was

each person's brain and conscience, not what was written in the Bible. He even went so far as to preach about his beliefs in public. This was certainly not the done thing, even amongst Unitarians—way worse than wearing unfashionable shoes. One day his fellow Unitarian ministers went to Parker's house and told him that if he kept on saying such outrageous stuff, he was going to be kicked out of the club, officially removed from the ministers group.

Has that ever happened to you, or to someone you know? Has anyone ever threatened to not be your friend, or to kick you out of a group of friends, if you refused to go along? What did you do?

I'll tell you what Theodore did. He not only refused to change his beliefs—and his preaching—he refused to be kicked out of the group. He told the ministers who were sipping tea in his front parlor that they had no right to remove him from their fellowship, and that he had no intention of going anywhere. And that he certainly wasn't going to limit what he said because they disagreed with him. The Unitarian ministers refused to let him preach in their churches, but eventu-

ally, whether they agreed with Theodore or not, they had to come to grips with the question of whether Unitarians were going to be the kind of group that kicked people out who had different beliefs, or whether we were truly a religion where differences were tolerated—or even welcomed. Bet you can guess which side

eventually won. And, oh, Theodore Parker, the guy who wasn't allowed to preach in all those Boston Unitarian churches? He went on to rent a big theatre to make room for all the people who wanted to hear him preach—a group that eventually numbered some 2000 people on a Sunday!

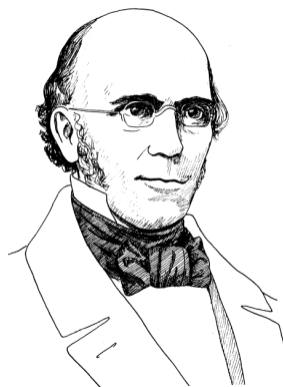
OK, I admit I'm as much of a sucker for a musical as the next person, and probably a lot more. And to the best of my knowledge there are no big song and dance scenes to go with the story of Theodore Parker, or any other of our Unitarian or Universalist heroes. But if you've ever been told that you can't do something because

you're a girl, you might really relate to the story of Olympia Brown, the first woman to be fully ordained as a minister. And if your mother has ever stopped you from pursuing your dreams because she was

Has anyone ever threatened to not be your friend, or to kick you out of a group of friends, if you refused to go along? What did you do?

afraid of what might happen to you, you might relate to the story of Origen that Jane tells on the front page. (OK, I'll give away the punch line and tell you that when he decided to run away and become a Christian martyr like his father, his mother stopped him by hiding his clothes!)

The point is, history isn't just facts about "them," some random people from a long time ago. It is stories about "us," people figuring out how to get along in the world, sometimes in fairly remarkable ways. And I have to say, our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors were a pretty interesting (and outrageous) bunch. If you want to find out more, one place to look is our KidTalk web page for kids, at www.clfuu.org/kidtalk (look for the archives link at the top if you want to read more from past months). And, hey, if you decide to make up a musical about Clara Barton or Joseph Priestly, let me know when it opens—I want to be there for sure! ■



Theodore Parker

Summer into Autumn

It had been a glorious summer with
bright, hot sunny weather;
and now the year was fading away as
seasonably into mellow days,
with mornings of silver mists and clear frosty nights.
The blooming look of the time of flowers
was past and gone;
but instead there were even richer tints
abroad in the sun-coloured leaves,
the lichens, the golden-blossomed furze;
if it was the time of fading,
there was glory in the decay.



by **Elizabeth Gaskell**, 19th Century British Unitarian novelist. This excerpt is from her story "The Doom of the Griffiths" as it appears in *A Green Sound: Nature Writing from the Living Tradition of Unitarian Universalism*, edited by William Lach and published in 1992 by Skinner House Books. Available from the CLF Library at www.clfuu.org/library.



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