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Unitarianism

Unitarianism is a Christian theological movement, named for its understanding of God as one person, namely God the Father, existing separate from Jesus, in direct contrast to Trinitarianism which defines God as three persons coexisting consubstantially as one in being.^[1]

From the 18th Century onwards English-speaking Unitarianism is also known for the rejection of several orthodox Protestant doctrines besides the Trinity,^[2] including the soteriological doctrines of original sin and predestination,^[3] and biblical inerrancy.^[5]

The first Unitarians were found in Italy, Hungary, Poland and the Netherlands from the 1540s onwards.^[6] The first Unitarian Church was established in 1774 on Essex Street, London, where today's British Unitarian headquarters are still located.^[7] Unitarianism quickly evolved, reaching its classical form in the mid-19th century^[8] and, as a Christian theology, is generally considered liberal.^[9]

Capitalization and Usage

Some confusion exists between the terms "Unitarianism" (capitalized) and "unitarianism" (uncapitalized). The capitalized term Unitarianism (which is the subject of this article) is a proper noun and follows the same English usage as other theologies that have developed within a religious movement (Calvinism, Anabaptism, Adventism, Wesleyanism, etc.).^[10] The uncapitalized unitarianism is a common noun and describes any Christology (i.e. understanding of Jesus Christ) that denies the Trinity or believes that only the Father of Jesus (and not Jesus himself) is God. As such, it is a monotheistic belief system not necessarily associated with the Unitarian movement.^[11] ^[12] To avoid confusion between Unitarianism and unitarianism, the former being a developed theology within a specific religious movement and the latter being a Christology, the term Nontrinitarianism is here reserved for the latter.

Recently some religious groups have adopted the 19th Century term "biblical unitarianism" to distinguish their theology from Unitarianism.^[13] Since their belief system is a conservative form of nontrinitarianism, unrelated to Unitarianism, it is not discussed here.

Unitarianism does not accept the Godhood of Jesus, and therefore does not include those nontrinitarian belief systems which do — for example, Oneness Pentecostalism, United Pentecostal Church International and the True Jesus Church—that maintain that Jesus is God as a single person.

The term *Unitarian* is sometimes applied to those who belong to a Unitarian church but who do not hold a Unitarian theological belief.^[14] In the past, the vast majority of members of Unitarian churches were Unitarians also in belief. Over time, however, some Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists moved away from the traditional Christian roots of Unitarianism.^[15] For example, in the 1890s the American Unitarian Association began to allow non-Christian and non-theistic churches and individuals to be part of their fellowship.^[16] As a result, people who held no Unitarian belief began to be called "Unitarians" because they were members of churches that belonged to the American Unitarian Association. After several decades, the non-theistic members outnumbered the theological Unitarians.^[17] A similar, though proportionally much smaller, phenomenon has taken place in the Unitarian churches in the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries, which remain more theistically based. Unitarian theology, therefore, is distinguishable from the belief system of modern Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships. This article includes information about Unitarianism as a theology and about the development of theologically Unitarian churches. For a more specific discussion of Unitarianism as it evolved into a pluralistic liberal religious movement, see Unitarian Universalism (and its national groups the Unitarian Universalist Association in the United States, the Canadian Unitarian Council in Canada, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in the United Kingdom, and the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists).

History

Unitarianism, both as a theology and as a denominational family of churches, was first defined and developed in England and America in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, although theological ancestors are to be found in the Protestant Reformation and even as far back as the early days of Christianity. It matured and reached its classical form in the mid-19th century.^[8]

Beliefs

Unitarian Belief System
Christology: Nontrinitarian
Soteriology: Arminian
Anthropology: Pelagian

Christology

Unitarians adhere to strict monotheism, and maintain that Jesus was a great man and a prophet of God, perhaps even a supernatural being, but not God himself.^[18] They believe Jesus did not claim to be God, and that his teachings did not suggest the existence of a triune God. Unitarians believe in the moral authority, but not necessarily the divinity, of Jesus. Their theology is thus opposed to the trinitarian theology of other Christian denominations.

Unitarian Christology can be divided according to whether Jesus is believed to have had a pre-human existence. Both forms maintain that God is one being and one "person"—the one Jesus called "Father"—and that Jesus is the (or a) Son of God, but generally not God himself.^[19]

Personal pre-human existence

In one form, the Son of God is considered to have pre-existed as the Logos, a being created by God, who dwelt with God in heaven prior to his birth as the man, Jesus. This theology is commonly called Arianism; however, there are many varieties of this form of Unitarianism, ranging from the belief that the Son was a divine spirit of the same nature as God before coming to earth, to the belief that he was an angel or other lesser spirit creature of a wholly different nature from God. (Arius' views did not present Jesus as an angel.)

In this belief system, Jesus has always been beneath God, but higher than humans. Proponents attempt to associate it with early church figures such as Justin Martyr, Lucian of Antioch, Eusebius of Caesarea, Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius the Sophist, Eunomius, and Ulfilas, as well as Felix, Bishop of Urgell. Michael Servetus did not deny the pre-existence of Christ.^[20] Isaac Newton had Arian beliefs as well.^{[21] [22] [23]} Famous 19th century Arian Unitarians include Andrews Norton^[24] and Dr. William Ellery Channing.^[25] Arian ideas persist among Unitarians in Transylvania, Hungary, France, and several countries in Africa.

Since the 19th century, several Evangelical or Restorationist nontrinitarians, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christian Churches of God (CCG), and the Filipino-based Iglesia ni Cristo, have also adopted a Christology sometimes classified as Arianism or Semi-Arianism, but these are not technically Unitarians (capitalized), either because of their conservative doctrines, such as the teaching of biblical inerrancy, or their development outside of, and lack of connection with, the historical Unitarian movement. Important figures include Barton W. Stone and Charles Taze Russell.

No personal pre-human existence

The distinguishing feature of this belief is the denial of the personal pre-existence of Christ. There are various views ranging from the belief that Jesus, the son of Joseph, was a great man who became filled with the Holy Spirit, often called adoptionism (or, in the 19th century, psilanthropism), to the belief that he literally was the Son of God through the virgin birth.

Acceptance of the virgin birth

Theodotus of Byzantium,^[26] Artemon^[27] and Paul of Samosata^[28] denied the pre-existence of Christ but accepted the virgin birth.^[29] This was continued by Marcellus of Ancyra and his pupil Photinus in the 4th century AD.^{[30] [31]} In the Radical Reformation and Anabaptist movements of the 16th century this resurfaced with Lelio Sozzini and his nephew Fausto Sozzini. Having influenced the Polish Brethren to a formal declaration of this belief in the Racovian Catechism, they gave the name "Socinianism" to this Christological position,^[32] which continued with English Unitarians such as John Biddle's *Twofold Catechism* (1654). The divergence point in Unitarian belief on this subject, and of miracles in general, in England, is around 1800, with Thomas Belsham (1806), Richard Wright (1808) writing against the miraculous conception.^{[33] [34] [35] [36]} The American Unitarian Association in America generally remained firm in its belief in the historical accuracy of the New Testament, including the virgin birth story, until the 1830s, when the Transcendentalist movement began.^[37] Famous American Unitarian William Ellery Channing, for example, was a believer in the virgin birth until later in his life, after he had begun his association with the Transcendentalists.^{[38] [39] [40]}

Psilanthropism

The denial of the virgin birth is also sometimes described as Ebionism from the Ebionites; however, Origen (*Contra Celsum* v.61) and Eusebius (*HE* iii.27) both indicate that some Ebionites did accept the virgin birth.^[41] The *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (1897) incorrectly ascribes denial of the virgin birth to Ferenc Dávid, leader of the Transylvanian Unitarians. The psilanthropist view was also manifested in Transcendentalist Unitarianism, which emerged from the German liberal theology associated primarily with Friedrich Schleiermacher. Its proponents took an intellectual and humanistic approach to religion, rejecting most of the miraculous events in the Bible (including the virgin birth). They embraced evolutionary concepts, asserted the "inherent goodness of man", and abandoned the doctrine of biblical infallibility. Notable examples are Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Frederick Henry Hedge.

Other beliefs

Though there is no specific authority on convictions of Unitarian belief aside from rejection of the Trinity, the following beliefs are generally accepted:^{[42] [43] [44] [45] [46] [47]}

- One God and the oneness or unity of God.
- The life and teachings of Jesus Christ constitute the exemplar model for living one's own life.
- Reason, rational thought, science, and philosophy coexist with faith in God.
- Humans have the ability to exercise free will in a responsible, constructive and ethical manner with the assistance of religion.
- Human nature in its present condition is neither inherently corrupt nor depraved (see original Sin), but capable of both good and evil, as God intended.
- No religion can claim an absolute monopoly on the Holy Spirit or theological truth.
- Though the authors of the Bible were inspired by God, they were humans and therefore subject to human error.
- Traditional doctrines that (they believe) malign God's character or veil the true nature and mission of Jesus Christ, such as the doctrines of predestination, eternal damnation, and the vicarious sacrifice or satisfaction theory of the Atonement are rejected.

Unitarians have liberal views of God, Jesus, the world and purpose of life as revealed through reason, scholarship, science, philosophy, scripture and other prophets and religions. They believe that reason and belief are complementary and that religion and science can co-exist and guide them in their understanding of nature and God. They also do not enforce belief in creeds or dogmatic formulas. Although there is flexibility in the nuances of belief or basic truths for the individual Unitarian Christian, general principles of faith have been recognized as a way to bind the group in some commonality. Adherents generally accept religious pluralism and find value in all teachings, but remain committed to their core belief in Christ's teachings. Unitarians generally value a secular society in which government is kept separate from religious affairs. Most contemporary Unitarian Christians believe that one's personal moral convictions guide one's political activities, and that a secular society is the most viable, just and fair.

Unitarian Christians reject the doctrine of some Christian denominations that God chooses to redeem or save only those certain individuals that accept the creeds of, or affiliate with, a specific church or religion, from a common ruin or corruption of the mass of humanity. They believe that righteous acts are necessary for redemption in addition to faith.

In 1938, *The Christian leader* attributed "*the religion of Jesus, not a religion about Jesus*" to Unitarians,^[48] though the phrase was first used by Congregationalist Rollin Lynde Hartt in 1924.^[49]

Worship

Worship within the Unitarian tradition accommodates a wide range of understandings of God, while the focus of the service may be simply the celebration of life itself. Each Unitarian congregation is at liberty to devise its own form of worship, though commonly, Unitarian services lack liturgy and ritual, while containing readings from many sources, which may include sermons, prayers, hymns and songs.^[50]

Modern Christian Unitarian organizations

This section relates to Unitarian churches and organizations today which are still specifically Christian within or outside Unitarian-Universalism, which embraces non-Christian religions.

Hungarian and Transylvanian Unitarian Churches

The largest Unitarian denomination worldwide today is also the oldest surviving Unitarian denomination (since 1565, first use of the term "Unitarian" 1600^[51]); the Unitarian Church of Transylvania (in Romania, which is union with the Unitarian Church in Hungary). The church in Romania and Hungary still looks to the statement of faith, the *Summa Universae Theologiae Christianae secundum Unitarios* (1787), though today assent to this is not required. The modern Unitarian Church in Hungary (25,000 members) and the Transylvanian Unitarian Church (75,000 members) are affiliated with the ICUU and claim continuity with the historical Unitarian Christian tradition established by Ferenc Dávid in 1565 in Transylvania under John II Sigismund Zápolya. The Unitarian churches in Hungary and Transylvania are structured and organized along a church hierarchy that includes the election by the synod of a national bishop who serves as superintendent of the Church. Many Hungarian Unitarians embrace the principles of rationalist Unitarianism.^[52] Unitarian high schools exist only in Transylvania (Romania), including the John Sigismund Unitarian Academy in Cluj-Napoca, and the Berde Mózes Unitárius Gimnázium in Cristuru Secuiesc (Székelykeresztúr); both teach Rationalist Unitarianism.



First Unitarian Meeting House in Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, designed by Unitarian Frank Lloyd Wright

UUCF (USA)

The Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship (UUCF, founded 1945) predates the consolidation of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and Universalist Church of America (UCA) into the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in 1961. UUCF continues as a subgroup of UUA serving the Christian members.

ICUU

Other Unitarian Christian groups are affiliated with the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), founded in 1995. The ICUU tends to contain a majority membership who express specifically Unitarian Christian beliefs, rather than the religious pluralism of the UUA, but nevertheless remain liberal, open-minded and inclusive communities.^[53] The ICUU has "full member" groups in the United States, Australia & New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada, Brazil, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka.

The ICUU includes small "Associate groups", including Congregazione Italiana Cristiano Unitariana, Turin (founded in 2004)^[54] and the Bét Dávid Unitarian Association, Oslo (founded 2005).^[55]

AUC (USA)

The American Unitarian Conference (AUC) was formed in 2000 and stands between UUA and ICUU in attachment to the Christian element of modern Unitarianism. The American Unitarian Conference is open to non-Christian Unitarians—being particularly popular with non-Christian theists and deists. The AUC has four congregations in the United States.

UCA (UK)

The Unitarian Christian Association (UCA, UK) was founded 1991 by Rev. Lancelot Garrard (1904–93)^[56] and others to promote specifically Christian ideas within the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC). Just as the UUCF and ICUU maintain formal links with UUA in America, so the UCA does with the GAUFCC in the UK.

The majority of Unitarian Christian publications are sponsored by an organization and published specifically for their membership. They generally do not serve as a tool for missionary work or encouraging conversions.

Australia

The Sydney Unitarian Church, was founded 1850, under a Reverend Stanley and was a vigorous denomination during the 19th Century. The modern church has properties in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, and smaller congregations elsewhere.^[57]

Ecclesiology

When Unitarianism developed in the 17th century during the Protestant era of the evolution of Christianity, the strongholds in Transylvania, Poland, and eventually Britain and the northeastern parts of the United States were firmly in the congregational tradition. In the Hungarian-speaking territories it adopted a governance system that combined the Synodal and Episcopal models.

For those churches under the congregational model, each church governed itself independently of a hierarchical authority. These small congregations belonged, however, to more formal associations of churches. The American Unitarian Association, formed in 1825, was one of these. Later, in 1961, the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America merged to form the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), which is the largest organization of Unitarians in the US. The UUA is no longer an explicitly Christian organization and does not focus exclusively on the core teachings of Jesus Christ or Christianity.

Several Unitarian organizations still promote Christianity as their central theme. Among them, Unitarian Ministries International,^[58] the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship (UUCF, an affiliate of the UUA),^[59] the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC) of the United Kingdom, and the Unitarian Christian Association (UCA, an affiliate of the GAUFCC).^[60]

In the US, the newest organization promoting a return to the theistic roots of Unitarianism is the American Unitarian Conference (AUC), formed in 2000. The AUC's stated goal is to formulate and promote classical Unitarian-based, unifying religious convictions, which balance the needs of members with a practical approach to inclusion and progressive free thought.

Interfaith dialogue and relations

Unitarian belief usually involves severance of identification with "Christianity" as formulated in the creeds of the Nicene and pre-Chalcedonian churches (Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most Protestants). Unitarianism is therefore outside of the fellowship of these traditions. Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant creeds generally insist on Trinitarian belief as an essential aspect of Christianity and basic to a group's continuity of identity with the historical Christian faith.

However, occasionally, especially in Protestant history, traditionally Trinitarian groups seek to incorporate unitarianism. Friendliness toward unitarianism has sometimes gone hand-in-hand with anti-Catholicism. In some cases non-Trinitarian or unitarian belief has been adopted by some, and tolerated in Christian churches as a "non-essential". This was the case in the English Presbyterian Church, and in the Congregational Church in New England late in the 18th century. The Restoration Movement also attempted to forge a compatible relation between Trinitarians and unitarians, as did the Seventh Day Baptists and various Adventists. The Seventh Day Baptists hold unitarian doctrines in their International Conference but became Trinitarians in the US. The unitarian tendency in these latter groups emerged from their original theology and their rejection of Catholic traditions regarding the Trinity.

In some cases, this openness to Unitarianism within traditionally Trinitarian churches has been inspired by a very broad ecumenical motive. Modern liberal Protestant denominations are often accused by Trinitarians within their ranks, and critics outside, of being indifferent to the doctrine, and therefore self-isolated from their respective Trinitarian pasts and heritage. In some cases, it is charged that these Trinitarian denominations are no longer Christian, because of their toleration of unitarian belief among their teachers, and in their seminaries.

At a local level, many unitarian Christian groups (or members) have links with congregations affiliated with the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Unity Church; some argue they feel more at home within these denominations than Unitarian Universalism. A small proportion of unitarian Christians also have links with Progressive Christianity.

Despite the close friendship and shared heritage that exists between adherents to Unitarian Universalism and unitarian Christianity, there is an element within Unitarian Universalism that opposes specifically unitarian Christian groups, believing them to be exclusive and intolerant of non-Christian thought. Likewise, some unitarian Christians also believe that Unitarian Universalists are intolerant of Christian thought and tend to marginalize Christians.

Notable unitarians

Notable unitarians include Béla Bartók the 20th century composer, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker in theology and ministry, Joseph Priestley and Linus Pauling in science, George Boole in mathematics, Susan B. Anthony, John Locke in civil government, and Florence Nightingale in humanitarianism and social justice, Charles Dickens and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in literature, Frank Lloyd Wright in arts, Josiah Wedgwood in industry and Charles William Eliot in education.

Eleven Nobel prizes have been awarded to Unitarians: Robert Millikan and John Bardeen (twice) in Physics; Emily Green Balch, Albert Schweitzer, Linus Pauling, and Geoff Levermore for Peace; George Wald and David H. Hubel in Medicine; Linus Pauling in Chemistry, and Herbert Simon in Economics.

Five presidents of the United States were unitarians: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Millard Fillmore, and William Howard Taft. Other unitarians include Sir Tim Berners-Lee,^[61] Lancelot Ware, founder of Mensa, Sir Adrian Boult, the conductor, and C. Killick Millard, founder of the Euthanasia Society.

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- [6] James Hastings *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: Algonquins-Art* p 785 - 2001 "The first Unitarians were Italians, and the majority took refuge in Poland, where the laxity of the laws and the independence of the nobility secured for them a toleration which would have been denied to their views in other countries."
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- [9] Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (8th ed.) places Unitarianism in its "Liberal Family" category: "Brought together in this chapter as the 'liberal' family of churches and 'religious' organizations are those groups that have challenged the orthodox Christian dominance of Western religious life: Unitarianism, universalism, and infidelism" (p. 611).
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- [12] Letter from Matthew F. Smith to Editor *World faiths Encounter* 7-12 World Congress of Faiths - 1994 - "In an otherwise excellent article by Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, 'Sikh Spirit in an Age of Plurality' (No. 6, Nov. 1993), the writer makes a number of pejorative remarks about 'unitarianism', associating the term with a striving for a monolithic polity and reductionism to a common denominator. This is a very unfortunate misuse of the word. A correct definition of 'unitarianism' (small 'u') is the monotheistic belief system of someone not directly associated with the Unitarian movement, almost always applied to a person from the Christian tradition, as the word was coined in distinction to the orthodox 'Trinitarian' doctrine of Christianity. 'Unitarians' (capital 'U') are, of course, those who follow the Unitarian approach to religion and are formally associated with the movement. In neither case can it be claimed that there is an underlying agenda towards reductionism and uniformity. Quite the reverse, in fact. Modern Unitarianism is remarkable among religions in not only welcoming the variety of faiths that there are to be found but also, as a creedless church, welcoming and encouraging acceptance of the same. We readily accept that not all our members are 'realist' theists, for example. Our long-standing commitment to interfaith understanding, evident in our practical support of the International Association for Religious Freedom, the World Congress of Faiths and the newly-established International Interfaith centre in Oxford cannot be taken to mean that Unitarians are seeking the creation of a single world religion out of the old. I do not know a single Unitarian who believes or seeks that. On the contrary, we reject uniformity and cherish instead the highest degree of spiritual integrity, both of the existing religious traditions of the world and of religious persons as unique, thinking individuals. Matthew F Smith, Information Officer" (Essex Street Chapel, Unitarian Church headquarters, UK)
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- [15] AW Gomes, EC Beisner, and RM Bowman, *Unitarian Universalism* (Zondervan, 1998), pp. 30–79.

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External links

- Unitarian Ministries International (<http://unitarianministries.com/home>)
- Unitarianism (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/unitarianism/>) at BBC Religions
- American Unitarian Conference (<http://www.americanunitarian.org/>)
- American Unitarian Reform (<http://american.unitarianreform.com/>)
- General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (UK) (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/>)
- Biblical Unitarians (<http://www.biblicalunitarian.com/>)

Nontrinitarianism

Nontrinitarianism (or **antitrinitarianism**) includes all Christian belief systems that wholly or partly disagree with the doctrine of the Trinity, namely, the teaching that God is three distinct *hypostases* and yet co-eternal, co-equal, and indivisibly united in one essence or *ousia*. According to the churches who consider ecumenical church council decisions final, this teaching was infallibly defined at the third Ecumenical Council (First Council of Ephesus). Nontrinitarians disagree with the findings of the Council for various reasons, such as the belief that the Bible as they understand it takes precedence over creeds, or that there was a Great Apostasy prior to the Council. Nontrinitarians represents a small minority of Christianity.

Nontrinitarian views differ widely on the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Various nontrinitarian views, such as Adoptionism, Monarchianism, and Arianism, existed prior to the formal definition of the Trinity doctrine in AD 325.^[1] Nontrinitarianism was later renewed in the Gnosticism of the Cathars in the 11th through 13th centuries, in the Age of Enlightenment of the 18th century, and in some groups arising during the Second Great Awakening of the 19th century.

Modern nontrinitarian groups or denominations include Unitarian Universalist Christians, Bible Students, Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, Iglesia ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Oneness Pentecostals, and the United Church of God.

Forms of nontrinitarianism

Most nontrinitarians identify themselves as Christian. There are some groups that do not describe themselves as either Christian or Trinitarian.

Status of nontrinitarianism within Christianity

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* states, "To some Christians the doctrine of the Trinity appeared inconsistent with the unity of God....They therefore denied it, and accepted Jesus Christ, not as incarnate God, but as God's highest creature by Whom all else was created....[this] view in the early Church long contended with the orthodox doctrine."^[2] This view (nontrinitarian) "in the early church", still supported by some Christians, generates controversy among mainstream Christians. Most trinitarians considered it heresy not to believe in the Trinity.

Christianity is typically understood as a Trinitarian monotheism in its God-concept, although the theological and philosophical work needed to differentiate this from tritheism is significant, if not impossible. This difficulty is so great that non-Christians who make the attempt are often left with a view of Christianity as being a faith of tritheism or quadratheism when dealing with Roman Catholics and their focus on the Virgin Mary Mariolatry. Some scholars get the general sense that the Cappadocian Fathers, who developed the idea of Trinity, were themselves not entirely convinced of its truth. However, some framework was needed to reconcile the centrality of Jesus for the Christian experience with the figure of YHWH or "Abba" of which Jesus was a representative, and the best option at that time was this trinity idea. In any discussion of early Christianity, it is important to remember that a small sect like

Christianity needed to show itself as quantifiably different from that which came before and the surrounding culture in general. In order to accomplish this, a standard theology was needed. With this theology, the group could define itself and rally around a central cause or figure. This made the faith strong, but after the faith grew beyond the danger of being destroyed by Rome, it also made the faith somewhat myopic when it came to dissenting views.

At times, segments of Nicene Christianity reacted with ultimate severity toward nontrinitarian views. At other times, especially among Protestants, the same views have been accommodated.

Forms of Christian nontrinitarianism

Nontrinitarian followers of Jesus fall into roughly five different groups:

- There are those who believe that Jesus is not God, but that he was a messenger from God, or prophet, or the perfect created human. One version of this view was espoused by ancient sects such as the Ebionites. A specific example of this form of nontrinitarianism is Arianism which had become the dominant view in some regions in the time of the Roman Empire. Arianism taught about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but held that the Son was not co-eternal with the Father. However, Arians still maintained that Jesus was divine and did not consider worship of the Son to be idolatrous.^[3] Another early form of nontrinitarianism was Monarchianism.
- Those who believe that the heavenly Father, the resurrected Son and the Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God, as perceived by the believer, rather than three distinct persons in God himself. This is a doctrine known originally as Sabellianism or modalism, although it is explained somewhat differently in the churches that now hold these beliefs. Examples of such churches today are Oneness Pentecostals and the New Church.
- Some denominations, such as Mormonism, teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not only distinct persons, but also distinct beings. Rather than being united in substance, these denominations believe they are united in other ways. For example, in Mormonism, the three individual deities are thought to be "one" in will or purpose, as Jesus was "one" with his disciples.^[4]
- Denominations within the Sabbatarian tradition (Armstrongism), who accept the divinity of the Father and Jesus the Son, but do not teach that the Holy Spirit is a being. The Living Church of God, for example, teaches, "The Holy Spirit is the very essence, the mind, life and power of God. It is not a Being. The Spirit is inherent in the Father and the Son, and emanates from Them throughout the entire universe". This view has historically been termed Semi-Arianism or Binitarianism.
- Jehovah's Witnesses who believe that Jehovah is the only true God, worthy to be worshipped and served. (Matthew 4:10, John 4: 23,24, 17:3). They consider Jesus to be the only begotten Son and the first creation of God. (Colossians 1: 15, John 3: 16) While they do give relative "proskuneo" to Christ, and pray through him as "Mediator" and "Messiah", they believe that only the Father is without beginning, and that the Father is greater than the Son, and therefore receives higher worship. They do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person but rather to be the active force or spirit of the almighty God Jehovah (Luke 1:35).

Forms of nonchristian nontrinitarianism

- Members of Unitarian Universalism may or may not identify as Christian. Traditionally, unitarianism was a form of Christianity that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. Unitarianism was rebuffed by orthodox Christianity at the First Council of Nicaea in a Synod meeting of the bishops in 325, but resurfaced subsequently in Church history, especially during the theological turmoils of the Protestant Reformation. In 1961, the American Unitarian Association (AUA) was consolidated with the Universalist Church of America (UCA), forming the Unitarian Universalist Association
- In Islam's holy book, the Quran, Allah (God) denounces the concept of Trinity (Qur'an 4:171 ^[5], 5:72-73 ^[6], 112:1-4 ^[7]) as an over-reverence by Christians of God's Word, the prophet and messiah Jesus Christ son of the virgin Mary, while maintaining Jesus as one of the most important and respected prophets and Messengers of

God, (2:136^[8]) primarily sent to prevent the Jews from changing the Torah, (61:6^[9]) and to refresh and reaffirm his original message as revealed to Moses and earlier New Testament prophets. The creation of Jesus is framed similar to the creation of Adam out of dust, but with Jesus' birth meaning his creation excludes male human intervention rather than creation completely without human participation (3:59^[10]). Belief in all of the aforementioned about Jesus as a prophet (5:78^[11]), as well as belief in the original gospel and Torah and belief in Jesus' virgin birth (3:45^[12]) are core criterion of being a Muslim and Quranic criterion for salvation in the hereafter along with belief in the Prophet Muhammad and all the prior prophets. In short God is seen as being both perfect and indivisible. He can therefore have no peer or equal. Jesus, being God's creation, can never be considered to be equal with God or a part of God. To do so is considered by Islam to be blasphemy. (112:3^[13])

History

All nontrinitarians take the position that the doctrine of the earliest form of Christianity (see Apostolic Age) was not Trinitarian. Typically, nontrinitarians believe Christianity was altered by the edicts of Emperor Constantine I, which eventually resulted in the adoption of Trinitarian Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire during the reign of Theodosius I. Because it was during a dramatic shift in Christianity's status that the doctrine of the Trinity attained its definitive development, nontrinitarians typically consider the doctrine questionable. Nontrinitarians see the Nicene Creed as an essentially political document, resulting from the subordination of true doctrine to state interests by leaders of the Catholic Church, so that the church became, in their view, an extension of the Roman Empire.

Although nontrinitarian beliefs continued to multiply, and among some people (such as the Lombards in the west) were dominant for hundreds of years after their inception, the Trinitarians gained prominence in the Roman Empire. Nontrinitarians typically argue that the primitive beliefs of Christianity were systematically suppressed (often to the point of death), and that the historical record, perhaps also including the scriptures of the New Testament, was altered as a consequence.

Some scholars investigating the historical Jesus assert that Jesus taught neither his own equality with God nor the Trinity (see, for example, the Jesus Seminar).

Nontrinitarians also dispute the veracity of the Nicene Creed based on its adoption nearly 300 years after the life of Jesus as a result of conflict within pre-Nicene early Christianity. Nontrinitarians also cite scriptures such as Matthew 15:9 and Ephesians 4:14 that warn the reader to beware the doctrines of men.

The author H. G. Wells, later famous for his contribution to science-fiction, wrote in *The Outline of History*: "We shall see presently how later on all Christendom was torn by disputes about the Trinity. There is no evidence that the apostles of Jesus ever heard of the Trinity, at any rate from him."

The question of why such a central doctrine to the Christian faith would never have been explicitly stated in scripture or taught in detail by Jesus himself was sufficiently important to 16th century historical figures such as Michael Servetus as to lead them to argue the question. The Geneva City Council, in accord with the judgment of the cantons of Zürich, Bern, Basel, and Schaffhausen, condemned Servetus to be burned at the stake for this and his opposition to infant baptism.

The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* describes the five stages that led to the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.^[14]

1. The acceptance of the pre-human existence of Jesus as the (middle-platonic) Logos, namely, as the medium between the transcendent sovereign God and the created cosmos. The doctrine of Logos was accepted by the Apologists and by other Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, such as Justin the Martyr, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Ireneus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, and the 4th century Arius.
2. The doctrine of the timeless generation of the Son from the Father as it was articulated by Origen in his effort to support the ontological immutability of God, that he is ever-being a father and a creator. The doctrine of the

timeless generation was adopted by Athanasius of Alexandria.

3. The acceptance of the idea that the son of God is *homoousios* to his father, that is, of the same transcendent nature. This position was declared in the Nicene Creed, which specifically states the son of God is as immutable as his father.
4. The acceptance that the Holy Spirit also has ontological equality as a third person in a divine Trinity and the final Trinitarian terminology by the teachings of the Cappadocian Fathers.
5. The addition of the Filioque to the Nicene Creed, as accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.

Points of dissent

Scriptural support

Critics argue that the Trinity, for a teaching described as fundamental, lacks direct scriptural support, and even some proponents of the doctrine acknowledge that direct or formal support is lacking. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught [explicitly] in the [Old Testament]", "The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established [by a council]...prior to the end of the 4th century".^[15] Similarly, *Encyclopedia Encarta* states: "The doctrine is not taught explicitly in the New Testament, where the word God almost invariably refers to the Father. [...] The term *trinitas* was first used in the 2nd century, by the Latin theologian Tertullian, but the concept was developed in the course of the debates on the nature of Christ [...]. In the 4th century, the doctrine was finally formulated".^[16] *Encyclopædia Britannica* says: "Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Old Testament: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord' (Deuteronomy 6:4). [...] The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. [...] by the end of the 4th century, under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappadocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since."^[17] The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* states: "One does not find in the NT the trinitarian paradox of the coexistence of the Father, Son, and Spirit within a divine unity."^[18]

Jesus as true God

The debate over the biblical basis of the Trinity revolves primarily around the question of the divinity of Jesus. Those who reject the teaching that Jesus is true God argue that Jesus himself rejected being called even "good" in deference to God in the parable of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-17), said that the Father is greater than he is (John 14:28), disavowed omniscience as the Son (John 8:28; Mark 13:32), "learned obedience" (Hebrews 5:8), was called the 'firstborn of all creation' (Colossians 1:15) and 'the beginning of God's creation' (Revelation 3:14), referred to ascending to "my Father, and to your Father; and to my God, and to your God" (John 20:17) and that he said "the Father is the only true God" (John 17:3). Additionally, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 when saying in Mark 12:29 "'The most important [commandment], answered Jesus, 'is this: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*'"

They also argue to show that "Elohim" (literally "gods") does not hint at any form of plurality, but rather to majesty pointing to the Hebrew dialect and grammar rules that render this title in nearly all circumstances with a singular verb. Raymond E. Brown wrote that Mark 10:18, Matthew 27:46, John 20:17, Ephesians 1:17, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Timothy 2:5, John 14:28, Mark 13:32, Philippians 2:5-10, and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 are "texts that seem to imply that the title God was not used for Jesus" and are "negative evidence which is often somewhat neglected in Catholic treatments of the subject."^[19]

Trinitarians, and nontrinitarians who also hold Jesus Christ as Almighty God (such as the "Modalists"), claim these statements are based on Jesus' existence as the Son of God in human flesh; that he is therefore both God and man, who became "lower than the angels, for our sake," (Hebrews 2:6-8) and that he was tempted as humans are tempted,

but did not sin (Hebrews 4:14-16). Some nontrinitarians counter the belief that the Son was limited only during his earthly life by citing "the head of Christ [is] God" (1 Corinthians 11:3), placing Jesus in an inferior position to the Father even after his resurrection. They also cite Acts 5:31 and Philippians 2:9, indicating that Jesus became exalted after ascension to heaven, and to Hebrews 9:24, Acts 7:55, and 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28, regarding Jesus as a distinct personality in heaven, all after his ascension.

Terminology

Nontrinitarians state that the doctrine of the Trinity relies on non-Biblical terminology. The term "Trinity" is not found in scripture and the number three is never associated with God in any sense other than within the Comma Johanneum of disputed authenticity. They argue that the only number ascribed to God in the Bible is one, and that the Trinity, literally meaning three-in-one, ascribes a threeness to God that is not biblical.

Several other examples of terms not found in the Bible include multiple "persons" in relation to God, the terms "God the Son" and "God the Holy Spirit", and "eternally" begotten. For example, a basic tenet of Trinitarianism is that God is made up of three distinct persons (hypostasis). The term *hypostasis* is used only once in reference to God in the Bible^[Heb 1:3] where it states that Jesus is the express image of God's person. The Bible never uses the term in relation to the Holy Spirit nor explicitly mentions the Son having a distinct hypostasis from the Father.

Regarding the major term *homoousios* (of the same essence), which was introduced into the Creed at the First Council of Nicaea, Pier Franco Beatrice stated: "The main thesis of this paper is that homoousios came straight from Constantine's Hermetic background. [...] The Plato recalled by Constantine is just a name used to cover precisely the Egyptian and Hermetic theology of the "consubstantiality" of the Logos-Son with the Nous-Father, having recourse to a traditional apologetic argument. [...] Constantine's Hermetic interpretation of Plato's theology and consequently the emperor's decision to insert homoousios in the Creed of Nicaea."^[20]

Trinitarians maintain that these ideas are implied within scripture and were necessary additions of the Nicene Era to counter the doctrine of Arianism.

Holy Spirit

See also: Holy Spirit.

It is also argued that the vast majority of scriptures that Trinitarians offer in support of their beliefs refer to the Father and to Son, but not to the Holy Spirit. Some nontrinitarians, including Jehovah's Witnesses, believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person but the active force of God.^[21]

Monotheism

The Trinity doctrine is integral in inter-religious disagreements with two of the other major faiths, Judaism and Islam; the former rejects Jesus' divine mission entirely, and the latter accepts Jesus as a human prophet and the Messiah but not as the son of God. The concept of trinity is totally rejected, with Quranic verses calling the doctrine of the Trinity blasphemous. Many within Judaism and Islam also accuse Christian Trinitarians of practicing polytheism—believing in three gods rather than just one.

Supporting scriptures

Among Bible verses cited by opponents of Trinitarianism are those that claim there is only one God, the Father. Other verses state that Jesus Christ was a man. Although trinitarians consider these apparent contradictions part of the mystery and paradox of the Trinity itself, some nontrinitarians argue that there is little, if any, biblical basis for the Trinity. Nontrinitarians cite scriptures such as the following as being contrary to the Trinity doctrine.

One God

Below are some scriptures nontrinitarians use to claim that there is only one God, the Father.

- "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:" (Mark 12:29)
- "Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"" (Matthew 4:10)
- "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3)
- "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5)
- "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (James 2:19)
- "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)

Son and Father

Below are some scriptures nontrinitarians use to show that Jesus is inferior to God, and was a creation.

- "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)
- "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." (John 1:18)
- "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)
- "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:20-23)
- "Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17)
- "He who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall never go out of it: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will also write upon him my new name." (Revelation 3:12)
- "But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56)
- "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15)
- "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in

all." (1 Cor. 15:24-28)

- "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:'" (Revelation 3:14)

Holy spirit

Below are some scriptures nontrinitarians use to claim the Holy Spirit is inferior to God. Some nontrinitarians use the below scriptures to endorse that the Holy Spirit is the power of God, rather than a "person".

- "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:39)
- "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; " (John 14:16)
- "But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26)
- "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:" (John 15:26)
- "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7)
- "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: " (Acts 2:17-18)
- "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)
- "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 10:45)
- "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15)
- "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Corinthians 2:12)
- "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2)
- "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:14)
- "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6)
- "In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13)
- "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3:24)
- "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4:13)
- "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 4:8)

Old Testament

- I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. (Daniel 7:13)
- Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (Psalms 110:1)

Ontological differences

- Jesus said, "The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." (John 13:16) Jesus said on numerous occasions that, "the Father... hath sent me." (John 5:37,6:37) The Holy Ghost was also sent by the Father (John 14:26) and Jesus (John 16:7), thus making Jesus inferior to the Father and the Holy Ghost inferior to both the Father and Jesus.
- "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the spirit of truth." (John 14:16)
- Jesus prays to God. (John 17:1-3)
- Jesus has faith in God. (Hebrews 2:17,18, Hebrews 3:2)
- Jesus is a servant of God. (Acts 3:13)
- Jesus does not know things God knows. (Mark 13:32, Revelation 1:1)
- Jesus worships God. (John 4:22)
- Jesus has one who is God to him. (Revelation 3:12)
- Jesus is in subjection to God. (1 Corinthians 15:28)
- Jesus' head is God. (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- Jesus has reverent submission, fear, of God. (Hebrews 5:7)
- Jesus is given lordship by God. (Acts 2:36)
- Jesus is exalted by God.(Acts 5:31)
- Jesus is made high priest by God. (Hebrews 5:10)
- Jesus is given authority by God. (Philippians 2:9)
- Jesus is given kingship by God. (Luke 1:32,33)
- Jesus is given judgment by God. (Acts 10:42)
- "God raised [Jesus] from the dead". (Acts 2:24, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 15:15)
- Jesus is at the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69, Acts 2:33, Romans 8:34)
- Jesus is the one human mediator between the one God and man. (1 Timothy 2:5)
- God put everything, except Himself, under Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)
- Jesus did not think being "equal with God" was graspable. (Philippians 2:6)
- "Around the ninth hour, Jesus shouted in a loud voice, saying "*Eli Eli lama sabachthani*?" which is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Views on allegedly Trinitarian passages in scripture

Nontrinitarians argue that a person who is really seeking to know the truth about God is not going to search the Bible hoping to find a text that he can construe as fitting what he already believes. They say it is noteworthy at the outset that most of the texts used as "proof" of the Trinity actually mention only two persons, not three; so nontrinitarians claim that even if the trinitarian explanation of the texts were correct, these would not prove that the Bible teaches the Trinity.^[22]

John 1:1 - The contention with this verse is that there is a distinction between God and the Logos (or "the Word"). Trinitarians contend that the third part of the verse (John 1:1c) translates as "and the Word was God", pointing to an equivalence between God and the Logos. Nontrinitarians contend that the Koine Greek ("*kai theos ên ho logos*") should instead be translated as "and the Word was a god", basing this on the contention that the section is an example of an anarthrous, that is, "*theos*" lacks the definite article, meaning its use was indefinite - "a god". Nontrinitarians

also contend that had the author of John's gospel wished to say "and the Word was God" that he could have easily written "*kai ho theos ên ho logos*", but he did not. In this way, nontrinitarians contend that the Logos would be considered to be the pre-existent Jesus, who is wholly distinct from God. Alternatively, others argue that the Greek should be translated as "and the Logos was divine" (with *theos* being an adjective), and the Logos being interpreted as God's "plan" or "reasoning" for salvation. Thus, when "the Logos became flesh" in John 1:14, it is not interpreted to be a pre-existent Jesus being incarnated, but rather the "plan" of God being manifested in the birth of the man Jesus.

The text of John 1:1 has a sordid past and a myriad of interpretations. With the Greek alone, we can create empathic, orthodox, creed-like statements, or we can commit pure and unadulterated heresy. From the point of view of early church history, heresy develops when a misunderstanding arises concerning Greek articles, the predicate nominative, and grammatical word order. The early church heresy of Sabellianism understood John 1:1c to read, "and the Word was *the* God." The early church heresy of Arianism understood it to read, "and the word was *a* God."

— David A. Reed^[23]

John 10:30:- Nontrinitarians believe that when Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," he did not mean that they were equal. They quote John 17:21,22 where Jesus prayed regarding his followers: "That they may all be one," and he added, "that they may be one even as we are one." Nontrinitarians endorse Jesus used the same Greek word (*hen*) for "one" in all these instances. It is pointed out that Jesus did not expect for his disciples to *literally* become "one" entity, in which case it is said that Jesus also did not expect his hearers to think that he and God were "one" entity either.

John 20:28-29:- "And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"". Since Thomas called Jesus *God*, Jesus's statement appears to endorse Thomas's assertion. Nontrinitarians typically respond that it is plausible that Thomas is addressing the Lord Jesus and then the Father. Another possible answer is that Jesus himself said, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" (John 10:34) referring to Psalms 82:6-8. The word "gods" in verse 6 and "God" in verse 8 is the same Hebrew word "elohim",^[24] which means, "gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used (in the plural thus, especially with the article) of the supreme God; occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates; and sometimes as a superlative"^[25] and as "God, god, gods, rulers, judges or angels".^[24] and as "divine ones, goddess, godlike one"^[26] The first explanation is perhaps the most plausible, in that the Greek forms used in the text do not denote two descriptions of one personage, but two personages described separately. A nontrinitarian would link this witnessing of Thomas to Jesus's saying that, to paraphrase, "He who sees me, sees the Father", and would point out that this text affirms the doctrine that Jesus is Lord but only God is deity, and hence the Lord of Jesus. Because "no one can come to the Father except through me (Jesus)", it is necessary however to call Jesus lord (a requirement of belief in the New Testament), which is exactly what Thomas did when he believed.

Objection to mystery

Some non-trinitarians say^[27] the mystery of the Trinity is a hindrance to cultivating a personal relationship with God as encouraged at James 4:8 and quoting^[28] 1 Corinthians 14:33 ("God is not a God of confusion", Revised Standard Version).

Trinitarians say^[29] that mystery is acceptable because nobody can comprehend the fullness and goodness of God (Romans 11:33-36).

Alternative views

There have been numerous other views of the relations of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, including the following.

Early Christian

- Church Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries: The Christian Apologists and other Church Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, having adopted and formulated the Logos Christology, considered the Son of God as the instrument used by the supreme God, the Father, to bring the creation into existence. Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian in particular state that the internal Logos of God (Gr. *Logos endiathetos*, Lat. *ratio*), that is his impersonal divine reason, was begotten as Logos uttered (Gr. *Logos proforikos*, Lat. *sermo*, *verbum*) and thus became a person to be used for the purpose of creation.^[30]
- Arius (AD ca. 250 or 256 - 336) believed that the Son was created by and subordinate to the Father, but that the Son did have divine status.
- Ebionites (1st to 4th century AD) believed that the Son was subordinate to the Father and nothing more than a special human.
- Marcion (AD ca. 110-160) believed that there were two deities, one of creation / Hebrew Bible and one of the New Testament.
- Modalism states that God has taken numerous forms in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and that God has manifested himself in three primary modes in regards to the salvation of mankind. Thus God is Father in creation (God created a Son through the virgin birth), Son in redemption (God manifested himself into the begotten man Christ Jesus for the purpose of his death upon the cross), and Holy Spirit in regeneration (God's indwelling Spirit within the souls of Christian believers). In light of this view, God is not three separate persons, but rather one God manifesting himself in multiple ways.
- Many Gnostic traditions held that the Christ is a heavenly Aeon but not one with the Father.
- Docetism comes from the Greek: δοκέω (dokeo), meaning "to seem." This view holds that Jesus only *seemed* to be human and only *appeared* to die.
- Adoptionism (2nd century AD) holds that Jesus became divine at his baptism (sometimes associated with the Gospel of Mark) or at his resurrection (sometimes associated with Saint Paul and Shepherd of Hermas).

Famous Christians

Further information: Isaac Newton's religious views

- Isaac Newton is generally thought not to have believed in Trinitarianism.^[31] He listed "worshipping Christ as God" in a list of "Idolatria" in his theological notebook.^[32] However, he never made a public declaration of his faith.^[33]
- See *People* below.

Modern Christians

- Unitarian Christians and Unitarian Universalist Christians
- American Unitarian Conference started as a reply to Unitarian Universalism becoming too liberal theologically. They refrain from political endorsements and believe religion and science can improve the human condition. They have a deist population.
- Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church believe that the Father and Son are two distinct and separate beings. They hold that the Holy Spirit is the shared essence, power, characteristics, presence, and life of those two.
- Christadelphians hold that Jesus Christ is the literal son of God the Father, and that Jesus was an actual human.^[34] The "holy spirit" terminology in the Bible is explained as referring to God's power, or God's method of thinking^[35] (depending on the context).

- Mormonism teaches that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are three separate beings, united in will or purpose, but not united in substance. See God in Mormonism.
- The Iglesia ni Cristo (Tagalog for *Church of Christ*) views Jesus Christ as human in nature but endowed by God with attributes not found in ordinary humans and that likewise, God has attributes not found in Jesus. They further contend that God wants humans to worship Jesus.^[36]
- Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the Son of God is unique in being God's only direct creation, before all ages; that God subsequently created all things through the Son; and that Jesus remains subordinate to God. They claim that references in the Bible to Jesus as "the firstborn of all creation", "the only-begotten Son", and his claim of having a God over him, even after his resurrection and exaltation to heaven, support their nontrinitarian viewpoint.^[37] They also believe that Jesus was made "God" and "Lord" only by the Father's permission and power. They teach that only the Father is the *Almighty* God, and that Jesus Christ wants us to worship and serve only Jehovah. (Matthew 4:10, 6:6) References to the "holy spirit" in the Bible are understood by Jehovah's Witnesses to refer to God's "active force": the means by which God accomplishes what he wills.^[38]
- Oneness Pentecostalism is a subset of Pentecostalism that believes God is only one person, and that he manifests himself in different ways, faces, or "modes". They believe that Jesus was "Son" only when he became flesh on earth, but was the Father prior to his being made human. They refer to the Father as the "Spirit" and the Son as the "Flesh". Oneness Pentecostals reject the Trinity doctrine as pagan and unscriptural, and hold to the Jesus' Name doctrine with respect to baptisms. Oneness Pentecostals are often referred to as "Modalists" or "Sabellians" or "Jesus Only".
- Swedenborgianism holds that the Trinity exists in one person, the Lord God Jesus Christ. The Father, the being or soul of God, was born into the world and put on a body from Mary. Throughout his life, Jesus put away all human desires and tendencies until he was completely divine. After his resurrection, he influences the world through the Holy Spirit, which is his activity. Thus Jesus Christ is the one God; the Father as to his soul, the Son as to his body, and the Holy Spirit as to his activity in the world. Swedenborgians have also been referred to as "Modalists".

Claimed pagan origins

Many nontrinitarians contend that the doctrine of the Trinity is a prime example of Christianity borrowing from Indo-European and Egyptian pagan sources. According to them, after the death of the Apostles their simpler idea of God was lost and the doctrine of the Trinity took its place due to the Church's accommodation of pagan ideas.

Those who argue for a pagan basis note that as far back as Babylonia, the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was common, and that this influence was also prevalent among the Celts, as well as in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In ancient India, the concept of the trio—Brahma the creator, Shiva the destroyer and Vishnu the preserver dates back to millennia before Christ. At the very least, they suggest that Greek philosophy brought a late influence into the creation of the doctrine.

Some nontrinitarians also find a link between the doctrine of the Trinity and the Egyptian Christian theologians of Alexandria, suggesting that Alexandrian theology, with its strong emphasis on the deity of Jesus, served to infuse Egypt's pagan religious heritage into Christianity. They charge the Church with adopting these Egyptian tenets after adapting them to Christian thinking by means of Greek philosophy.^[39] As evidence of this, they point to the widely acknowledged synthesis of Christianity with Platonic philosophy evident in Trinitarian formulas appearing by the end of the 3rd century. Hence, beginning with the Constantinian period, they allege, these pagan ideas were forcibly imposed on the churches as Catholic doctrine rooted firmly in the soil of Hellenism. Most groups subscribing to the theory of a Great Apostasy generally concur in this thesis.

The early apologists, including Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Irenaeus, frequently discussed the parallels and contrasts between Christianity, Paganism and other syncretic religions, and answered charges of borrowing from paganism in their apologetical writings.

Hellenic influences

Advocates of the "Hellenic influences" argument attempt to trace the influence of Hellenic philosophers such as Philo of Alexandria on post-Apostolic Christianity, which then interpreted the Bible through a Neoplatonic filter. These advocates point out the similarities between Hellenistic philosophy and post-Apostolic Christianity, by examining the following factors:

- Philo himself had been influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, in which Plato called the logos "the image of God" and "the second God".^[40]
- Philo's work reveals his dependence upon the Hellenic view that God Himself could not be directly responsible for the creation - for how could a perfect being produce an imperfect world, or the mutable derive from the immutable? The Greek solution was to propose the existence of a secondary divine being - the Demiurge - which, although tremendously powerful in its own right, was a little lower than God Himself (being neither perfect nor immutable in the absolute sense), and could therefore be safely associated with the creative process. To the Greeks, this arrangement was both a logical and philosophical necessity, and Philo - following his Hellenic inclinations - emphasizes it strongly in *De Opificio*:

"The Absolute Being, the Father, who had begotten all things, gave an especial grace to the Archangel and First-born Logos (Word), that standing between, He might sever the creature from the Creator. The same is ever the Intercessor for the dying mortal before the immortal God, and the Ambassador and the Ruler to the subject. He is neither without beginning of days, as God is, nor is He begotten, as we are, but is something between these extremes, being connected with both."

- Stuart G Hall (formerly Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King's College, London) describes the subsequent process of philosophical/theological amalgamation in *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (1991), where he writes:

"The [Christian] apologists [such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus] began to claim that Greek culture pointed to and was consummated in the Christian message, just as the Old Testament was. This process was done most thoroughly in the synthesis of Clement of Alexandria. It can be done in several ways. You can rake through Greek literature, and find (especially in the oldest seers and poets) references to 'God' which are more compatible with monotheism than with polytheism (so at length Athenagoras.) You can work out a common chronology between the legends of prehistoric (Homer) Greece and the biblical record (so Theophilus.) You can adapt a piece of pre-Christian Jewish apologetic, which claimed that Plato and other Greek philosophers got their best ideas indirectly from the teachings of Moses in the Bible, which was much earlier. This theory combines the advantage of making out the Greeks to be plagiarists (and therefore second-rate or criminal), while claiming that they support Christianity by their arguments at least some of the time. Especially this applied to the question of God."
- The neo-Platonic trinities, such as that of the One, the Nous and the Soul, are not a trinity of consubstantial equals as in orthodox Christianity. However, the neo-Platonic trinity has the doctrine of emanation, a timeless procedure of generation having as a source the One and being paralleled with the generation of the light from the Sun. This was adopted by Origen and applied to the generation of the Son from the Father, because he wanted to support that the Father, as immutable, always had been a Father, and that the generation of the Son is therefore eternal and timeless.
- The synthesis of Christianity with Platonic philosophy was further incorporated in the trinitarian formulas that appeared by the end of the 3rd century. "The Greek philosophical theology" was "developed during the Trinitarian controversies over the relationships among the persons of the Godhead."^[41] Some assert that this incorporation was well known during the 3rd century, because the allegation of borrowing was raised by some disputants when the Nicene doctrine was being formalized and adopted by the bishops. For example, in the 4th century, Marcellus of Ancyra, who taught the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were one person (hypostasis), said in his *On the Holy Church*, 9:

"Now with the heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which has corrupted the Church of God...These then teach three hypostases, just as Valentinus the heresiarch first invented in the book entitled by him 'On the Three Natures'. For he was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from Hermes and Plato."^[42]

Groups

- American Unitarian Conference
- Arianism
- Bible Students
- Christadelphians
- Two by Twos (aka, *The Truth*; publish no doctrinal statements; classified as nontrinitarian by observers)
- Church of Christ, Scientist; that is, the Christian Science religion
- Church of God General Conference (Abrahamic Faith)
- Church of God (Seventh Day)
- Church of the Blessed Hope (also known as the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, but not part of "General Conference")
- Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church (Not to be confused with the Seventh-day Adventist Church)
- Doukhobors
- Friends of Man
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Living Church of God
- Molokan
- Monarchianism
- Muggletonianism
- New Church
- Oneness Pentecostals
- Polish Brethren
- Quakers
- Shakers
- Socinianism
- Swedenborgianism
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church; see also Mormon)
- The Way International
- Unification Church
- Unitarian Christians
- Iglesia ni Cristo
- True Jesus Church
- Members of the Church of God International
- United Church of God
- Unitarian Universalism

People

- Hermas c. 140 (he considers the Father superior and the Son as the archangel Michael)
- Clement of Alexandria c. 190 (he considers the Father superior and the Son born in time)
- Natalius, ~200
- Sabellius, ~220 (he considers the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three manifestations of the same person)
- Origen c. 230 (he considers the Father superior, but the Son as co-eternal)
- Paul of Samosata, 269
- Arius, 336
- Eusebius of Nicomedia, 341, baptized Constantine
- Constantius II, Byzantine Emperor, 361
- Antipope Felix II, 365
- Aëtius, 367
- Ulfilas, Apostle to the Goths, 383
- Priscillian, 385, considered first Christian to be executed for heresy
- Muhammad, 632, see also Isa
- Ludwig Haetzer, 1529
- John Locke, 1704
- Isaac Newton, 1727, considered the Trinity to be idolatry
- William Whiston, 1752, expelled from University of Cambridge in 1710
- Jonathan Mayhew, 1766
- Emanuel Swedenborg, 1772
- Benjamin Franklin, 1790
- Joseph Priestley, 1804
- Joseph Smith, 1805
- Thomas Paine, 1809
- Mary Baker Eddy, 1821
- Thomas Jefferson, 1826
- James Madison, 1836
- William Ellery Channing, 1842
- Robert Hibbert, 1849
- John Thomas (Christadelphian), 1871

- Michael Servetus, 1553, burned at the stake in Geneva under John Calvin
- Sebastian Castellio, 1563
- Ferenc Dávid, 1579
- Justus Velsius, c. 1581
- Fausto Paolo Sozzini, 1604
- John Biddle, 1662
- John Milton (poet), c. 1674
- Thomas Aikenhead, 1697, last person to be hanged for blasphemy in Britain
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1882
- Robert Roberts (Christadelphian), 1898
- Benjamin Wilson, 1900
- James Martineau, 1900
- Félix Manalo, 1914
- Charles Taze Russell, 1916
- Neville Chamberlain, 1940
- William Branham, 1965
- Herbert W. Armstrong, 1986
- Eliseo Soriano, 1947

Notes

- [1] von Harnack, Adolf (1894-03-01). "History of Dogma" (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/harnack/dogma1.ii.iii.iii.html>). . Retrieved 2007-06-15. "[In the 2nd century,] Jesus was either regarded as the man whom God hath chosen, in whom the Deity or the Spirit of God dwelt, and who, after being tested, was adopted by God and invested with dominion, (Adoptian Christology); or Jesus was regarded as a heavenly spiritual being (the highest after God) who took flesh, and again returned to heaven after the completion of his work on earth (pneumatic Christology)"
- [2] *Encyclopædia Britannica* 1942 edition p.634 "Christianity"
- [3] HISTORY OF ARIANISM, Alexandria and Arius: AD 323-325 (<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac61>)
- [4] See Daniel C. Peterson, "Mormonism and the Trinity," in the journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology, "Element" 3:1-2 (Spring/Fall 2007).
- [5] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/004.qmt.html#004.171>
- [6] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/005.qmt.html#005.072>
- [7] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/112.qmt.html#112.001>
- [8] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/002.qmt.html#002.136>
- [9] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/061.qmt.html#061.006>
- [10] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/003.qmt.html#003.059>
- [11] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/005.qmt.html#005.078>
- [12] <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/003.qmt.html#003.045>
- [13] http://www.harunyahya.com/Quran_translation/Quran_translation112.php
- [14] W. Fulton, "Trinity", *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, T. & T. Clark, 1921, Vol. 12, p. 459.
- [15] *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) Volume XIV p.299
- [16] John Macquarrie, "Trinity," *Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2005*. © 1993-2004 Microsoft Corporation. Retrieved on March 31, 2008.
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- [18] Jouette M. Bassler, "God in the NT", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday, New York 1992, 2:1055.
- [19] *Theological Studies* #26 (1965) p. 545-73, "Does the NT call Jesus God?"
- [20] *The Word "Homōousios" from Hellenism to Christianity* ([http://noemon.net/noesis/The word Homōousios from Hellenism to Christianity.pdf](http://noemon.net/noesis/The%20word%20Homōousios%20from%20Hellenism%20to%20Christianity.pdf)), by P.F. Beatrice, *Church History*, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History, Vol. 71, No. 2, (Jun., 2002), pp. 243-272. (retrieved @ noemon.net)
- [21] What Does God Require Of Us (published by Jehovah's Witnesses) [http://watchtower.org/e/rq/lesson 2 paragraph 3](http://watchtower.org/e/rq/lesson%20paragraph%203) "What, though, is the holy spirit? It is not a person like God. Rather, it is God's active force.—Psalm 104:30. "
- [22] Reasoning from Scriptures, Watch Tower bible and tract society page 411 para 4
- [23] David A. Reed. "How Semetic Was John? Rethinking the Hellenistic Background to John 1:1." *Anglican Theological Review*, Fall 2003, Vol. 85 Issue 4, p709
- [24] <http://www.biblicalheritage.org/Linguistic/HL/1-A/-elohiym.htm>
- [25] <http://strongnumbers.com/hebrew/430.htm>
- [26] <http://www.biblestudytools.net/Lexicons/Hebrew/hebrew.cgi?number=0430>
- [27] The Watchtower December 1, 2006 page 6 "The engrafting of the Trinity was a masterstroke of the antichrist, for this doctrine shrouded God in mystery and blurred his relationship with the Son. (John 14:28; 15:10; Colossians 1:15) Just think, how can one "draw close to God," as encouraged by the Scriptures, if God is a mystery?—James 4:8." online edition (http://www.watchtower.org/e/20061201/article_02.htm)
- [28] Should You Believe in the Trinity? (brochure arguing against the Trinity published by Jehovah's Witnesses), 2006 printing, page 5 online edition (<http://watchtower.org/e/ti/>)
- [29] The Mystery Of God Incarnate (<http://www.leaderu.com/theology/mystery.html>) by Paul D. Adams

- [30] Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day*, Prince Press, 1984, Vol. 1, pp. 159-161 • Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, The University of Chicago Press, 1971, Vol. 1, pp. 181-199
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- [36] Manalo, Eraño G., *Fundamental Beliefs of the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ)* (Iglesia ni Cristo; Manila 1989)
- [37] http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/article_04.htm
- [38] The Holy Spirit-God's Active Force - Jehovah's Witnesses Official Web Site (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_07.htm)
- [39] 'At times he forms one of a trinity in unity, with Ra and Osiris, as in Fig. 87, a god with the two sceptres of Osiris, the hawk's head of Horus, and the sun of Ra. This is the god described to Eusebius, who tells us that when the oracle was consulted about the divine nature, by those who wished to understand this complicated mythology, it had answered, "I am Apollo and Lord and Bacchus," or, to use the Egyptian names, "I am Ra and Horus and Osiris." Another god, in the form of a porcelain idol to be worn as a charm, shows us Horus as one of a trinity in unity, in name, at least, agreeing with that afterwards adopted by the Christians--namely, the Great God, the Son God, and the Spirit God.'—Samuel Sharpe, *Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity* ([http://books.google.gr/books?id=8hoGAAAAQAAJ&dq=egyptian+mythology+and+egyptian+christianity"&pg=PP1&ots=TVSbe5lTjq&sig=Tvt3E5dmKHgD8egTh8F-OPc-iag&hl=el&prev=http://www.google.gr/search?hl=el&q=Egyptian+Mythology+and+Egyptian+Christianity"&sa=X&oi=print&ct=title&cad=one-book-with-thumbnail](http://books.google.gr/books?id=8hoGAAAAQAAJ&dq=egyptian+mythology+and+egyptian+christianity)), 1863, pp. 89-90.
- [40] Philo of Alexandria, On Providence (Fragment 1), cf. the preservation of this fragment in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio Evangelica* 7.21.336b-337a
- [41] A. Hilary Armstrong, Henry J. Blumenthal, Platonism. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved May 13, 2008, from Encyclopædia Britannica 2006 Ultimate Reference Suite DVD.
- [42] Logan A. Marcellus of Ancyra (Pseudo-Anthimus), 'On the Holy Church': Text, Translation and Commentary. Verses 8-9. *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Volume 51, Pt. 1, April 2000, p.95

External links

- The Trinity: True or False? (http://www.thechristadelphians.org/htm/books/trinity/trinity_mainframe.htm) by James H. Broughton & Peter J Southgate
- The Origin of the Trinity: From Paganism to Constantine ([http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/Contents/doctrine/The Origin of the Trinity.htm](http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/Contents/doctrine/The%20Origin%20of%20the%20Trinity.htm))
- Should you believe in the Trinity? (<http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/index.htm>) - Jehovah's Witnesses perspective
- *An investigation of the trinity of Plato and of Philo Judaeus, and of the effects which an attachment to their writings had upon the principles and reasonings of the father of the Christian church* (<http://www.archive.org/details/investigationoft00morguoft>), by Caesar Morgan, Cambridge University Press, 1853.
- *Antitrinitarian Biography; or, Sketches of the lives and writings of distinguished antitrinitarians, exhibiting a view of the state of the Unitarian doctrine and worship in the principal nations of Europe, from the reformation to the close of the seventeenth century, to which is prefixed a history of Unitarianism in England during the same period* (<http://www.archive.org/details/antitrinitarianb03walluoft>), Robert Wallace, 1850.
- A list of 70 nontrinitarian translations of John 1:1 (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14780372/Non-trinitarian-Translations-of-John-1-1>)

Arminianism

Arminianism is a school of soteriological thought within Protestant Christianity based on the theological ideas of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609)^[1] and his historic followers, the Remonstrants. The doctrine's acceptance stretches through much of Christianity from the early arguments between Athanasius and Origen, to Augustine of Hippo's defense of "original sin."

Dutch Arminianism was originally articulated in the Remonstrance (1610), a theological statement signed by 45 ministers and submitted to the Dutch states general. The Synod of Dort (1618–19) was called by the states general to pass upon the Remonstrance. The five points of the Remonstrance asserted that:

1. election (and condemnation on the day of judgment) was conditioned by the rational faith or nonfaith of man;
2. the Atonement, while qualitatively adequate for all men, was efficacious only for the man of faith;
3. unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will;
4. grace is not irresistible; and
5. believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace.

The crux of Remonstrant Arminianism lay in the assertion that human dignity requires an unimpaired freedom of the will.^[2]

Since the 16th century, Christians of many sects including the Baptists (See *A History of the Baptists* Third Edition by Robert G. Torbet) have been influenced by Arminian views. So have the Methodists, the Congregationalists of the early New England colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the Universalists and Unitarians in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Arminianism is most accurately used to define those who affirm the original beliefs of Jacobus Arminius himself, but the term can also be understood as an umbrella for a larger grouping of ideas including those of Hugo Grotius, John Wesley and others. There are two primary perspectives on how the system is applied in detail: Classical Arminianism, which sees Arminius as its figurehead, and Wesleyan Arminianism, which sees John Wesley as its figurehead. Wesleyan Arminianism is sometimes synonymous with Methodism. In addition, Arminianism is often misrepresented by some of its critics to include Semipelagianism or even Pelagianism, though proponents of both primary perspectives vehemently deny these claims.^[3]

Within the broad scope of the history of Christian theology, Arminianism is closely related to Calvinism (or Reformed theology), and the two systems share both history and many doctrines. Nonetheless, they are often viewed as rivals within evangelicalism because of their disagreement over details of the doctrines of divine predestination and salvation.^[4]

History

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch pastor and theologian in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He was taught by Theodore Beza, Calvin's hand-picked successor, but after examination of the Scriptures, he rejected his teacher's theology that it is God who unconditionally elects some for salvation. Instead Arminius proposed that the election of God was *of believers*, thereby making it conditional on faith. Arminius's views were challenged by the Dutch Calvinists, especially Franciscus Gomarus, but Arminius died before a national synod could occur.

Arminius's followers, not wanting to adopt their leader's name, called themselves the Remonstrants. When Arminius died before he could satisfy Holland's State General's request for a 14-page paper outlining his views, the Remonstrants replied in his stead crafting the Five articles of Remonstrance. After some political maneuvering, the Dutch Calvinists were able to convince Prince Maurice of Nassau to deal with the situation. Maurice systematically removed Arminian magistrates from office and called a national synod at Dordrecht. This Synod of Dort was open primarily to Dutch Calvinists (Arminians were excluded) with Calvinist representatives from other countries, and in 1618 published a condemnation of Arminius and his followers as heretics. Part of this publication was the famous Five points of Calvinism in response to the five articles of Remonstrance.

Arminians across Holland were removed from office, imprisoned, banished, and sworn to silence. Twelve years later Holland officially granted Arminianism protection as a religion, although animosity between Arminians and Calvinists continued.

The debate between Calvin's followers and Arminius's followers is distinctive of post-Reformation church history. The emerging Baptist movement in 17th-century England, for example, was a microcosm of the historic debate between Calvinists and Arminians. The first Baptists—called "General Baptists" because of their confession of a "general" or unlimited atonement, were Arminians.^[5] The Baptist movement originated with Thomas Helwys, who left his mentor John Smyth, who had moved into semi-Pelagianism and other distinctives of the Dutch Waterlander Mennonites of Amsterdam, and returned to London to start the first English Baptist Church in 1611. Later General Baptists such as John Griffith, Samuel Loveday, and Thomas Grantham defended a Reformed Arminian theology that reflected more the Arminianism of Arminius than that of the later Remonstrants or the English Arminianism of Arminian Puritans like John Goodwin or Anglican Arminians such as Jeremy Taylor and Henry Hammond. The General Baptists encapsulated their Arminian views in numerous confessions, the most influential of which was the Standard Confession of 1660. In the 1640s the Particular Baptists were formed, diverging strongly from Arminian doctrine and embracing the strong Calvinism of the Presbyterians and Independents. Their robust Calvinism was publicized in such confessions as the London Baptist Confession of 1644 and the Second London Confession of 1689. Interestingly, the London Confession of 1689 was later used by Calvinistic Baptists in America (called the Philadelphia Baptist Confession), whereas the Standard Confession of 1660 was used by the American heirs of the English General Baptists, who soon came to be known as Free Will Baptists.

This same dynamic between Arminianism and Calvinism can be seen in the heated discussions between friends and fellow Methodist ministers John Wesley and George Whitefield. Wesley was a champion of Arminian teachings, defending his soteriology in a periodical titled *The Arminian* and writing articles such as *Predestination Calmly Considered*. He defended Arminianism against charges of semi-Pelagianism, holding strongly to beliefs in original



sin and total depravity. At the same time, Wesley attacked the determinism that he claimed characterized unconditional election and maintained a belief in the ability to lose salvation. Wesley also clarified the doctrine of prevenient grace and preached the ability of Christians to attain to perfection. While Wesley freely made use of the term "Arminian," he did not self-consciously root his soteriology in the theology of Arminius but was highly influenced by 17th-century English Arminianism and thinkers such as John Goodwin, Jeremy Taylor and Henry Hammond of the Anglican "Holy Living" school, and the Remonstrant Hugo Grotius.

Current landscape

Advocates of both Arminianism and Calvinism find a home in many Protestant denominations, and sometimes both exist within the same denomination as with the Puritans. Faiths leaning at least in part in the Arminian direction include Methodists, Free Will Baptists, General Baptists, Church of the Nazarene, The Salvation Army, and Charismatics. Denominations leaning in the Calvinist direction are grouped as the Reformed churches and include Particular Baptists, Reformed Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. The majority of Southern Baptists, including Billy Graham, accept Arminianism with an exception allowing for a doctrine of perseverance of the saints ("eternal security").^[6] ^[7] ^[8] Many see Calvinism as growing in acceptance,^[9] and some prominent Reformed Baptists, such as Albert Mohler and Mark Dever, have been pushing for the Southern Baptist Convention to adopt a more Calvinistic orientation. Lutherans espouse a view of salvation and election distinct from both the Calvinist and Arminian schools of soteriology.

The current scholarly support for Arminianism is wide and varied. One particular thrust is a return to the teachings of Arminius. F. Leroy Forlines, Robert Picirilli, Stephen Ashby and Matthew Pinson (see citations) are four of the more prominent supporters. Forlines has referred to this type of Arminianism as "Classical Arminianism," while Picirilli, Pinson, and Ashby have termed it "Reformation Arminianism" or "Reformed Arminianism." Through Methodism, Wesley's teachings also inspire a large scholarly following, with vocal proponents including J. Kenneth Grider, Stanley Hauerwas, Thomas Oden, Thomas Jay Oord, and William Willimon.

Recent influence of the New Perspective on Paul movement has also reached Arminianism — primarily through a view of corporate election. The New Perspective scholars propose that the 1st century, Second Temple Judaism understood election primarily as national (Israelites) and racial (Jews), not as individual. Their conclusion is thus that Paul's writings on election should be interpreted in a similar corporate light.

Theology

Arminian theology usually falls into one of two groups — Classical Arminianism, drawn from the teaching of Jacobus Arminius — and Wesleyan Arminian, drawing primarily from Wesley. Both groups overlap substantially.

Classical Arminianism

Classical Arminianism (sometimes titled Reformed Arminianism or Reformation Arminianism) is the theological system that was presented by Jacobus Arminius and maintained by some of the Remonstrants;^[10] its influence serves as the foundation for all Arminian systems. A list of beliefs is given below:

- **Depravity is total:** Arminius states "In this [fallen] state, the free will of man towards the true good is not only wounded, infirm, bent, and weakened; but it is also imprisoned, destroyed, and lost. And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as are excited by Divine grace."^[11]
- **Atonement is intended for all:** Jesus's death was for all people, Jesus draws all people to himself, and all people have opportunity for salvation through faith.^[12]
- **Jesus's death satisfies God's justice:** The penalty for the sins of the elect is paid in full through Jesus's work on the cross. Thus Christ's atonement is intended for all, but requires faith to be effected. Arminius states that

"Justification, when used for the act of a Judge, is either purely the imputation of righteousness through mercy... or that man is justified before God... according to the rigor of justice without any forgiveness."^[13] Stephen Ashby clarifies: "Arminius allowed for only two possible ways in which the sinner might be justified: (1) by our absolute and perfect adherence to the law, or (2) purely by God's imputation of Christ's righteousness."^[14]

- **Grace is resistible:** God takes initiative in the salvation process and His grace comes to all people. This grace (often called *prevenient* or pre-regenerating grace) acts on all people to convince them of the Gospel, draw them strongly towards salvation, and enable the possibility of sincere faith. Picirilli states that "indeed this grace is so close to regeneration that it inevitably leads to regeneration unless finally resisted."^[15] The offer of salvation through grace does not act irresistibly in a purely cause-effect, deterministic method but rather in an influence-and-response fashion that can be both freely accepted and freely denied.^[16]
- **Man has free will to respond or resist:** Free will is limited by God's sovereignty, but God's sovereignty allows all men the choice to accept the Gospel of Jesus through faith, simultaneously allowing all men to resist.
- **Election is conditional:** Arminius defined *election* as "the decree of God by which, of Himself, from eternity, He decreed to justify in Christ, believers, and to accept them unto eternal life."^[17] God alone determines who will be saved and his determination is that all who believe Jesus through faith will be justified. According to Arminius, "God regards no one in Christ unless they are engrafted in him by faith."^[17]
- **God predestines the elect to a glorious future:** Predestination is not the predetermination of who will believe, but rather the predetermination of the believer's future inheritance. The elect are therefore predestined to sonship through adoption, glorification, and eternal life.^[18]
- **Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer:** Justification is sola fide. When individuals repent and believe in Christ (saving faith), they are regenerated and brought into union with Christ, whereby the death and righteousness of Christ are imputed to them for their justification before God.^[19]
- **Eternal security is also conditional:** All believers have full assurance of salvation with the condition that they remain in Christ. Salvation is conditioned on faith, therefore perseverance is also conditioned.^[20] Apostasy (turning from Christ) is only committed through a deliberate, willful rejection of Jesus and renunciation of saving faith. Such apostasy is irremediable.^[21]

The Five articles of Remonstrance that Arminius's followers formulated in 1610 state the above beliefs regarding (I) conditional election, (II) unlimited atonement, (III) total depravity, (IV) total depravity and resistible grace, and (V) possibility of apostasy. Note, however, that the fifth article did not completely deny perseverance of the saints; Arminius, himself, said that "I never taught that a true believer can... fall away from the faith... yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect; and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such a kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding."^[22] Further, the text of the Articles of Remonstrance says that no believer can be plucked from Christ's hand, and the matter of falling away, "loss of salvation" required further study before it could be taught with any certainty.

The core beliefs of Jacobus Arminius and the Remonstrants are summarized as such by theologian Stephen Ashby:

1. Prior to being *drawn and enabled*, one is *unable to believe... able only to resist*.
2. Having been *drawn and enabled*, but prior to regeneration, one is *able to believe... able also to resist*.
3. After one *believes*, God then regenerates; one is *able to continue believing... able also to resist*.
4. Upon *resisting* to the point of *unbelief*, one is *unable again to believe... able only to resist*.^[23]

Wesleyan Arminianism

Further information: Methodism

John Wesley has historically been the most influential advocate for the teachings of Arminian soteriology. Wesley thoroughly agreed with the vast majority of what Arminius himself taught, maintaining strong doctrines of original sin, total depravity, conditional election, prevenient grace, unlimited atonement, and possibly apostasy.

Wesley departs from Classical Arminianism primarily on three issues:

- **Atonement** – Wesley's atonement is a hybrid of the penal substitution theory and the governmental theory of Hugo Grotius, a lawyer and one of the Remonstrants. Steven Harper states "Wesley does not place the substitutionary element primarily within a legal framework...Rather [his doctrine seeks] to bring into proper relationship the 'justice' between God's love for persons and God's hatred of sin...it is not the satisfaction of a legal demand for justice so much as it is an act of mediated reconciliation." [24]
- **Possibility of apostasy** – Wesley fully accepted the Arminian view that genuine Christians could apostatize and lose their salvation, as his famous sermon "A Call to Backsliders" clearly demonstrates. Harper summarizes as follows: "the act of committing sin is not in itself ground for the loss of salvation...the loss of salvation is much more related to experiences that are profound and prolonged. Wesley sees two primary pathways that could result in a permanent fall from grace: unconfessed sin and the actual expression of apostasy." [25] Wesley disagrees with Arminius, however, in maintaining that such apostasy was not final. When talking about those who have made "shipwreck" of their faith (1 Tim 1:19), Wesley claims that "not one, or a hundred only, but I am persuaded, several thousands...innumerable are the instances...of those who had fallen but now stand upright." [26]
- **Christian perfection** – According to Wesley's teaching, Christians could attain a state of practical perfection, meaning a lack of all voluntary sin by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, in this life. Christian perfection (or *entire sanctification*), according to Wesley, is "purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God" and "the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked." It is "loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves". [27] It is 'a restoration not only to the favour, but likewise to the image of God,' our "being filled with the fullness of God". [28] Wesley was clear that Christian perfection did not imply perfection of bodily health or an infallibility of judgment. It also does not mean we no longer violate the will of God, for involuntary transgressions remain. Perfected Christians remain subject to temptation, and have continued need to pray for forgiveness and holiness. It is not an absolute perfection but a perfection in love. Furthermore, Wesley did not teach a salvation by perfection, but rather says that, "Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ." [27]

Other variations

Since the time of Arminius, his name has come to represent a very large variety of beliefs. Some of these beliefs, such as Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism (see below) are not considered to be within Arminian orthodoxy and are dealt with elsewhere. Some doctrines, however, do adhere to the Arminian foundation and, while minority views, are highlighted below.

Open theism

The doctrine of open theism states that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, but differs on the nature of the future. Open theists claim that the future is not completely knowable because people have not made their decisions yet, and therefore God knows the future in possibilities rather than certainties. As such, open theists resolve the issue of human free will and God's sovereignty by claiming that God is sovereign because he does not ordain each human choice, but rather works in cooperation with his creation to bring about his will. This notion of sovereignty and freedom is foundational to their understanding of love since open theists believe that love is not genuine unless it is freely chosen. The power of choice under this definition has the potential for as much harm as it does good, and open theists see free will as the best answer to the problem of evil. Well-known proponents of this

theology are Greg Boyd, Clark Pinnock, Thomas Jay Oord, William Hasker, and John E. Sanders.

Some Arminians, such as professor and theologian Robert Picirilli, reject the doctrine of open theism as a "deformed Arminianism".^[29] Joseph Dongell stated that "open theism actually moves beyond classical Arminianism towards process theology."^[30] There are also some Arminians, like Roger Olson, who believe Open theism to be an alternative view that a Christian can have. The majority Arminian view accepts classical theism – the belief that God's power, knowledge, and presence have no external limitations, that is, outside of His divine nature. Most Arminians reconcile human free will with God's sovereignty and foreknowledge by holding three points:

- Human free will is limited by original sin, though God's prevenient grace restores to humanity the ability to accept God's call of salvation.^{[31] [32]}
- God purposely exercises his sovereignty in ways that do not illustrate its extent – in other words, He has the power and authority to predetermine salvation but he chooses to apply it through different means.
- God's foreknowledge of the future is exhaustive and complete, and therefore the future is certain and not contingent on human action. God does not determine the future, but He does know it. God's certainty and human contingency are compatible.^[33]

Corporate view of election

Further information: Conditional election Corporate election

The majority Arminian view is that election is individual and based on God's foreknowledge of faith, but a second perspective deserves mention. These Arminians reject the concept of individual election entirely, preferring to understand the doctrine in corporate terms. According to this corporate election, God never chose individuals to elect to salvation, but rather He chose to elect the believing church to salvation. Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Ridderbos says "[The certainty of salvation] does not rest on the fact that the church belongs to a certain "number", but that it belongs to Christ, from before the foundation of the world. Fixity does not lie in a hidden decree, therefore, but in corporate unity of the Church with Christ, whom it has come to know in the gospel and has learned to embrace in faith."^[34]

Corporate election draws support from a similar concept of corporate election found in the Old Testament and Jewish law. Indeed most biblical scholarship is in agreement that Judeo-Greco-Roman thought in the 1st century was opposite of the Western world's "individual first" mantra – it was very collectivist or communitarian in nature.^[35] Identity stemmed from membership in a group more than individuality.^[35] According to Romans 9–11, supporters claim, Jewish election as the chosen people ceased with their national rejection of Jesus as Messiah. As a result of the new covenant, God's chosen people are now the corporate body of Christ, the church (sometimes called *spiritual Israel* – see also Covenant theology). Pastor and theologian Dr. Brian Abasciano claims "What Paul says about Jews, Gentiles, and Christians, whether of their place in God's plan, or their election, or their salvation, or how they should think or behave, he says from a corporate perspective which views the group as primary and those he speaks about as embedded in the group. These individuals act as members of the group to which they belong, and what happens to them happens by virtue of their membership in the group."^[35]

These scholars also maintain that Jesus was the only human ever elected and that individuals must be "in Christ" (Eph 1:3–4) through faith to be part of the elect. This was, in fact, Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth's, understanding of the doctrine of election. Joseph Dongell, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, states "the most conspicuous feature of Ephesians 1:3–2:10 is the phrase 'in Christ', which occurs twelve times in Ephesians 1:3–4 alone...this means that Jesus Christ himself is the chosen one, the predestined one. Whenever one is incorporated into him by grace through faith, one comes to share in Jesus' special status as chosen of God."^[36] Markus Barth illustrates the inter-connectedness: "Election in Christ must be understood as the election of God's people. Only as members of that community do individuals share in the benefits of God's gracious choice."^[37]

Arminianism and other views

Further information: Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, History of Calvinist–Arminian debate

Understanding Arminianism is aided by understanding the theological alternatives: Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Calvinism. Arminianism, like any major belief system, is frequently misunderstood both by critics and would-be supporters. Listed below are a few common misconceptions.



Comparison among Protestants

This table summarizes the classical views of three different Protestant beliefs about salvation.^[38]

Topic	Lutheranism	Calvinism	Arminianism
Human will and depravity	Total Depravity without free will until spiritual regeneration.	Total Depravity free will means the capacity to choose freely what one wants; but totally depraved individuals never want to choose God prior to regeneration.	Total depravity, with prevenient grace, does not preclude free will
Election	Unconditional election to salvation only	Unconditional election to salvation and damnation (<i>double-predestination</i>)	Conditional election on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief
Justification	Justification of all people completed at Christ's death	Justification is limited to those predestined to salvation, completed at Christ's death	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death, but only applied upon placing faith in Jesus
Conversion	Monergistic, through the means of grace, resistible	Monergistic, through the inner calling of the Holy Spirit, irresistible	Monergistic but must be received, resistible due to the common, sufficient grace of free will
Preservation and apostasy	Falling away is possible, but reflection on Christ's redemption of sinners provides assurance of preservation	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will necessarily persevere in faith and subsequent holiness until the end	Preservation is conditional upon continued faith in Christ; reflection on one's faith provides assurance

Common misconceptions

- **Arminianism supports works-based salvation** – No well-known system of Arminianism denies salvation "by faith alone" and "by faith first to last". This misconception is often directed at the Arminian possibility of apostasy, which critics maintain requires continual good works to achieve final salvation. To Arminians, however, both initial salvation *and* eternal security are "by faith alone"; hence "by faith first *to last*". Belief through faith is the condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God; unbelief is the condition for exit from the Kingdom of God – not a lack of good works.^{[39] [40] [41]}
- **Arminianism is Pelagian (or Semi-Pelagian), denying original sin and total depravity** – No system of Arminianism founded on Arminius or Wesley denies original sin or total depravity;^[42] both Arminius and Wesley *strongly* affirmed that man's basic condition is one in which he cannot be righteous, understand God, or seek God.^[43]

Many Calvinist critics of Arminianism, both historically and currently, claim that Arminianism condones, accepts, or even explicitly supports Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism. Arminius referred to Pelagianism as "the grand falsehood" and stated that he "must confess that I detest, from my heart, the consequences [of that theology]."^[44] David Pawson, a British pastor, decries this association as "libelous" when attributed to Arminius' or Wesley's doctrine.^[45] Indeed most Arminians reject all accusations of Pelagianism; nonetheless, primarily due

to Calvinist opponents,^[46] ^[47] the two terms remain intertwined in popular usage.

- **Arminianism denies Jesus' substitutionary payment for sins** – Both Arminius and Wesley believed in the necessity and sufficiency of Christ's atonement through penal substitution.^[48] Arminius held that God's justice was satisfied individually,^[49] while Hugo Grotius and many of Wesley's followers taught that it was satisfied governmentally.^[50]

Comparison with Calvinism

Ever since Arminius and his followers revolted against Calvinism in the early 17th century, Protestant soteriology has been largely divided between Calvinism and Arminianism. The extreme of Calvinism is hyper-Calvinism, which insists that signs of election must be sought before evangelization of the unregenerate takes place and that the eternally damned have no obligation to repent and believe, and on the extreme of Arminianism is Pelagianism, which rejects the doctrine of original sin on grounds of moral accountability; but the overwhelming majority of Protestant, evangelical pastors and theologians hold to one of these two systems or somewhere in between.

Similarities

- **Total depravity** – Arminians agree with Calvinists over the doctrine of total depravity. The differences come in the understanding of how God remedies this human depravity.
- **Substitutionary effect of atonement** – Arminians also affirm with Calvinists the substitutionary effect of Christ's atonement and that this effect is limited only to the elect. Classical Arminians would agree with Calvinists that this substitution was penal satisfaction for all of the elect, while most Wesleyan Arminians would maintain that the substitution was governmental in nature.

Differences

- **Nature of election** – Arminians hold that election to eternal salvation has the condition of faith attached. The Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election states that salvation cannot be earned or achieved and is therefore not conditional upon any human effort, so faith is not a condition of salvation but the divinely apportioned means to it. In other words, Arminians believe that they owe their election to their faith, whereas Calvinists believe that they owe their faith to their election.
- **Nature of grace** – Arminians believe that, through grace, God restores free will concerning salvation to all humanity, and each individual, therefore, is able either to accept the Gospel call through faith or resist it through unbelief. Calvinists hold that God's grace to enable salvation is given only to the elect and irresistibly leads to salvation.
- **Extent of the atonement** – Arminians, along with four-point Calvinists or Amyraldians, hold to a universal drawing and universal extent of atonement instead of the Calvinist doctrine that the drawing and atonement is limited in extent to the elect only, which many Calvinists prefer to call 'particular redemption'.^[51] Both sides (with the exception of hyper-Calvinists) believe the invitation of the gospel is universal and "must be presented to everyone [they] can reach without any distinction."^[52]
- **Perseverance in faith** – Arminians believe that future salvation and eternal life is secured in Christ and protected from all external forces but is conditional on remaining in Christ and can be lost through apostasy. Traditional Calvinists believe in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which says that because God chose some unto salvation and actually paid for their particular sins, he keeps them from apostasy and that those who do apostatize were never truly regenerated (that is, born again) or saved. Non-traditional Calvinists and other evangelicals advocate the similar but different doctrine of eternal security that teaches if a person was once saved, his or her salvation can never be in jeopardy, even if the person completely apostatizes.

Notes

- [1] Magnusson, Magnus (ed). *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (Chambers: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 62
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- [3] Olson, Roger E. *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006) 17–18, 23, 80–82, 142–145, 152
- [4] Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. Two: The Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: Harpercollins Publishers, 1985; reprint – Peabody: Prince Press, 2008) 180
- [5] Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1985; reprint – Peabody: Prince Press, 2008) 225–226
- [6] "The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000 Revision" (<http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp#iv>)
- [7] Harmon, Richard W. *Baptists and Other Denominations* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1984) 17–18, 45–46
- [8] Dongell, Joseph and Walls, Jerry *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004) 12–13, 16–17
- [9] Dongell 7–20
- [10] Ashby, Stephen "Reformed Arminianism" *Four Views on Eternal Security* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 137
- [11] Arminius, James *The Writings of James Arminius* (three vols.), tr. James Nichols and W.R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), I:252
- [12] Arminius I:316
- [13] Arminius III:454
- [14] Ashby *Four Views*, 140
- [15] Picirilli, Robert *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2002), 154ff
- [16] Forlines, Leroy F., Pinson, Matthew J. and Ashby, Stephen M. *The Quest for Truth: Answering Life's Inescapable Questions* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2001), 313–321
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- [19] Forlines, F. Leroy, *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of Salvation*, ch. 6
- [20] Picirilli *Grace, Faith, Free Will* 203
- [21] Picirilli 204ff
- [22] Arminius *Writings*, I:254
- [23] Ashby *Four Views*, 159
- [24] Harper, Steven "Wesleyan Arminianism" *Four Views on Eternal Security* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 227ff
- [25] Harper 239–240
- [26] Wesley, John "A Call to Backsliders" *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Wesley Methodist Book Room, 1872; repr, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) 3:211ff
- [27] Wesley, John "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection", *Works*
- [28] Wesley, John "The End of Christ's Coming", *Works*
- [29] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 40 – Picirilli actually objects so strongly to the link between Arminianism and Open theism that he devotes an entire section to his objections. See 59ff.
- [30] Dongell, Joseph and Walls, Jerry *Why I Am Not a Calvinist*, 45
- [31] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 42–43, 59ff
- [32] Ashby, *Four Views on Eternal Security*, 146–147
- [33] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 40
- [34] Ridderbos, Herman *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 350–351
- [35] Abasciano, Brian *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis* (T&T Clark Publishers, 2006), ISBN 0-567-03073-3
- [36] Dongell, Joseph and Walls, Jerry *Why I am Not a Calvinist*, 76
- [37] Barth, Markus *Ephesians* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 108
- [38] Table drawn from, though not copied, from Lange, Lyle W. *God So Loved the World: A Study of Christian Doctrine*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2006. p. 448.
- [39] Pawson *Once Saved, Always Saved?* 121–124
- [40] Picirilli *Grace, Faith, Free Will* 160ff
- [41] Ashby *Four Views on Eternal Security* 142ff
- [42] Ashby 138–139
- [43] Arminius, *Writings* 2:192
- [44] Arminius *Writings*, II:219ff (the entire treatise occupies pages 196–452)
- [45] Pawson *Once Saved, Always Saved?*, 106
- [46] Pawson 97–98, 106
- [47] Picirilli *Grace, Faith, Free Will*, 6ff
- [48] Picirilli *Grace, Faith, Free Will* 104–105, 132ff
- [49] Ashby *Four Views on Eternal Security* 140ff

[50] Picirilli *Grace, Faith, Free Will* 132

[51] Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm>)

[52] Nicole, Roger, "Covenant, Universal Call And Definite Atonement" (<http://www.apuritansmind.com/Arminianism/NicoleRogerUniversalCallDefiniteAtonement.htm>) *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38:3 (September 1995)

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- Wesley, John. "The Question, 'What Is an Arminian?' Answered by a Lover of Free Grace" (<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/arminian.stm>)
- Witski, Steve. "Free Grace or Forced Grace?" (http://wesley.nnu.edu/arminianism/arminian_mag/19_1_01.htm#free) from *The Arminian Magazine*, Spring 2001
- Satama, Mikko (2009). "Aspects of Arminian Soteriology in Methodist-Lutheran Ecumenical Dialogues in 20th and 21st Century" (<https://oa.doria.fi/handle/10024/43883?locale=len>) Master's Thesis, University of Helsinki, Faculty of Theology.

External links

- The Works of Jacob Arminius (<http://wesley.nnu.edu/arminianism/the-works-of-james-arminius/>)
- The Society of Evangelical Arminians (<http://www.evangelicalarminians.org/index>)
- What is an Arminian? (<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/arminian/>) by John Wesley
- Sermon #58: "On Predestination" (<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/58/>) by John Wesley
- "Corporate Election in Romans 9", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 2006 (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3817/is_200606/ai_n17176282/pg_1) by Brian Abasciano (Arminian perspective)
- The Nature of Wesleyan Theology (http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyjournal/1982-wtj-17-2.pdf) by J. Kenneth Grider (Arminian perspective)

- Characteristics of Wesley's Arminianism (http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyjournal/1987-wtj-22-1.pdf) by Luke L. Keefer, Jr. (Arminian perspective)
- Wesleyan Theology: Arminianism (<http://www.revneal.org/Writings/WesArmin.htm>) by Gregory S. Neal (from a Methodist perspective)
- Arminianism (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01740c.htm>) from the Catholic Encyclopedia
- Christian Cyclopedia article on Arminianism (<http://www.lcms.org/ca/www/cyclopedia/02/display.asp?t1=A&word=ARMINIANISM>) (Lutheran perspective)

Pelagianism

Pelagianism is a theological theory named after Pelagius (AD 354 – AD 420/440), although he denied, at least at some point in his life, many of the doctrines associated with his name. It is the belief that original sin did not taint human nature and that mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special Divine aid. Thus, Adam's sin was "to set a bad example" for his progeny, but his actions did not have the other consequences imputed to Original Sin. Pelagianism views the role of Jesus as "setting a good example" for the rest of humanity (thus counteracting Adam's bad example) as well as providing an atonement for our sins. In short, humanity has full control, and thus full responsibility, for obeying the Gospel *in addition to* full responsibility for every sin (the latter insisted upon by both proponents and opponents of Pelagianism). According to Pelagian doctrine, because humans are sinners by choice, they are therefore criminals who need the atonement of Jesus Christ. Sinners are not victims, they are criminals who need pardon.

Pelagianism stands in contrast to two other prominent theological theories: Semipelagianism and Total Depravity.

History

Pelagius was opposed by Saint Augustine, one of the most influential early Church Fathers. When Pelagius taught that moral perfection was attainable in this life without the assistance of divine grace through human free will, Saint Augustine contradicted this by saying that perfection was impossible without grace because we are born sinners with a sinful heart and will. The Pelagians charged Augustine on the grounds that the doctrine of original sin amounted to Manichaeism: the Manichaeans taught that the flesh was in itself sinful (and they denied that Jesus came in the flesh) – and this charge would have carried added weight since contemporaries knew that Augustine himself had been a Manichaean layman before his conversion to Christianity. Augustine also taught that a person's salvation comes solely through an irresistible free gift, the efficacious grace of God, but that this was a gift that one had a free choice to accept or refuse.^[1]

Pelagianism was attacked in the *Council of Diospolis*^[2] and condemned in 418 at the Council of Carthage.^[3] These condemnations were ratified at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The strict moral teachings of the Pelagians were influential in southern Italy and Sicily, where they were openly preached until the death of Julian of Eclanum in 455.^[4]

In *De causa Dei contra Pelagium et de virtute causarum*, Thomas Bradwardine denounced Pelagians in the 14th century and Gabriel Biel did the same in the 15th century.^[3]

Pelagius

Little or nothing is known about the life of Pelagius. Although he is frequently referred to as a *British* monk, it is by no means certain what his origins were. Augustine says that he lived in Rome "for a very long time" and referred to him as "Brito" to distinguish him from a different man called Pelagius of Tarentum. Bede refers to him as "Pelagius Bretto".^[5] St. Jerome suggests he was of Scottish descent but in such terms as to leave it uncertain as to whether Pelagius was from Scotland or Ireland. He was certainly well known in the Roman province, both for the harsh asceticism of his public life, as well as the power and persuasiveness of his speech. Until his more radical ideas saw daylight, even such pillars of the Church as Augustine referred to him as "saintly."

Pelagius taught that the human will, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a sinless life, although he believed that God's grace assisted every good work. Pelagius did not believe that all humanity was guilty in Adam's sin, but said that Adam had condemned humankind through bad example, and that Christ's good example offered humanity a path to salvation, through sacrifice and through instruction of the will. Jerome emerged as one of the chief critics of Pelagianism, because, according to him, sin was a part of human nature and we couldn't help but to sin.



Nuremberg Chronicle (1493): Pelagius Hereticus and John Chrysostom.

Comparison of teaching

Church Fathers on free will

Many of the Church Fathers taught that humans have the power of free will and the choice over good and evil. Justin Martyr said that 'every created being is so constituted as to be capable of vice and virtue. For he can do nothing praiseworthy, if he had not the power of turning either way'. 'Unless we suppose man has the power to choose the good and refuse the evil, no one can be accountable for any action whatever.' (The First Apology, 43 ^[6]). Tertullian also argued that no reward can be justly bestowed, no punishment can be justly inflicted, upon him who is good or bad by necessity, and not by his own choice. (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, p. 61). Likewise Origen,^[7] and Clement of Alexandria^[8]

Justin Martyr said, "Let some suppose, from what has been said by us, that we say that whatever occurs happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known beforehand, this too we explain. We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Now, if this is not so, but all things happen by fate, then neither is anything at all in our own power. For if it is predetermined that this man will be good, and this other man will be evil, neither is the first one meritorious nor the latter man to be blamed. And again, unless the human race has the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions."^[9]

Justin Martyr said, "I have proven in what has been said that those who were foreknown to be unrighteous, whether men or angels, are not made wicked by God's fault. Rather, each man is what he will appear to be through his own fault."^[10]

Tatian said, "We were not created to die. Rather, we die by our own fault. Our free will has destroyed us. We who were free have become slaves. We have been sold through sin. Nothing evil has been created by God. We ourselves have manifested wickedness. But we, who have manifested it, are able again to reject it."^[11]

Melito said, "There is, therefore, nothing to hinder you from changing your evil manner to life, because you are a free man."^[12]

Theophilus said, "If, on the other hand, he would turn to the things of death, disobeying God, he would himself be the cause of death to himself. For God made man free, and with power of himself."^[13]

Irenaeus said, "But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect similar to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself his own cause that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes chaff."^[13]

Irenaeus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds'...And 'Why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?'...All such passages demonstrate the independent will of man...For it is in man's power to disobey God and to forfeit what is good."^[14]

Clement of Alexandria said, "We...have believed and are saved by voluntary choice."^[15]

Tertullian said, "I find, then, that man was constituted free by God. He was master of his own will and power...For a law would not be imposed upon one who did not have it in his power to render that obedience which is due to law. Nor again, would the penalty of death be threatened against sin, if a contempt of the law were impossible to man in the liberty of his will...Man is free, with a will either for obedience or resistance."^[16]

Pelagius's views

In contrast, Pelagius taught:

Pelagius said, "Whenever I have to speak on the subject of moral instruction and conduct of a holy life, it is my practice first to demonstrate the power and quality of human nature and to show what it is capable of achieving, and then to go on to encourage the mind of my listener to consider the idea of different kinds of virtues, in case it may be of little or no profit to him to be summoned to pursue ends which he has perhaps assumed hitherto to be beyond his reach; for we can never end upon the path of virtue unless we have hope as our guide and compassion...any good of which human nature is capable has to be revealed, since what is shown to be practicable must be put into practice."^[17]

Pelagius said, "It was because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative...he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in the other direction too. He could not claim to possess the good of his own volition, unless he was the kind of creature that could also have possessed evil. Our most excellent creator wished us to be able to do either but actually to do only one, that is, good, which he also commanded, giving us the capacity to do evil only so that we might do His will by exercising our own. That being so, this very capacity to do evil is also good - good, I say, because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity but free to decide for itself."^[18]

Pelagius said, "Those who are unwilling to correct their own way of life appear to want to correct nature itself instead."^[19]

Pelagius said, "And lest, on the other hand, it should be thought to be nature's fault that some have been unrighteous, I shall use the evidence of the scripture, which everywhere lay upon sinners the heavy weight of the charge of having used their own will and do not excuse them for having acted only under constraint of nature."^[20]

Pelagius said, "Yet we do not defend the good of nature to such an extent that we claim that it cannot do evil, since we undoubtedly declare also that it is capable of good and evil; we merely try to protect it from an unjust charge, so that we may not seem to be forced to do evil through a fault of our nature, when, in fact, we do neither good nor evil without the exercise of our will and always have the freedom to do one of the two, being always able to do either."^[20]

Pelagius said, "Nothing impossible has been commanded by the God of justice and majesty...Why do we indulge in pointless evasions, advancing the frailty of our own nature as an objection to the one who commands us? No one knows better the true measure of our strength than he who has given it to us nor does anyone understand better how much we are able to do than he who has given us this very capacity of ours to be able; nor has he who is just wished to command anything impossible or he who is good intended to condemn a man for doing what he could not avoid doing."^[21]

Pelagius said, "Grace indeed freely discharges sins, but with the consent and choice of the believer."^[22]

Pelagius said, "Obedience results from a decision of the mind, not the substance of the body."^[23]

An unknown Pelagian, "Is it possible then for a man not to sin? Such a claim is indeed a hard one and a bitter pill for sinners to swallow; it pains the ears of all who desire to live unrighteous. Who will find it easy now to fulfil the demands of righteousness, when there are some who find it hard even to listen to them?"^[24]

An unknown Pelagian, "When will a man guilty of any crime or sin accept with a tranquil mind that his wickedness is a product of his own will, not of necessity, and allow what he now strives to attribute to nature to be ascribed to his own free choice? It affords endless comfort to transgressors of the divine law if they are able to believe that their failure to do something is due to inability rather than disinclination, since they understand from their natural wisdom that no one can be judged for failing to do the impossible and that what is justifiable on grounds of impossibility is either a small sin or none at all."^[25]

An unknown Pelagian, "Under the plea that it is impossible not to sin, they are given a false sense of security in sinning...Anyone who hears that it is not possible for him to be without sin will not even try to be what he judges to be impossible, and the man who does not try to be without sin must perforce sin all the time, and all the more boldly because he enjoys the false security of believing that it is impossible for him not to sin...But if he were to hear that he is able not to sin, then he would have exerted himself to fulfil what he now knows to be possible when he is striving to fulfil it, to achieve his purpose for the most part, even if not entirely."^[26]

An unknown Pelagian, "Consider first whether that which is such that a man cannot be without it ought to be described as sin at all; for everything which cannot be avoided is now put down to nature but it is impious to say that sin is inherent in nature, because in this way the author of nature is being judged at fault... how can it be proper to call sin by that name if, like other natural things, it cannot be avoided, since all sin is to be attributed to the free choice of the will, not to the defects of nature?"^[27]

Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Mormon theologian Sterling M. McMurrin stated "The theology of Mormonism is completely Pelagian", i.e., Mormons do not believe in original sin.^[28] It is doubtful that many Latter-day Saints would think of themselves as "Pelagians," or express their beliefs in the traditional terms used in the theological debates surrounding Pelagianism. However, McMurrin's statement is essentially true, although the Latter-day Saints do not believe that personal, individual perfection is possible without the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

A statement of faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reads as follows: "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression."^[29]

Notes

- [1] The Cambridge Companion to Augustine. 2001. , eds. Eleonore Stump, Norman Kretzmann. New York: Cambridge University Press. 130-135.
- [2] * Transcript From The Council of Diospolis (Lydda) Against Pelagius, 415AD (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Synod_Lydd_415AD.html)
- [3] Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion by William L Reese, Humanities Press 1980 p.421
- [4] controversial.com (<http://www.controversial.com/Unitarian Universalists.htm>) Unitarian Universalism
- [5] Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary (http://books.google.ie/books?id=cHMPAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA299&lpg=PA299&dq=Pelagius+britto&source=web&ots=R-icqUBiRi&sig=u4ltvpAUk20joVNJCdpFURtJquQ&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=6&ct=result)
- [6] <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>
- [7] said, "The soul does not incline to either part out of necessity, for then neither vice nor virtue could be ascribed to it; nor would its choice of virtue deserve reward; nor its declination to vice punishment." (The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher (<http://books.google.gr/books?id=0Rt5QFNvoM0C&hl=en>) p.212) Again, "How could God require that of man which he [man] had not power to offer Him?" (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, p. 62, published by Truth in Heart)
- [8] "Neither promises nor apprehensions, rewards, no punishments are just if the soul has not the power of choosing and abstaining; if evil is involuntary." (Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, p. 63, published by Truth in Heart)
- [9] Dialogue with Trypho, chapter 95 (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01287.htm>)
- [10] Dialogue with Trypho, chapter 140 (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iv.cx1.html>)
- [11] Address to the Greeks, 11 (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.iii.ii.xi.html>)
- [12] c.170, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 286, published by Hendrickson Publishers
- [13] c.180, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 286, published by Hendrickson Publishers
- [14] c.180, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers
- [15] c.195, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, published by Hendrickson Publishers
- [16] c.207, A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 288, published by Hendrickson Publishers
- [17] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 36-37, published by The Boydell Press
- [18] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 38, published by The Boydell Press
- [19] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 39, published by The Boydell Press
- [20] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 43, published by The Boydell Press
- [21] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 53-54, published by The Boydell Press
- [22] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 92, published by The Boydell Press

- [23] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 90, published by The Boydell Press
- [24] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 167, published by The Boydell Press
- [25] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 167-168, published by The Boydell Press
- [26] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 168, published by The Boydell Press
- [27] The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 168-169, published by The Boydell Press
- [28] McMurrin, Sterling M. *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* 1965
- [29] 2 (<http://lds.org/scriptures/pgp/a-of-f/1?lang=eng>), Articles of Faith, LDS Church.

Further reading

Writings by Pelagius

- Letters of Pelagius: To A Presbyter, Augustine of Hippo, and Pope Innocent I (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Letters.html)
- Confession of Faith (http://seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Confession_Of_Faith.html)
- On Nature (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_On_Nature.html)
- Defense Of The Freedom Of The Will (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Defense_Of_The_Freedom_Of_The_Will.html)
- Expositions on Paul's Epistle
- Epistle to Demetrias (<http://www.pelagius.net/pelagius/demetrias.htm>)
- Excerpts Out Of Divine Scriptures: Book One (a.k.a. Chapters) (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Chapters.html)
- Written Anathema (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pelagius_Written_Anathema.html)

External links

- The Writings of the legendary Pelagians (<http://www.libraryoftheology.com/pelagianismwritings.html>)
 - Canons From The Council Of Carthage Against Pelagianism, May 1, 418 (http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Council_Of_Carthage_May_1_418.html)
 - Catholic Encyclopedia: Pelagius and Pelagianism (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11604a.htm>)
 - Pelagians, Donatists, Monks, Anabaptists and other Perfectionists (<http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/336>) - a sympathetic look at Pelagianism and similar 'perfectionist' movements
 - Pelagius Library (<http://www.pelagius.net>): Online site dedicated to the study of Pelagius
 - Pelagianism: The Religion of Natural Man (<http://www.modernreformation.org/mh94pelagianism.htm>) - a critical look at Pelagianism
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Biblical Unitarianism

Today, **biblical Unitarianism** (or "**Biblical Unitarianism**" or "**biblical unitarianism**")^[1] identifies the Christian belief that the Bible teaches God is one being -- the Father -- and that Jesus is his son. A few denominations use this term to describe themselves, clarifying the distinction between them and those churches^[2] which, from the late 19th century, evolved into modern British Unitarianism and, primarily in the United States, Unitarian Universalism.

The history of Unitarianism was as a "scripturally oriented movement" which denied the Trinity^[3] and held various understandings of Jesus. Over time, however -- specifically, in the mid-19th century -- Unitarianism moved away from a belief in the necessity of the Bible as the source of religious truth.^[3]

The term "biblical Unitarianism" is connected first with Robert Spears and Samuel Sharpe of the *Christian Life* magazine in the 1880s. It is a neologism that gained increasing currency in non-Trinitarian literature during the 20th century as the mainstream Unitarian churches moved away from belief in the Bible and, in the United States, towards merger with Universalism. It has been used since the late 19th century by conservative Christian Unitarians, and sometimes by historians, to refer to Scripture-fundamentalist Unitarians of the 16th-18th centuries. Its use is problematic in that Unitarians from the 17th century until the 20th century all had attachment to the Bible, but in differing ways.

Early Unitarians and the Bible

Historians such as George Huntston Williams (1914-2000) rarely employ the term "Biblical Unitarian", as it would be anachronistic.^[4] Those individuals and congregations that we may now think of as Unitarians went through a range of beliefs about Jesus: that he was either pre-existent but created Son of God, not God the Son (Arianism); or that he originated at the virgin birth (Socinianism); or that he was simply a godly man (Adoptionism or Psilanthropism).^[5]

For early unitarians such as Henry Hedworth, who introduced the term "Unitarian" from Holland into England in 1673, the idea that Unitarianism was "Biblical" was axiomatic, since the whole thrust of the 16th and 17th century Unitarian and Arian movements was based on *sola scriptura* argumentation from Scripture, as in the case of the Arian Isaac Newton.^[6]

The Unitarian Churches (1774 onwards)

Theophilus Lindsey established the first avowedly Unitarian church in England in 1774 at Essex Street Chapel^[7], although, Nontrinitarianism was against the law until the Doctrine of the Trinity Act 1813; legal difficulties with the authorities were overcome with the help of barrister John Lee, who later became Attorney-General. Unitarians of this time continued to consider their teachings as "Biblical", though increasingly questioning the inspiration of the Bible, and the accounts of the miraculous.^[8] Divergence in the Unitarian Church was increasingly evident after 1800 with the majority following the rationalist views of writers such as Thomas Belsham (1806), Richard Wright (1808) who wrote against the miraculous conception while a minority holding to the views of traditionalists such as who published against Belsham's view (1808).^{[9] [10] [11]}

The Unitarian Church of Transylvania remained a conservative "Biblical" Unitarian movement largely isolated from developments in the west until the 1830s. The *Summa Universae Theologiae Christianae secundum Unitarios* (1787) represents a conservative position which held into the late 19th Century.

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that the Transcendentalist movement of Ralph Waldo Emerson "shattered rationalist, biblical Unitarianism — now grown conservative — and replaced it with intuitional religion and social idealism. When Unitarianism spread to the newly opened Middle West, its religious fundamentals changed to human aspiration and scientific truth, rather than Christianity and the Bible."^[12]

First uses of the term

An early example of the term "Biblical Unitarianism" occurs in the *British & Foreign Evangelical Review* (1882) in an article on the "Waning of Biblical Unitarianism".^[13] In the following year, Peter William Clayden's biography of Samuel Sharpe (1883) describes him as a "Biblical Unitarian", adding, "His intensely practical mind, and his business training, joined with his great though rational reverence for the Bible, made him long for definite views expressed in scripture language."^[14]

The context of the term in the above examples relates to the tension from the 1830s onward between more traditional and relatively scripture-fundamentalist Unitarians and those advocating a freer approach such as transcendentalists Theodore Parker and James Martineau. This conflict came to a head in 1876 when Robert Spears resigned from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and, with the support of Sharpe, a former president of the Association, began to publish a rival magazine.^[15] In this context, Sharpe is referred to again by John M. Robertson (1929) as a "Biblical Unitarian,"^[16] and adds that Sharpe's magazine, *The Christian Life*, was largely aimed at combatting growing agnosticism in Unitarian pulpits. However, though Sharpe may have used the term, and later been called, "Biblical Unitarian", he did not set up any lobby group of that name within Unitarianism.

The label of "Biblical Unitarianism" is also attributed to earlier generations than Sharpe by Henry Gow (1928), who even compares this with "Channing Unitarianism", a reference to the still relatively scripture-fundamentalist views of William Ellery Channing.^[17] "... and for a time, Unitarianism became the faith of many, if not most, of the leading citizens and thinkers of New England. As in England, it was a definitely Biblical Unitarianism."^[18]

Alexander Elliott Peaston (1940) pinpoints 1862 as the year of change from "Biblical Unitarianism" to newer models in England,^[19] ^[20] where formerly belief in miracles and the resurrection were dominant.^[21] The entry of higher criticism into Unitarianism via Alexander Geddes and others dealt a "blow at the biblical Unitarianism of Joseph Priestley".^[22] Walter H. Burgess (1943) adopts the same terminology -- "Biblical Unitarianism" vs. "the newer Unitarianism" -- to describe the tension in Wales in the 1870s between the deists David and Charles Lloyd vs. Gwilym Marles.^[23] ^[24] A similar example occurs in quotation marks from historian Stange (1984)^[25]

Earl Morse Wilbur, in his monumental *A History of Unitarianism* (1945), does not describe any group by the terminology "Biblical Unitarian", though the tension between the fundamentalist origins of Unitarianism and post-Christian direction of late 19th century Unitarianism does begin to appear in the later volumes.^[26]

Modern use of the term

Although Spears and Sharpe made appeal to the term "Biblical Unitarianism" in *The Christian life* (e.g. Volume 5, 1880), an appeal to the concept of "Biblical Unitarianism" by individuals and churches is rare until after Unitarian Universalism was formed from the merger in 1961 of two historically Christian denominations, the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association.^[27] In some cases in the 1870s where the name "Unitarian" was still considered too associated with "the narrowly Biblical type of liberal theologian", other names, such as "Christian Free Church", were employed.^[28] Larsen (2011) applies Spears' "biblical Unitarian" to him in regard to his 1876 resignation.^[29]

The term "biblical Unitarian" only begins to reappear frequently in the 1990s in the writings of those associated with a revival of interest in early Unitarian figures such as Fausto Sozzini and John Biddle ("the Father of English Unitarianism"^[30]), as well as Arians like Isaac Newton and William Whiston. An example is the journal *A Journal from the Radical Reformation, A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* (1993–present).^[31]

Alongside this historical interest in the Radical Reformation, during the 1990s the term "biblical unitarian" also begins to appear in Anti-Trinitarian publications without either 'b' or 'u' capitalized.^[32] ^[33]

Denominations

There may be small continuing groups of Christian Unitarians who look to the works of Spears, Sharpe and earlier.^[34] However, in terms of denominations today which could be identified as "biblical unitarian", the two most visible names are the Church of God General Conference (CoGGC), with 5,000 members in the USA, and Christadelphians, with 60,000 members worldwide. Both of these groups share Non-Trinitarian, specifically Socinian, Christology and both have historians^[35] who have acknowledged works such as the Racovian Catechism and Biddle's *Twofold Catechism* as prefiguring and compatible with their beliefs. Christadelphians are perhaps more reserved than CoGGC in association with the name "Unitarian", given that the Unitarian Church still exists in Britain, and many of its independent congregations are mostly post-Christian.^[36]

There is also a third, much smaller group, Christian Educational Services (CES), which separated from Victor Paul Wierwille's The Way International^[37], and which has taken an interest in the works of biblical unitarians in New England in the 19th century.^[38]

References

- [1] Generally capitalized "b. U." - Dowley 1977 Larsen 2011 Robertson 1929 BFER 1882 PTR 1929 New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1987. See Wikipedia:Manual of Style (capital letters), article English capitalisation cites source: L. Sue Baugh Essentials of English Grammar: A Practical Guide to the Mastery of English (9780844258218) Second Edition 1994 p59 "Religious Names and Terms: The names of all religions, denominations, and local groups are capitalized." Uncapitalized: Ankerberg.
- [2] Tuggy, Dale, (2009). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/unitarianism.html>'Unitarianism'). Accessed 10-30-2010
- [3] Unitarianism (<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia/entry/Unitarnsm>) *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (2007). Accessed 10-30-2010
- [4] only once in Williams, *The Polish Brethren : Documentation of the History and Thought of Unitarianism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Diaspora 1601–1685*, Scholars Press, 1980, ISBN 0-89130-343-X
- [5] *The works of Sir John Suckling: Volume 1* ed. Thomas Clayton, Lester A. Beaurline - 1971 "'Socinianism' was both a flexible body of contemporary Biblical-Unitarian doctrine, formalized in 16th-century Italy chiefly by Faustus Socinus, and a catchword 'used to cover different kinds of unorthodox religious opinion.'"
- [6] Stephen D. Snobelen, "Isaac Newton: His life and religion," in Arri Eisen and Gary Laderman, eds., *Science, religion, and society: An encyclopedia of history, culture, and controversy*, vol. 1 (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2007), "A manuscript list of twelve statements distinguishing God from Christ according to his biblical unitarian theology confirms this association and reveals that it has a heretical corollary. Newton asserts that it is only the Father who is [God]"
- [7] Chapter 2. Mortimer Rowe, B.A., D.D. *The History of Essex Hall*. London:Lindsey Press, 1959. Full text reproduced here (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/support/doc-EssexHall0.shtml>). }
- [8] Gerald Parsons *Religion in Victorian Britain* Vol 3- 1988 p80 "Comprised of two theologically incompatible strands (one Bible-based, orthodox and distinguished from the rest of evangelical dissent only by its conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity was unscriptural; the other heir to the rationalism and deism of the Enlightenment and possessed of a calm and intellectual rather than fervent and ethos, Unitarianism was always destined to be firmly middle class."
- [9] R. K. Webb "Miracles in English Unitarian Thought" Essay, chapter 6 in ed. Mark S. Micale, Robert L. Dietle, Peter Gay Enlightenment, passion, modernity: historical essays in European Thought and Culture 2007 p120 cf ref 22 p423 "Compare Richard Wright, the celebrated Unitarian missionary, An Essay on the Miraculous Conception of Jesus Christ (London, 1808)."
- [10] Wright *A review of the missionary life and labors of Richard Wright* p68 "After they were excited to think freely, some gave up the doctrine of the miraculous conception, from reading the scriptures only, and observing certain things there with which it could not be reconciled."
- [11] Robert Spears *The Unitarian handbook of scriptural illustrations & expositions* 1883 "The prophet uses not the Hebrew word which properly signifies a virgin, but which denotes a girl, a young woman. ... Originally and literally this seems applicable only to the birth of a child, a sign to Ahaz,"
- [12] New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1987 p264; same article also appears Merriam-Webster's encyclopedia of world religions - 1999, p1117
- [13] James Oswald Dykes, James Stuart Candlish, Joseph Samuel Exell - 1882 "Waning of Biblical Unitarianism. Testament criticism, Dr. Ezra Abbot, of the Boston Unitarian School of Divinity, and, as a member of the American Revision Company is justly looked up to as an authority in that department, has published ..."
- [14] Clayden *Samuel Sharpe: Egyptologist and Translator of the Bible* Page 247-248
- [15] Tim Dowley *Eerdman's handbook to the history of Christianity* 1977 p496 "But in the 1830s James Martineau and some younger Unitarians led a revolt against biblical Unitarianism and its dogmas. They advocated a less argumentative religion. They wanted a more refined, romantic and devotional spirituality."

- [16] Robertson J. M. *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* Vol2 429: "Samuel Sharpe, the scholarly "Biblical Unitarian," though he had championed the cause of James Martineau (with whom he did not agree) when the party of Grote objected to making him Professor of Philosophy at University College, spent much of his time in his latter years in combating the new movement.
- [17] *The Princeton theological review*: Volume 27 (1929) "Dr. Gow stresses the fact that the older Unitarianism was professedly a Biblical Unitarianism. Its advocates rejected such doctrines as the Trinity and the Atonement not so much on the ground that they were unreasonable as on the ground that they were [unscriptural]"
- [18] Henry Gow *The Unitarians* Methuen 1928
- [19] Peaston A. E. *The Prayer book reform movement in the XVIIIth century 1940 Until the year 1862, the theology championed by Lindsey and Priestley, and perfected by Lindsey's biographer Belsham, had been a Biblical Unitarianism, deriving its inspiration and authority from the Holy Scriptures*
- [20] Alexander Elliott Peaston *The Prayer book reform movement in the XVIIIth century 1940* "The Book of Common Prayer as revised by Lindsey immediately attracted those Presbyterians who had been anxious for a liturgy, and whose theology, under the influence of Priestley was becoming Biblical Unitarian."
- [21] *Worship and theology in England: Volume 4* 1970 "These four forms of corporate worship have several common characteristics and together may be regarded as typical of Biblical Unitarianism. The belief in miracles and supremely in the miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus is dominant"
- [22] *Recusant history: Volume 25, Issues 1-2* Catholic Record Society (Great Britain) - 2000 "Geddes, indeed, dealt a potentially serious blow at the biblical Unitarianism of Joseph Priestley by his contributions to the mythological interpretation of the scriptures themselves, and by his association with the German school of biblical criticism.
- [23] Walter H. Burgess *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society: Volumes 8-9* "The struggle between Biblical Unitarianism and the newer Unitarianism is seen in the controversy between Dr. Charles Lloyd, Principal of Carmarthen, and Gwilym Marles on "Saving Faith."
- [24] D. Elwyn Davies *"They thought for themselves": a brief look at the story of Unitarianism in Wales* 1982 "And it was a disagreement regarding the above philosophical principle that caused yet another major controversy between Gwilym Marles and his old Principal Tutor at Carmarthen, Dr. David Lloyd, regarding the meaning of Saving Faith."
- [25] Stange, Charles Douglas *British Unitarians against American slavery, 1833-65* - Page 54: "[George] Harris was one of the originators of the Scottish Unitarian Association in 1813, and a supporter of "old biblical Unitarianism."
- [26] *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and Its Antecedents* etc., Harvard University Press, 1945.
- [27] Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, George Dawes Hicks, George Stephens Spinks *The Hibbert journal: Volumes 49-50* 1950 "But it may be of service to the reader interested in the fourth section to be reminded of the fine collections of semi-Arian and Biblical Unitarian liturgies in the libraries of Manchester College, Oxford, and the Unitarian College,..."
- [28] *The London quarterly & Holborn review: Volume 169* 1944 [Robert Rodolph] Suffield was at Croydon from 1871 until 1877. It was a period of theological strain among English Unitarians. The heirs of the older Presbyterianism clung to a Biblical theology with a strongly Christocentric outlook. It was for this reason that Suffield refused to call his church by the Unitarian name, a label associated popularly with William Gaskell, Robert Spears, and the narrowly Biblical type of liberal theologian. He chose the designation of 'Free Christian Church', the title which brought him nearest to Parker and the New England Transcendentalists..... Faith finds its authority either in the intellectual and moral acceptance of some outward revelation, a church or a book, or in the alternative of an attitude of reliance upon the dictates of the individual conscience. To Suffield, the two positions were sharply divided; the older Biblical Unitarian "
- [29] Timothy Larsen *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* 2011 p143 "In 1876 (over fifteen years after Parker's death and the year before Carpenter's own death), the English biblical Unitarian Robert Spears resigned his post with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association because of a plan to republish Parker's works.
- [30] Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, p. 290.
- [31] Polish Socinians: FROM THE POLISH SOCINIANS TO THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION, Marian Hillar, A Journal from the Radical Reformation, A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 22-57, 1994
- [32] e.g. David Kemball-Cook *Is God a Trinity?* Page 64 "Graeser, Lynn and Schoenheit, in *One God and One Lord* represent the biblical unitarian view that Jesus was an anointed man. They argue against the Trinity on both logical and biblical grounds, and they reject the 'God-man' idea..."
- [33] P. R. Lackey *The Tyranny of the Trinity: The Orthodox Cover-up* 2008 Page 347 "Her strong conviction led her to collaborate with biblical unitarian authors to create a book that challenges the centuries-old man-made doctrine of the Trinity, the mainstay of ecclesiastical tradition. "
- [34] J. D. Bowers *Joseph Priestley and English Unitarianism in America* - chapter The Death and Resurrection of English Unitarianism - "There are others who even hope to bring back Priestley's theology. They see Socinianism as a potentially important and shaping force in the (re)creation of a new Unitarian theology, one that returns to the old principles and teachings. Anthony Buzzard has been a leading Unitarian proponent in arguing for a return to Christian ... Buzzard has written numerous "evangelical" works (from a Unitarian standpoint), that argue for a return to a belief in Jesus as the Messiah" p251
- [35] Anthony Buzzard among CoGGC, the geographer L.A. Eyre among Christadelphians: Eyre *Brethren in Christ* CSSS Adelaide.
- [36] General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/>), UK
- [37] Spirit & Truth Fellowship International formed 2005
- [38] "Christian Educational Services has also begun reprinting many of the more important works of biblical unitarians in New England in the 1800's, before the movement was splintered by the Transcendentalists and turned toward a humanistic perspective. Many of these works are excellent expositions of Bible truth, as well as devastating polemics against Trinitarian orthodoxy and tyranny. Christian Educational Services

has also reprinted The Racovian Catechism, the most illuminating work of the Socinian movement"

Unitarian Christian Association

Unitarian Christian Association	
Formation	1991
Type	Religious Organization
Location	United Kingdom
Official languages	English
Moderator	Revd Jeffrey L Gould
Key people	Jim Corrigan (Editor of The Herald), Mrs Denise Birks (Secretary)
Website	[1]

The **Unitarian Christian Association** is a relatively small fellowship of Christians who feel an affinity with traditional Unitarianism and Free Christianity. The association is based in the United Kingdom and has formal links with the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches^[2], the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (NSPCI)^[3], and the European Liberal Protestant Network.

The UCA also has fraternal relations with European groups such as the Assemblée Fraternelle des Chrétiens Unitariens (AFCU) and Congregazione Italiana Cristiana Unitariana, along with North American groups such as the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship and American Unitarian Conference.

As such, the UCA could be considered to be part of three Christian subcultures—the distinct traditions of Unitarianism and Free Christianity, and the broader 'umbrella movement' of Liberal Christians.

Theology

The Unitarian Christian Association, as its name suggests, exists primarily to preserve and celebrate Unitarian Christianity.

In short, the Unitarian Christian tradition is founded on a theological position (originally espoused by Michael Servetus and Francis David) that dissents from the doctrine of the Trinity instead affirming the unity of God and placing emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. This strict monotheism is arguably more akin to Islamic and Jewish positions than the positions of larger Christian groups such as the Roman Catholic Church - and as a result, they maybe regarded by some fellow Christians as 'unorthodox' or 'heretical'.

In tandem with their aim to promote Unitarian Christian beliefs, the UCA also maintains an ethos of theological open-mindedness and inclusivity shaped by its links with the Free Christian tradition. This is highlighted by the UCA's Foundational Declaration (Recast Edition) which states the following:

"The Bible is central to our faith and Jesus is the Teacher, Exemplar and Master. We will read and search scripture for truth, interpreted by the authority of Conscience. All creeds and confessions restrict belief and the free Inquiry we need for Knowledge. By loving one another, we show ourselves to follow the example of the Jesus. In all things, in faith and deeds, we seek to follow the His Great Commandment that God is One and we should love God with all that we are, and love neighbour as ourselves. We know that how we act is much more important than what the words we say and that, in all times, the words of Jesus still show the way, more important than those uttered in later days. Unity is found not in creeds or doctrines, but by following and being obedient to His teachings. This we affirm."^[4]

Not all NSPCI ministers see themselves as Unitarian.

History

The UCA was formed in 1991, largely at the instigation of scholar and minister Lancelot Austin Garrard (1904–1993), as a response to theological revisionism within the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC).^[5]

The founders of the Unitarian Christian Association sought to uphold the original Unitarian Christian tradition of Francis David within the British Unitarian movement. The aims of the UCA were "*to promote Unitarian Christian religion in the congregations of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, to promote religious education within that tradition, to relieve need, hardship or distress of members of the Association, and to undertake any other charitable purpose that may arise.*"^[6]

They sought to achieve these aims through working together on explicitly Unitarian Christian publications such as *The Herald* (a journal published every quarter), contributions to *Hymns of Faith and Freedom* (a Unitarian hymn book), and through the holding of explicitly Unitarian Christian meetings, lectures and services within churches affiliated with the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

In its early years, the members of the UCA decided that they did not wish to apply for recognition as an official body affiliated to the General Assembly. But after the GA adopted new aims and objects which specifically included "the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition," it was agreed that it would be appropriate to apply for recognition. The Unitarian Christian Association became an Affiliated Society in April 2002.^[7]

Despite the clear friendship and warmth between Unitarian Christians and non-Christian Unitarians in the UK, there have been a series a debates within the Association and wider denomination - sometimes heated - over the future of Unitarian Christianity in the United Kingdom, and the UCA's role in its preservation and continued development.

In Spring 2006, a theological colloquium was held at Cambridge University by UCA members in order to discuss the future of Unitarianism and Free Christianity within Britain. Following this, UCA representatives met with representatives from the Assemblée Fraternelle des Chrétiens Unitariens (AFCU) and Congregazione Italiana Cristiano Unitariana to discuss the future of Unitarian Christianity on a wider international level. From this meeting the *Avignon Manifesto* - a joint declaration of intent - was created and published for their members to individually ratify.^[8] The document affirmed their distinct identity as Unitarian Christians whilst signalling their intent to remain within the wider Unitarian and Free Christian traditions.

Not all ministers of the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (NSPCI) are on a common roster with the ministers of the predominantly British General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC). Not all NSPCI ministers see themselves as Unitarian.

References

- [1] <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk>
- [2] See "Affiliated Societies" *British Unitarians homepage*, <http://www.unitarian.org.uk/movementc.htm>
- [3] See "Report on the UCA's Autumn Synod" *The Herald, Winter 2006*, <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/13.html>
- [4] See "About the UCA" *Unitarian Christian Association*, <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/7.html>
- [5] See "History" *Unitarian Christian Association*, <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/2.html>
- [6] See "History" *Unitarian Christian Association*, <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/2.html>
- [7] See "History" *Unitarian Christian Association*, <http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/2.html>
- [8] CAUTE: Avignon Manifesto in English and a thought on Spinoza and Quantum Mechanics (<http://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/2007/09/well-feeling-much-better-now-and-so.html>)

External links

- Unitarian Christian Association (UK) (<http://www.unitarianchristian.org.uk/>)

Unitarian Universalism

Unitarian Universalism is a religious community characterized by support for a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning".^[1] Unitarian Universalists do not share a creed; rather, they are unified by their shared search for spiritual growth and by the understanding that an individual's theology is a result of that search and not obedience to an authoritarian requirement. Unitarian Universalists draw on many different theological sources and have a wide range of beliefs and practices.

Historically, both Unitarianism and Universalism have roots in the Christian faith. Contemporary Unitarian Universalists espouse a pluralist approach to religion, whereby the followers may be atheist, theist, or any point in between.

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was formed in 1961, a consolidation of the American Unitarian Association, established in 1825, and the Universalist Church of America, established in 1866. It is headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, and serves churches mostly in the United States. The Canadian Unitarian Council became an independent body in 2002.^[2]

History

Unitarian Universalism was formed from the merger in 1961 of two historically Christian denominations, the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association, both based in the United States. At the time of the North American merger, the theological significance of these terms had expanded beyond the traditional Christian understanding. Unitarian Universalists today draw from a variety of religious traditions. Individuals may or may not self-identify as Christians or subscribe to Christian beliefs.^[3] Unitarian Universalist congregations and fellowships tend to retain some Christian traditions, such as Sunday worship with a sermon and the singing of hymns. The extent to which the elements of any particular faith tradition are incorporated into personal spiritual practice is a matter of personal choice for congregants, in keeping with a creedless, non-dogmatic approach to spirituality and faith development.

New England Unitarians evolved from the Pilgrim fathers' Congregational Christianity, which was originally based on a literal reading of the Bible. Liberalizing Unitarians rejected the Trinitarian belief in the tri-partite godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost/Spirit. Instead, they asserted a unitary notion of God.

New England Universalists rejected the Puritan forefathers' emphasis on the select few, the Elect, who were reportedly saved from eternal damnation by a just God. Instead Universalists asserted that 'all were universally saved.' Universalists rejected the hellfire and damnation of the evangelical preachers who tried to revive the fundamentalist Christianity of the early Pilgrim fathers.

Universalism

Universalism broadly refers to a theological belief that all persons and creatures are related to a god or the divine and will be reconciled to a god (Universal Salvation).

Christian Universalism

Proponents of Christian Universalism claim a long history, beginning with Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, though both of these are questioned by modern scholarship and Orthodox scholars.^{[4] [5] [6]} It is based upon the doctrine of universal salvation through Christ (universal reconciliation) and an interpretation of the "restitution of all things" (apocatastasis). In 1793, Universalism emerged as a particular denomination of Christianity in the United States, eventually called the Universalist Church of America.^[7] Early American advocates of Universal Salvation such as Elhanan Winchester, Hosea Ballou and John Murray taught that all souls would achieve salvation, sometimes after a period resembling purgatory.^[8] Christian Universalism denies the doctrine of everlasting damnation, and proclaims belief in an entirely loving God who will ultimately redeem all human beings.

Unitarianism

Historically, Unitarianism was a denomination within Christianity. The term may refer to any belief about the nature of Jesus Christ that affirms God as a singular entity and rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, but is usually distinguished from Arianism which was rejected by mainstream Christianity, a consensus of Christian bishops at the First Council of Nicaea in 325. This resurfaced later on in Church history, especially during the theological turmoils of the Protestant Reformation. A Spanish physician, Michael Servetus, studied the Bible and concluded that the concept of the Trinity, as traditionally conceived, was not biblical. His books *On the Errors of the Trinity* and *Christianismi Restitutio* caused much uproar. Servetus was eventually arrested, judged, and burned at the stake in Geneva in 1553 when John Calvin was leading the Reformation there.^[9]

The term *Unitarian* entered the English language via Henry Hedworth in relation to the teachings of Laelio Sozzini and the Polish Socinians. Unitarian churches were formally established in Transylvania and Poland (by the Socinians) in the second half of the 16th Century.^[10] The early Unitarian church not only rejected the Trinity, but also the pre-existence of Christ as well, in many cases, predestination and original sin as put forward by Augustine of Hippo, and the substitutionary atonement of Christ developed by Anselm of Canterbury and John Calvin. There were several different forms of Christology in the beginnings of the Unitarian movement; ultimately, the variety that became prevalent was that Jesus was a man, but one with a unique relationship to God. These Unitarian thinkers and groups have gone by many names, including Nontrinitarianism and Anti-trinitarianism.

Britain

Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) revised the Book of Common Prayer, removing the Trinitarian Nicene Creed and references to Jesus as God.^[11] Theophilus Lindsey also revised the Book of Common Prayer to allow a more Unitarian interpretation. His efforts met with substantial criticism by the more conservative priests and bishops who held sufficient power within the Church of England to stifle his attempts at reform. In response, in 1774, Lindsey founded the Essex Street Chapel, the first true Unitarian congregation in England. A third Anglican, Joseph Priestley (more widely known as the scientist who discovered oxygen), founded a reform congregation. Priestley fled to America after his home was burned down in riots named after him, and became a leading figure in the founding of the church on American soil.^[12]

During the late 19th Century there was tension between the "Biblical Unitarianism" of Robert Spears and Samuel Sharpe and those such as James Martineau as Unitarians began to move away from belief in scripture.

Unitarian congregations in Britain today meet under the auspices of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Two that have been significant in national life are the Cross Street Chapel in Manchester and Newington Green Unitarian Church in north London.

United States

In the United States, the Unitarian movement began primarily in the Congregational parish churches of New England, which were part of the state church of Massachusetts.^[13] These churches, whose buildings may still be seen today in many New England town squares, trace their roots to the division of the Puritan colonies into parishes for the administration of their religious needs.^[14] In the late 18th century, conflict grew within some of these churches between Unitarian and Trinitarian factions. In 1819 William Ellery Channing preached the ordination sermon for Jared Sparks in Baltimore, outlining the Unitarian position, and the dispute culminated in the foundation of the American Unitarian Association as a separate denomination in 1825.^[15]

Integration 1825–1961

After the schism, some of those churches remained within the Congregational fold, while others voted to become Unitarian. In the aftermath of their various historical circumstances, some of these churches became member congregations of the Congregational organization (later the United Church of Christ), others became Unitarian and eventually became part of the UUA. Universalist churches in contrast followed a different path, having begun as independent congregations beyond the bounds of the established Puritan churches entirely. Today, the UUA and the United Church of Christ cooperate jointly on social justice initiatives such as the Sexuality Education Advocacy Training project.^[16] In the 19th century, under the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson (who had been a Unitarian minister)^[17] and other transcendentalists, Unitarianism began its long journey from liberal Protestantism to its present more pluralist form.

Unitarians and Universalists often have had common interests and communication between them. In the often-quoted words of Thomas Starr King, pastor of the San Francisco Unitarian Church at the beginning of the Civil War: "The Universalists believe that God is too good to damn them, and the Unitarians believe they are too good to be damned!"^[18]

In 1961, the American Unitarian Association (AUA) was consolidated with the Universalist Church of America (UCA), thus forming the Unitarian Universalist Association.^[18] In the same year, the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) formed.^[19] The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was also given corporate status in May 1961 under special acts of legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of New York. In 1998 the CUC and UUA dissolved their financial accord, although they continue to cooperate in many ways.^[19]

Beliefs

There is no single unifying belief that all Unitarian Universalists (UUs) hold, aside from complete and responsible freedom of speech, thought, belief, faith, and disposition. Unitarian Universalists believe that each person is free to search for his or her own personal truth on issues, such as the existence, nature, and meaning of life, deities, creation, and afterlife. UUs can come from any religious background, and hold beliefs and adhere to morals from a variety of cultures or religions.

Concepts about deity are diverse among UUs. Some have no belief in any gods (atheism); others believe in many gods (polytheism). Some believe that the question of the existence of any god is most likely unascertainable or unknowable (agnosticism). Some believe that God is a metaphor for a transcendent reality. Some believe in a female god (goddess), an Abrahamic god, or a god identified with nature or the universe (pantheism). Still others may hold with the Deist notion that a creator God exists, but does not intervene in the world or reveal itself, and can only be apprehended (if at all) through the use of reason. Many UUs reject the idea of deities and instead speak of the "spirit of life" that binds all life on earth. UUs support each person's search for truth and meaning in concepts of spirituality.

Seven Principles and Purposes

Deliberately without an official creed or dogma (per the principle of freedom of thought), Unitarian Universalists instead typically agree with the Principles and Purposes *suggested* by the Unitarian Universalist Association. As with most actions in Unitarian Universalism, these were created in committee, and affirmed democratically by a vote of member congregations, proportional to their membership, taken at an annual General Assembly (a meeting of delegates from member congregations). Adopted in 1960, the full Principles, Purposes and Sources can be found in the article on the Unitarian Universalist Association. The Principles are as follows:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to 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 in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.^[20]

Unitarian Universalism is often referred to by its members as a *living tradition*, and the principles and purposes have been modified over time to reflect changes in spiritual beliefs among the membership. Most recently, the last principle, adopted in 1985 and generally known as the *Seventh Principle*, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part", and a sixth source (adopted in 1995), "Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature" were added to explicitly include members with Neopagan, Native American, and pantheist spiritualities.^[21]

Unitarian Universalists tend to promote beliefs of a person that are based on their individual thoughts, and can range from a strict monotheistic belief to more of a philosophical view of things.

Six Sources

Unitarian Universalists place emphasis on spiritual growth and development. Unitarian Universalism is a creedless religion. The Unitarian Universalist Association affirms seven principles:^[22] The official statement of Unitarian Universalist principles describes the "sources" upon which current practice is based:^[22]

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an 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 of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's 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 against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

The religious pluralism of Unitarian Universalism respects diverse traditions within the movement and often within the same congregation. Many see it as a typical syncretic religion, in which personal beliefs and religious services draw from many faith traditions.

Unitarian Universalism asserts a strong commitment to social justice and community exploration of spiritual development.

Unitarian Universalists assert no theology. Unitarian Universalists believe that the divine can be found in all people and in many faiths. Unitarian Universalists draw inspiration from a variety of other faith traditions. Many Unitarian Universalist churches celebrate observances associated with other religious traditions, including Buddhist-style meditation groups, Jewish Seder, Yom Kipur and Passover dinners, *iftaar* meals (marking the breaking of Ramadan fast for Muslims), and Christmas Eve/Winter Solstice services. Children's and youth's religious education classes teach about the divinity of the world and the sanctity of world religions. One of its more popular curricula, *Neighboring Faiths* (formerly *Church Across the Street*), takes middle and high school participants to visit the places of worship of many faith traditions including a Hindu temple, a Reform or Orthodox synagogue, and a Catholic church.

Many Unitarian Universalists consider themselves humanists, while others hold to Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, natural theist, atheist, agnostic, pantheist, pagan, and other beliefs. Most choose to attach no particular theological label to their beliefs. This diversity of views is considered a strength in the Unitarian Universalist movement. The emphasis remains on the common search for meaning among its members rather than adherence to any particular doctrine. Many UU congregations have study groups that examine the traditions and spiritual practices of Neopaganism, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Pantheism, and other faiths. Some UU ministers, such as the Reverend James Ishmael Ford, are also ordained Zen teachers. Other UU ministers, such as the Reverend David Miller, are atheists. There are Buddhist meditation teachers, Sufi teachers, as well as gnostic and episcopi vagantes clerics. Some view their Jewish heritage as primary, and others see the concept of God as unhelpful in their personal spiritual journeys. While Sunday services in most congregations tend to be spiritual in nature (as different from theological), it is not unusual for a part of a church's membership to attend pagan, Buddhist, or other spiritual study or worship groups as an alternative means of worship. Some Unitarian Universalists are also atheist or agnostic.

In several surveys,^[3] Unitarian Universalists in the United States most often identified themselves as humanists, while smaller numbers identified themselves as earth-centered, agnostic, theistic, atheistic, Buddhist, Christian, or pagan.

There is great variety among Unitarian Universalist congregations, with some favoring particular religious beliefs or forms of worship over others, with many more home to an eclectic mix of beliefs. Regardless of their orientation, most congregations are fairly open to differing beliefs, though not always with various faith traditions represented to the same degree.

There is also a wide variety in how congregations conceive of themselves. Congregations call themselves "churches," "societies," "fellowships," "congregations," or eschew the use of any particular descriptor (e.g. "Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists"). Whether a congregation is a 'fellowship' or a 'church' sometimes hinges on whether it is led by one (or more) minister(s): those without ministers being fellowships, those with ministers being churches. Many use the name "Unitarian Universalist," (and a few "Universalist Unitarian"), having gradually adopted this formulation since consolidation in 1961. Others use names that reflect their historic roots by keeping simply the designation "Unitarian" or "Universalist" (e.g. "Community Unitarian Church at White Plains"). A few congregations use neither. For some congregations, the name can be a clue to their theological orientation. For others, avoidance of the word "church" indicates a desire to distance itself from traditional Christian theology. Sometimes the use of another term may simply indicate a congregation's lay-led or relatively new status. However, some UU congregations have grown to appreciate alternative terms such as *fellowship* and retained them even though they have grown much larger or lost features sometimes associated with their use (such as, in the case of fellowships, a traditionally lay-led worship model).^[23]

Also of note is that there are many more people who identify as UU on surveys than those who attend UU churches (by a factor of four in a recent survey),^[24] reflecting those who have never joined (and lapsed members) but nonetheless consider themselves part of the UU movement.

Approach to sacred writings

A Unitarian Universalist approach to the Christian Bible and other sacred works is given in *Our Unitarian Universalist Faith: Frequently Asked Questions*, published by the UUA:

We do not, however, hold the Bible – or any other account of human experience – to be either an infallible guide or the exclusive source of truth. Much biblical material is mythical or legendary. Not that it should be discarded for that reason! Rather, it should be treasured for what it is. We believe that we should read the Bible as we read other books – with imagination and a critical eye. We also respect the sacred literature of other religions. Contemporary works of science, art, and social commentary are valued as well. We hold, in the words of an old liberal formulation, that "revelation is not sealed." Unitarian Universalists aspire to truth as wide as the world – we look to find truth anywhere, universally.

In short, Unitarian Universalists respect the important religious texts of other religions. UUs believe that all religions can coexist if viewed with the concept of love for your neighbor and for yourself. Other church members who do not believe in a particular text or doctrine, are encouraged to respect it as a historically significant literary work that should be viewed with an open mind. It is intended that in this way, individuals from all religions or spiritual backgrounds could live peaceably.

Elevator speeches

In 2004, *UU World* magazine asked for contributions of "elevator speeches" explaining Unitarian Universalism.^[25] These are short speeches that could be made in the course of an elevator ride to those who knew nothing of the religion. Here are examples of the speeches submitted:

In Unitarian Universalist congregations, we gather in community to support our individual spiritual journeys. We trust that openness to one another's experiences will enhance our understanding of our own links with the divine, with our history, and with one another.

— Rev. Jonalu Johnstone, Oklahoma City, OK^[26]

Most Unitarian Universalists believe that nobody has a monopoly on all truth, or ultimate proof of the truth of everything in any one belief. Therefore, one's own truth is unprovable, as is that of others. Consequently, we should respect the beliefs of others, as well as their right to hold those beliefs. Conversely, we expect that others should respect our right to our own beliefs. Several UU's then, would likely hold as many different beliefs. Other beliefs they may hold in common are a respect for others, for nature, and for common decency, leading to a particular caring for the poor, the weak and the downtrodden. As a result, issues of justice, including social justice are held in common among most.

— Gene Douglas, Harrah, OK^[27]

Worship and ritual

As in theology, Unitarian Universalist worship and ritual are often a combination of elements derived from other faith traditions alongside original practices and symbols. In form, church services might be difficult to distinguish from those of a Protestant church, but they vary widely among congregations.^[18]

Symbols

The most common symbol of Unitarian Universalism is the flaming chalice, often framed by two overlapping rings that many interpret as representing Unitarianism and Universalism (the symbol has no official interpretation). The chalice itself has long been a symbol of liberal religion, and indeed liberal Christianity (the Disciples of Christ also use a chalice as their denomination symbol). The flaming chalice was initially the logo of the Unitarian Service Committee during the Second World War. It was created by Austrian artist Hans Deutsch, inspired by "the kind of chalice which the Greeks and Romans put on their altars. The holy oil burning in it is a symbol of helpfulness and sacrifice."^[28]

Nevertheless, other interpretations have been suggested, such as the chalice used by the followers of Czech heretic Jan Hus, or its vague resemblance to a cross in some stylized representations. Many UU congregations light a chalice at the beginning of worship services. Other symbols include a slightly off-center cross within a circle (a Universalist symbol associated with the Humiliati movement in the 1950s, a group of reformist, liturgically minded clergy seeking to revive Universalism).

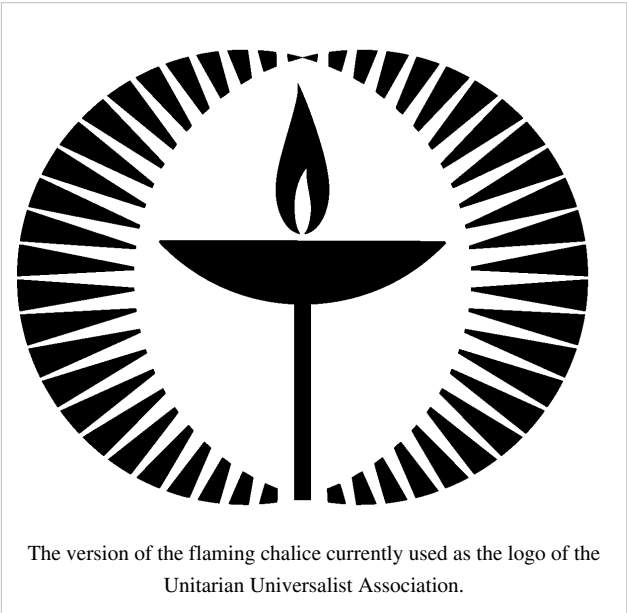
Other symbols include a pair of open hands releasing a dove.^[29]

Services of worship

Religious services are usually held on Sundays and most closely resemble the form and format of Protestant worship in the Reformed tradition.^[18] Services at a vast majority of congregations utilize a structure that focuses on a sermon or presentation by a minister, a lay leader of the congregation, or an invited speaker.^[30] Sermons may cover a wide range of topics. Since Unitarian Universalists do not recognize a particular text or set of texts as primary or inherently superior, inspiration can be found in many different religious or cultural texts as well as the personal experiences of the minister.

The service also includes hymn-singing, accompanied by organ, piano, or other available instruments, and possibly led by a song leader or choir. The most recent worship songbook published by the denomination, *Singing the Journey*^[31] contains 75 songs and is a supplement to the older *Singing the Living Tradition* which contains readings as well.^[32] Hymns typically sung in UU services come from a variety of sources – traditional hymn tunes with new or adapted lyrics, spirituals, folk songs from various cultures, or original compositions by Unitarian Universalist musicians are just a few. Instrumental music is also a common feature of the typical worship service, including preludes, offertory music, postludes, or music for contemplation.

Pastoral elements of the service may include a time for sharing Joys and Sorrows/Concerns, where individuals in the congregation are invited to light a candle and/or say a few words about important events in their personal lives. Many UU services also include a time of meditation or prayer, led by the minister or service leader, both spoken and



silent. Responsive readings and stories for children are also typical.

Many UU congregations no longer observe the Christian sacraments of baptism, communion, or confirmation, at least in their traditional forms or under their traditional names. Congregations that continue these practices under their more traditional names are often federated churches or members of the Council of Christian Churches within the Unitarian Universalist Association (CCCUUA), or may have active chapters associated with the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship or similar covenant groups.^[33] "Child dedications" often replace more traditional infant baptisms (though it should be noted that such "dedications" are sometimes practiced even in "orthodox" Christian communities that do not baptize infants for theological reasons). Annual celebrations of Water Communion and Flower Communion may replace or supplement Christian-style communion (though many pluralist and Christian-oriented congregations may celebrate or otherwise make provisions for communion on Christian holy days).^[34] Confirmation may be replaced by a "Coming of Age" program, in which teenagers explore their individual religious identity, often developing their own credo. After they have completed exploring their spiritual beliefs, they write a speech about it which they then personally deliver to the congregation.

Politics

Historical politics of Unitarians

In the 19th century, Unitarians and Universalists were active in abolitionism, the women's movement, the temperance movement, and other social reform movements. The second woman's rights convention was held at the First Unitarian church in Rochester, New York.

Politics of UUs

Historically, Unitarian Universalists have often been active in political causes, notably the civil rights movement,^[36] the gay rights movement, the social justice movement, and the feminist movement.

Susan B. Anthony, a Unitarian and Quaker, was extremely influential in the women's suffrage movement. Unitarian Universalists and Quakers still share many principles, notably that they are creedless religions with a long-standing commitment to social justice. It is therefore common to see Unitarian Universalists and Quakers working together.



A Unitarian Assembly located in Louisville, Kentucky.^[35]

UU's were and are still very involved in the fight to end racism in the United States. John Haynes Holmes, a Unitarian minister and social activist at The Community Church of New York—Unitarian Universalist was among the founders of both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), chairing the latter for a time. James J. Reeb, a minister at All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington, D.C. and a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was clubbed in Selma, Alabama on March 8, 1965, and died two days later of massive head trauma. Two weeks after his death, Viola Liuzzo, a Unitarian Universalist civil rights activist, was murdered by white supremacists after her participation in the protest march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. The Selma to Montgomery marches for voting rights are best known as Bloody Sunday, although technically that refers only to March 7, the most violent day of the three.

The past head of the Unitarian Universalist Association 2001–2009, Rev. William G. Sinkford, is African-American, making Unitarian Universalism one of the first traditionally white denominations to be headed by a member of a

racial minority.^[37]

While political liberals make up a clear majority of Unitarian Universalists, the UU movement aspires to diversity, and officially welcomes congregants regardless of their political views. Politically conservative Unitarian Universalists point out that neither religious liberalism nor the Principles and Purposes of the UUA require liberal politics. Like the beliefs of Unitarian Universalists, politics are decided by individuals, not by congregations or the denomination.

Several congregations have undertaken a series of organizational, procedural and practical steps to become acknowledged as a "Welcoming Congregation": a congregation which has taken specific steps to welcome and integrate gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender (GLBT) members. UU ministers perform same-sex unions and now same-sex marriages where legal (and sometimes when not, as a form of civil protest). On June 29, 1984, the Unitarian Universalists became the first major church "to approve religious blessings on homosexual unions."^[38] Unitarian Universalists have been in the forefront of the work to make same-sex marriages legal in their local states and provinces, as well as on the national level. Gay men and lesbians are also regularly ordained as ministers, and a number of gay and lesbian ministers have, themselves, now become legally married to their partners. In May 2004, Arlington Street Church was the site of the first state-sanctioned same-sex marriage in the United States. The official stance of the UUA is for the legalization of same-sex marriage—"Standing on the Side of Love." In 2004 UU Minister Rev. Debra Haffner of The Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing published An Open Letter on Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality to affirm same-sex marriage from a multi-faith perspective.

Many congregations are heavily involved in projects and efforts aimed at supporting environmental causes and sustainability. These are often termed "seventh principle" activities because of the seventh principle quoted above.

Controversies

External

Lack of formal creed

The lack of formal creed has been a cause for criticism among some who argue that Unitarian Universalism is thus without religious content. In May 2004, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn ruled that Unitarian Universalism was not a "religion" because it "does not have one system of belief," and stripped the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church in Denison, Texas of its tax-exempt status. However, within weeks, Strayhorn reversed her decision.^[39]

Confusion with other groups

There are separate movements and organizations of Christians who hold to classical Unitarian or Christian Universalist theology and do not belong to the Unitarian Universalist Association or consider themselves UUs. The American Unitarian Conference and the Christian Universalist Association are the two most significant organizations representing these theological beliefs today. Christians who hold these beliefs tend to consider themselves the true Unitarians or Universalists and heirs of the theological legacy of the original American Unitarian Association or Universalist Church of America, and they do not wish to be confused with UUs and UUism. The Unity Church is another denomination that is often confused with Unitarian Universalism.^[40]

Internal

Language of reverence

During the presidency of the Rev. William Sinkford, debate within the UU movement has roiled over his call to return to or create an authentic UU "language of reverence." Sinkford has suggested that UUs have abandoned traditional religious language, thereby abandoning words with potential power to others who will then dictate their meanings in the public sphere. He has suggested that Unitarian Universalists regain their proper seat at the interfaith table by making this language their own. Others have reacted to this call by believing it to be part of an effort to return UU congregations to more orthodox Christian worship patterns. Sinkford has denied this, citing the words of UU humanists as examples of what he means by the "language of reverence." The debate seems part and parcel of an attendant effort at increasing biblical literacy amongst Unitarian Universalists, including the publication of a book by the UUA's Beacon Press written by former UUA President John Buehrens.^[41] The book is titled *Understanding the Bible: An Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers, and Religious Liberals*,^[42] and is meant as a kind of handbook to be read alongside the Bible itself. It provides interpretative strategies, so that UUs (among others) might be able to engage in public debate about what the Bible says from a liberal religious perspective, rather than relinquishing to religious conservatives, and other more literal interpretations, all control over the book's contents and significance in matters of public and civic import. Also an important work by Rev. Buehrens, along with Forrest Church, is *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism*,^[43] in which the authors explore the many sources of the living tradition of their chosen faith.

Borrowing from other religions

The "borrowing" of religious rituals from other faith traditions by Unitarian Universalists was discussed at the UU General Assembly in 2001 during a seminar titled Cultural Appropriation: Reckless Borrowing or Appropriate Cultural Sharing by the Religious Education Dept, UUA.^[44] ^[45] Of particular discussion was the borrowing rituals and practices that are sacred to specific tribes or using spiritual practices without real context. However, that being said, there are among Unitarian Universalists sincere practitioners of what could be considered indigenous peoples' ceremonies and rituals, and when practiced reverently and with proper acknowledgement have become an integral part of the practitioners' personal search for spirit and meaning.

When UUs pick and choose from these things, it trivializes their spiritual practices. The specificity [of their use] is so complete, that visiting Native Americans do not participate in another tribe's rituals, and to do so would be perceived as foolish. I would not even practice the rituals of my own tribe, because I am not an elder or spiritual leader. If this is true of her own people, then the use of these things by others who share no cultural context is seen not only as particularly foolish and inappropriate.

Not all of this usage is inappropriate, though. Some taped music, written prayers, that kind of thing, might be alright, but it's not right to fool around with it. If it's not in context, if the user is not walking with us, if the user is not part of our struggle, then it is presumptuous.

— Reverend Danielle Di Bona, 2001 General Assembly^[44]

They sort of pick and choose from among wildly unrelated pieces of Buddhism: a little from Tibetan, a little from Chinese, a little from here, a little from there. This is offensive and presumptuous.

— Mr. Young Kim, 2001 General Assembly^[44]

Organizations

- The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of Congregations is the largest association of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist congregations in the world, and the most well-known. It operates mainly within the United States. A few Unitarian and UU congregations in other countries, such as San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), Puerto Rico,^[46] Auckland (New Zealand),^[47] and a few others are also members of the UUA. Currently, the UUA represents 1,078 member congregations^[11] that collectively include more than 217,000 members.
- The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) split off from the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2001 and serves Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist congregations in Canada.
- Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) is the youth organization within the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Canadian Unitarian Council. It was created in 1981 and 1982, at two conferences, Common Ground 1 & 2. Common Ground was called to form a UUA-controlled replacement for Liberal Religious Youth (LRY), the youth organization that preceded YRUU. LRY was dissolved by the Unitarian Universalist Association, and its assets absorbed by the UUA.
- Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network (C*UUYAN) is the Continental (US & Canada) Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network, an organization by and for Unitarian Universalist young adults (age 18–35, inclusive).
- Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist churches worldwide are represented in the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU). The UUA and CUC are both members of this organization.
- The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is a nonsectarian organization devoted to promoting human rights and social justice worldwide.
- Promise the Children is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Promise the Children's mission is to help Unitarian Universalists advocate for and with children and youth. Promise the Children is also an Independent Affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) is an association of Unitarian Universalists who define themselves as Pagans or Neopagans.
- The Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship (UUCF) is an association of Unitarian Universalists who define themselves as Christians.
- The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) exists to serve UUs remote from any physical congregation.
- The Church of the Younger Fellowship (CYF) is the web based Young Adult Ministry of CLF.
- Religious Youth Empowerment, Inc. (RYE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. RYE is a nonprofit created by bridged YRUUs whose goals are to empower and fund the youth and help network between youth of different districts as well as between youth and young adults. RYE is currently not yet affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Number of members

At the time of the merger between Universalists and Unitarians, membership was perhaps half a million. Membership rose after the merger but then fell in the 1970s.

In 1956, Sam Wells wrote that "Unitarians and Universalists are considering merger which would have total U.S. membership of 160,000 (500,000 in world)".^[48] In 1965 Conkin wrote that "In 1961, at the time of the merger, membership [in the United States] was 104,821 in 651 congregations, and the joint membership soared to its historically highest level in the mid-1960s (an estimated 250,000) before falling sharply back in the 1970s [...]"^[49] According to the 2008 *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches*, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations claimed 214,738 members in 2002.^[50]

The most recent estimates, from the 1990s, put world membership between 120,000 and 600,000.^[51]

In the United States, the American Religious Identification Survey reported 629,000 members describing themselves as Unitarian Universalist in 2001, an increase from 502,000 reported in a similar survey in 1990.^[52] The highest concentrations are in New England and around Seattle, Washington.^[53]

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted in 2007 by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and featuring a sample size of over 35,000, puts the proportion of American adults identifying as Unitarian Universalist at 0.3%.^[54]

While the 2001 Canadian census done by Statistics Canada put Canadian Unitarians at 17,480,^[55] the latest membership statistics from the Canadian Unitarian Council show as of September 1, 2007 they had 5,150 "official" members.^[56]

There is a small UU congregation active in the Islamic Republic of Iran denominated as the Circle of Lasting Fellowship, facing prosecution by the Iranian authorities including denial of employment and social rights for their leader.

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- *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (Revised edition) by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, 1998, Beacon Press, ISBN 0-8070-1617-9.
- *To Re-Enchant the World: A Philosophy of Unitarian Universalism* by Richard Grigg, 2004
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External links

- Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network (<http://uuyan.org>) (C*UUYAN)
 - UU World Magazine (<http://www.uuworld.org/>)
 - Unitarian Universalism TV (<http://www.unitarianuniversalism.tv/>) (UU TV)
 - Unitarian Universalist Wiki (http://www.uuism.net/uuwiki/index.php/Main_Page) (UUViki)
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 - Unitarianism and Universalism (http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Unitarianism_and_Universalism/) at the Open Directory Project
 - Unitarian-Universalist Encyclopedia (<http://unitarian-universalist.wetpaint.com/>)
 - DiscoverUU (<http://www.DiscoverUU.com>)
 - FUUSE (<http://www.fuuse.com>)
-

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists	
 <p>The official YRUU logo, based upon the flaming chalice motif and featuring the YRUU initialism.</p>	
Abbreviation	YRUU
Formation	1981 ^[1] & 1982 ^[2]
Type	religious organization
Purpose/focus	Youth program, Youth ministry
Location	United States & Canada
Affiliations	Unitarian Universalist Association, Canadian Unitarian Council
Website	http://www.cuc.ca/youth

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) is a youth organization within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in the United States and the Canadian Unitarian Council. YRUU is primarily run by youth, ranging in age from 14 to 20, with mentoring adult partners. It is organized at congregational, regional and continental levels.^{[3] [4]}

YRUU goals have included youth empowerment, social activism and building leadership qualities. YRUU members have often made their presence known in public demonstrations, for instance in the June 23, 2006 protest in St. Louis, Missouri against Victoria's Secret for allegedly printing its catalogues on paper from endangered North American forests.^{[5] [6]}

YRUU is characterized by its own attendant culture; for instance, YRUU events and gatherings often involve interactive peer-led worship activities, use games to foster community building, and encourage youth leadership, often with the goal of creating an environment of trust, safety, and openness. This enables a deeper connection to other people, which some YRUUers or advisors describe as a different way of expressing spirituality.

Beginning in 1982, YRUU published the newspaper *Synapse*, which appeared three times a year. In 2005, budget cuts forced the publication to be switched to two online issues that were compiled into a single print edition. In 2007, the UUA's Office of Youth Ministries halted publication, claiming a lack of submissions and staffing, and announced that *Synapse* would be replaced by a newsletter that will be published three times a year.^[7]

In February 2008, UUA President William G. Sinkford, in a letter to the YRUU Steering Committee, announced there would be no further funding for Continental level YRUU at the end of the fiscal year. "There is broad consensus that the current structure for continental youth ministry is not serving our faith well," wrote Stafford. "It is true that continental YRUU, as we have known it, will be replaced at some point by a new structure that will serve us better."^[8] Two months later, the UUA Board of Trustees announced it would cease its funding for the continental level YRUU activities in June 2008 and refocus its North American youth ministry endeavors.^[9] There is currently a working group on youth ministry that has been appointed to make suggestions as to the future structure of YRUU. YRUU is still operating at Congregational and Regional/District levels, with youth groups and conferences still definitely active.


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External links

- Canadian Unitarian Council Website (<http://www.cuc.ca/youth>) - youth section
 - Archive of the old YRUU website (<http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20070315045225/http://www.uua.org/YRUU/index.html>) - Internet Archive's
 - Unitarian Universalist Association Website (<http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/youth/>) - youth page
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Unitarian Universalist Association

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in North America	
<div></div> <p>The official logo of the UUA, based upon the flaming chalice motif.</p>	
Abbreviation	UUA
Formation	May 1961
Type	religious organization
Purpose/focus	To serve Unitarian Universalist congregations primarily in the United States
Headquarters	Boston, Massachusetts, United States
Location	United States
Membership	164,656 (adult members) ^[1]
President	Peter Morales
Affiliations	International Council of Unitarians and Universalists
Website	www.uua.org ^[2]

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), in full the **Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations in North America**, is a liberal religious association of Unitarian Universalist congregations formed by the consolidation in 1961 of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. Both of these predecessor organizations began as Christian Unitarian and Christian Universalist denominations; but modern Unitarian Universalists define themselves as non-creedal, and therefore they are not limited to Christian beliefs or affinities, but may also draw wisdom from other religions and philosophies as well, such as Humanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Earth-centered spirituality, among others, or different combinations of them. Therefore the UUA qualifies as a form of *post-Christian* liberal religion with syncretistic leanings.

Congregations



Sign on a UU church in the United States.

Most of the member congregations of the UUA are in the United States and Canada, but the UUA has also admitted congregations from Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Pakistan (although UUA policy appears at present to be against admitting any new congregations from outside North America, rather having them form their own national bodies and having these bodies join the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists). Until 2002, almost all member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) were also members of the UUA and most services to CUC member congregations were provided by the UUA. However, after an

agreement between the UUA and the CUC, since 2002 most services have been provided by the CUC to its own member congregations, with the UUA continuing to provide ministerial settlement services and as well as a minimal amount of youth (12–20) and young adult (18–35) programming and services. Since 2002, some Canadian congregations have continued to be members of both the UUA and CUC while others are members of only the CUC.

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) is a member church of the Unitarian Universalist Association providing denominational services to persons unable to attend a physical congregation because of distance or mobility, or who wish to belong to a congregation other than their local congregation. Many of these are Unitarian Universalists in other countries, members of the military, prisoners or non-mobile elderly.

Organization

The UUA is headquartered at 25 Beacon Street on historic Beacon Hill, Boston, Massachusetts, the historical center of Unitarian Christianity in America. As of 2009, the UUA comprised 19 Districts, 1,041 congregations with 164,656 certified members and 61,795 church school enrollees served by 1,623 ministers.[3]

Corporate status

The UUA was given corporate status in May 1961 under special acts of legislature of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of New York. See Chapter 148 of the acts of 1960 of the Massachusetts legislature and Chapter 827 of the Acts of 1960 of the New York legislature. Copies of said Acts are attached to the minutes of the organizing meeting of the Association held in Boston, Massachusetts in May 1961 and also are printed in the 1961-62 Directory of the Association.

Decentralized association

The UUA is not a denomination in the traditional sense; the UUA is an association of congregations with no one organization able to speak authoritatively for the whole. It is the congregations that have authority over the larger body, through the annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Since the general public understands *denomination* much more readily than *association of congregations*, the distinction is generally elided in conversation. Because of this relationship between the congregations and the association, Unitarian Universalist congregations have a congregational polity of governance. However, for the more day-to-day decisions, there is a Board of Trustees that is elected by Districts and at General Assembly.

In its role as a national organization representing the congregations, the UUA is a member of various organizations, both religious and secular.

Principles and purposes

The UUA does not have a central creed in which members are required to believe, but they have found it useful to articulate their common values in what has become known as the *Principles and Purposes*. The first version of the principles was adopted in 1960, and the modern form was adopted in 1984 (including the 7th principle). They were amended once again in 1995 to include the 6th source. Both of these were added to explicitly include members with Neopagan, Native American, and other natural theist spiritualities.^[4]

The principles as published in church literature and on the UUA website ^[5] :

The Principles and purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association

"We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to 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 in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

"The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:"

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an 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 of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's 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 against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

"Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support."

The Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.

The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member societies and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to race, color, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, age, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or bond of union used by any society unless such is used as a creedal test.

General Assembly

General Assembly (GA ^[6]) is held every year in June in a different city in the USA. Member congregations (and three associate member organizations) send delegates and conventioners to participate in the plenary sessions, workshops, district gatherings, and worship services.

Finances and membership fees

The UUA requests annual contributions from its member congregations. The requested contribution, known as Fair Share, is calculated for each congregation by multiplying an annually determined membership fee times the number of registered members of that congregation. The UUA also has alternative modes of raising funds. In order for congregations to participate in certain programming, they will pay a nominal fee. Some funds are earned through charitable gifts or estate planning. Additionally, the UUA pools together investment funds from congregations or other constituents and manages them for a small percentage.

Related organizations

Three non-congregational organizations belong to the UUA as Associate Member organizations. Associate Member organizations are esteemed as inherently integral to the work of the UUA and its member congregations, and are accorded two voting delegates each to the annual General Assembly. The Associate Member organizations are the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), which is active in social change actions; the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, which provides education and advocacy on women's issues; and the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, which is a center of information and action at the United Nations.

The UUA also recognizes many organizations as Independent Affiliate organizations. These organizations are created by Unitarian Universalists as needed to meet the special needs of the diversity within Unitarian Universalism. These groups provide specialized spiritual support, work for specific social justice issues, provide support for religious professionals, etc.

The UUA owns Beacon Press, a nationally known publisher of both fiction and non-fiction books. Skinner House Books publishes books primarily of interest to Unitarian Universalists.

The UUA also participates in interfaith organizations such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

Presidents

The president of the UUA is its CEO and the religious leader of Unitarian Universalism in the United States. The delegates at General Assembly (Unitarian Universalist Association) elect the president to a four-year term and a president may be re-elected once.^[7] The Rev. Peter Morales was elected at General Assembly in 2009.

Name	Elected
Rev. Dana McLean Greeley	1961
Rev. Robert West	1969
Rev. Paul Carnes	1977
Rev. O. Eugene Pickett	1979*
Rev. William Schulz	1985
Rev. John A. Buehrens	1993
Rev. William G. Sinkford	2001
Rev. Peter Morales	2009

*Rev. Pickett was elected president by the Board of Trustees upon the death of Rev. Paul Carnes. He was subsequently elected to a four-year term by the General Assembly.

Moderators

The moderator of the UUA is the chair of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association and is the presiding officer at the General Assembly (Unitarian Universalist Association). The moderator is the highest UUA position traditionally held by laity. General Assembly delegates elect the moderator to a four-year term and a moderator may be re-elected once. Moderator Gini Courter (2003*) ran unopposed and was elected to a second full four-year term at General Assembly in 2009.^[8]

Name	Elected
Marshall E. Dimock	1961
Joseph L. Fisher	1964*
Sandra M. Caron	1977
Natalie Gulbrandsen	1985
Denise Davidoff	1993
Diane Olson	2001
Gini Courter	2003*

*Fisher and Courter were each elected moderator by the Board of Trustees upon the resignations of their predecessors and subsequently elected by General Assembly to full four-year terms.

Boy Scouts of America controversy

Further information: Boy Scouts of America membership controversies and Religious emblems programs (Boy Scouts of America)

The Religion in Life religious emblems program of UUA is no longer recognized by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). The UUA published statements opposing the BSA's policies on homosexuals, atheists, and agnostics in 1992; and in 1993, the UUA updated Religion in Life to include criticism of these BSA policies.^[9] In 1998, the BSA withdrew recognition of Religion in Life, stating that such information was incompatible with BSA programs. The UUA removed the material from their curriculum and the BSA renewed their recognition of the program. When the BSA found that the UUA was issuing supplemental material with the Religion in Life workbooks that included statements critical of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or personal religious viewpoint, the BSA again withdrew recognition.^[10]

The Unitarian Universalist Scouters Organization (UUSO) created the Living Your Religion program in May 2005 as a parallel award for Unitarian Universalist youth.^[11] The program was promoted at the 2005 National Scout Jamboree and shown as having BSA approval in the UUSO membership brochure and the Living Your Religion Guidebook.^{[12] [13] [14] [15]} The UUA has stated that the UUSO is not recognized as an affiliate organization.^{[16] [17]} As of March 2006, the UUSO has a stated goal to create a set of awards that are recognized by the UUA and BSA.^[11]

In the wake of this controversy, a number of SpiralScouts International circles have formed within congregations of the UUA, despite having no official affiliation with the UUA.^[18]

Boy Scout Troop 103 was sponsored by All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City. The BSA policies that excluded the UUA caused the congregation to terminate its charter and sever ties with the BSA. The volunteers who formerly led the troop later founded Navigators USA,^[18] which its founders describe as "...committed to providing a quality scouting experience that is inclusive and available to all children and families regardless of gender, race,

religion, economic status, sexual orientation and social background."^[19] There are currently 2 chapters in the metropolitan New York City area, one in upper New York state, two in Massachusetts, and one in Durham, North Carolina.^[20]

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External links

- Unitarian Universalist Association official web site (<http://www.uua.org/>)
- List of member congregations (<http://www.uua.org/CONG>)
- Profile of the UUA at the Association of Religion Data Archives website (http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1403.asp)
- UU World Magazine (<http://www.uuworld.org/>)

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches	
 <p>The official logo of the GAUFCC, based upon the flaming chalice motif.</p>	
Abbreviation	GAUFCC; the Unitarians
Formation	1928
Type	religious organization
Purpose/focus	To serve Unitarian and Free Christian congregations in the United Kingdom.
Headquarters	London, United Kingdom
Location	United Kingdom
Affiliations	International Council of Unitarians and Universalists
Website	unitarian.org.uk ^[1]

The **General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GAUFCC)** is the umbrella organisation for Unitarian, Free Christian and other liberal religious congregations in the United Kingdom. It was formed in 1928, with denominational roots going back to the Great Ejection of 1662. Its headquarters building is Essex Hall in central London, on the site of the first avowedly Unitarian chapel in England, set up in 1774.

The GAUFCC brings together various strands and related traditions besides Unitarianism, including English Presbyterianism, General Baptist, Methodism, Christian Universalism, Religious Humanism and Unitarian Universalism. Unitarians are now an open faith community celebrating diverse beliefs. They differ from many other religions in that they believe in helping people find their own spiritual path rather than defining it for them ^[2].

History

Early Modern Britain

Christopher Hill, the world-renowned historian, explains that ideas such as anti-Trinitarianism, which scholars solemnly trace back to ancient times, were an integral part of “the lower-class heretical culture which burst into the open in the sixteenth century”. The cornerstones of this culture were Anti-clericalism and a strong emphasis on biblical study, but there were specific heretical doctrines that had “an uncanny persistence”. In addition to anti-Trinitarianism, there was a rejection of Predestination, and an embrace of Millenarianism, mortalism, and Hermeticism. Such ideas became “commonplace to seventeenth century Baptists, Levellers, Diggers, Seekers, ... early Quakers and other radical groupings which took part in the free-for-all discussions of the English Revolution”. ^[3]

After the restoration of the Stuart monarchy and the resulting Act of Uniformity 1662, around 2000 ministers left the established Church of England (the Great Ejection). Following the Act of Toleration 1689, many of these ministers preached in 'non-conforming' congregations. The modern Unitarian denomination's origins lay within this group of respectable Protestants who were reluctant to ever become Dissenters, that is the English Presbyterians. However, by

the late 18th century, the influx of General Baptist congregations to the denomination established a direct lineage to this radical milieu although, by now, much of the 'heretical culture' baggage had been jettisoned.

Nineteenth century

Until the passing of the Unitarian Relief Act in 1813 it was a criminal offence to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. By 1825 a new body, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, itself an amalgamation of three previous societies, was set up to co-ordinate denominational activities. However, there was a setback in 1837 when "the Presbyterian / Unitarian members were forced to withdraw from the General Body of Protestant Ministers which, for over a century, had represented the joint interests of the old established nonconformist groups in and around London".^[4]

Around this time Presbyterian / Unitarian opinion was once again divided about how far the denomination should be associated with the label 'Unitarian'. James Martineau, a Presbyterian minister formerly based in Liverpool, pleaded for a 'warmer' religion than the 'critical, cold and untrusting' Unitarianism of his day. In 1881 he helped to found the National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian and other Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations – "a triumph, one might say, of Victorian verbosity. But the length of the name reflected the breadth of Martineau's vision".^[5]

Thus, from 1881 to the establishment of the GAUFCC, the denomination consisted of "two overlapping circles, one labelled 'Unitarian' and eager for organisation and propaganda, the other rejecting labels and treasuring comprehensiveness. Each side had its own college, its own newspaper and its own hymn book"^[6]

Now

By 1928 these two "overlapping circles" had been reconciled in the same organisation: the GAUFCC. Over time the organisation has come to embrace a wider theological and philosophical diversity. "At one extreme are the 'Free Christians' who wish to remain part of the Church Universal; at the other are those who wish to move beyond Christianity"^[7] The congregations of GAUFCC contain members who hold diverse opinions. Indeed, Unitarians are able to embrace and gain insights from the great world religions, philosophies, arts and modern sciences.^[8]

Member churches

The General Assembly counts about 180 churches as members, including:

- Billingshurst Unitarian Chapel, 1754, West Sussex
- Brighton Unitarian Church, 1820, built by Amon Henry Wilds
- Chowbent Chapel, in Atherton, Greater Manchester
- Cross Street Chapel, Manchester
- Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow, Cheshire
- Essex Church, the first Unitarian church in England, moved in 1880s from central London to Kensington
- Fulwood Old Chapel, in Sheffield
- Newington Green Unitarian Church, North London
- Octagon Chapel, Norwich
- Rivington Unitarian Chapel, in Lancashire
- Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead, North London; one of the biggest congregations nationally
- Todmorden Unitarian Church, in West Yorkshire
- Toxteth Unitarian Chapel, in Liverpool
- Unitarian Chapel, Liverpool
- Upper Chapel, Sheffield
- York Unitarian Chapel

Some Unitarian churches have become defunct, and the buildings are used for other purposes:

- Wallasey Memorial Unitarian Church, on the Wirral Peninsula, now under the care of the Historic Chapels Trust

The following place articles mention the presence of their Unitarian churches:

- Monton Unitarian Church in Eccles, Greater Manchester
- the Brookfield Unitarian Church in Gorton, near Manchester, built by Richard Peacock
 - Grade II* listed buildings in Greater Manchester lists Brookfield, Monton, and Chowbent
- Stalybridge, near Manchester
- Crewkerne, in Somerset
- Little Horton in Bradford
- Belper, Derbyshire (1788)
- List of places of worship in Hastings
- Westgate Chapel in Lewes, East Sussex
- the chapel on Trim Street, Bath, 1795

The following article mentions a church link:

- MP Cyril Smith, Rochdale Unitarian Church

Affiliations

The British Unitarians are a member of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists and of the European Liberal Protestant Network. The Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland maintains very close links with the GAUFCC.

In addition to the approximately 180 congregations that are affiliated with the General Assembly, there are also groups within it. Some of these represent interests (history, music, international development, etc.), while others are of religious beliefs, most notably the Unitarian Christian Association and the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network.

Officers

Information is taken from the 2009 Annual Report, which also contains a full list of presidents, a role that normally rotates each year.^[9]

Secretaries / Chief Executives / Chief Officers

- 1928 Rev S H Mellone, MA, DSc
- 1928 Rev R Travers Herford, BA, DD
- 1929-49 Rev Mortimer Rowe, BA, DD
- 1949-69 Rev John Kielty, LD, DD
- 1969-79 Rev Brian L Golland, MA
- 1979-94 Dr Roy W Smith, DHL
- 1994-07 Mr Jeffrey J Teagle, MSc
- 2007-09 Rev S Dick, MSc
- 2009- Mr Derek McAuley, MA, BSSc

Treasurers

- 1928-39 Lieut-Col S Chatfield-Clarke, DL
- 1939-59 Mr Ronald P Jones, MA, FRIBA
- 1959-70 Sir C Herbert Pollard, CBE, FCA
- 1970-71 Mr Albert Forrester, FCA
- 1971-79 Mr Arnold Graves, FCA, FCIS
- 1979-98 Mr Geoffrey Head, BA
- 1998-05 Mr Michael Tomlin
- 2005-09 Mr Martin West
- 2009-10 Mr Derek McAuley, MA, BSSc
- 2010-11 Mr Huw Thomas

Notable British Unitarians

- Sir Tim Berners Lee, inventor of the worldwide web
- Sir John Brunner, businessman (ICI), politician and great grandfather of HRH Duchess of Kent
- Austen Chamberlain, Nobel peace prize winner
- Rt Hon Joe Chamberlain, businessman (GKN), politician and statesman
- Neville Chamberlain, prime minister
- Sir Philip Colfox, politician
- John Sutton Nettlefold, industrialist
- Sir Isaac Newton, physicist
- Alan Bullock

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- [1] <http://www.unitarian.org.uk/>
- [2] <http://www.unitarian.org.uk/index.shtml>
- [3] Hill, Christopher (1977) "Milton and the English Revolution" Faber & Faber, London, pp.71 - 76;
- [4] Goring, J & R (1984) "The Unitarians", p.23;
- [5] Goring, J & R (1984) "The Unitarians", p.24;
- [6] Goring, J & R (1984) "The Unitarians", p.24;
- [7] Goring, J & R (1984) "The Unitarians", p.59;
- [8] "Unitarian theology and spirituality" page on the GAUFCC website. Accessed 25 January 2011 (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/intro/spirit.shtml>) "Unitarianism has its roots in the Jewish and Christian traditions but is open to insights from world faiths, science, the arts, the natural world, and everyday living."
- [9] 2009 Annual Report (http://www.unitarian.org.uk/pdfs/Annual_Report_2009.pdf)

External links

- General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/>) official site

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship	
Abbreviation	UUCF
Formation	1945
Type	religious organization
Purpose/focus	To serve Unitarian Universalist Christians.
Headquarters	Turley, Oklahoma, United States
Location	United States
President	Dean Drake
Website	http://www.uuchristian.org/

The **Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship (UUCF)** is the main group serving Christian Unitarian Universalists within the Unitarian Universalist Association. The UUCF was founded in 1945 and can trace its roots back through the history of North American Universalism and Unitarianism. As its bylaws put it:

"We serve Christian Unitarians and Universalists according to their expressed religious needs; uphold and promote the Christian witness within the Unitarian Universalist Association; and uphold and promote the historic Unitarian and Universalist witness and conscience within the church universal."

They do this work by providing the *Good News* periodical six times a year full of essays and meditations and reviews and liturgies and interpretations of biblical passages, and they also publish the annual theological publication, *UU Christian Journal*. In addition to these publications they have a "Revival" every other year which is an opportunity for its members to gather together in community. Many of UUCF members meet regularly in local UUCF-affiliated Christian spirituality covenant groups at their local Unitarian Universalist congregations and have discussions via e-mail.

The main office of UUCF is located in Turley, Oklahoma, United States. The head of the organization is President Dean Drake.[1]

External links

- Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship official web site ^[2]

References

[1] http://uuchristian.org/M_Leadership.html

[2] <http://www.uuchristian.org/>

Free Christian

The term Free Christian refers specifically to individual members and whole congregations within the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Free Christians do not subscribe to any officially written doctrinal or creedal statement, as found in other churches. Because of their connections with British Unitarianism, they are known particularly for allowing dissent from Trinitarian doctrine. However, Free Christian groups also welcome those believers who personally adhere to more orthodox beliefs (such as the Trinity) as the emphasis is on *inclusivity* rather than non-conformity per se.

Brief History & Current Presence

The term Free Christian can be traced back to ministry of James Martineau in the late 19th Century. James Martineau was an advocate of theological inclusivity arguing that explicitly Unitarian churches would lead to "a different doxy" from orthodoxy. He urged churches not to use the name "Unitarian," and suggested "Free Christian Church" as a more inclusive alternative—going further in 1868 to form the Free Christian Union which he hoped would unite Christians of various beliefs who were opposed to officially imposed doctrine or creeds.^[1]

In mainland Britain today, Free Christians who profess a denominational allegiance can be found primarily within the ranks of the Unitarians, and more specifically, the Unitarian Christian Association. Notable Free Christian congregations include Flowery Field Church ^[2] (Hyde, Greater Manchester), Hyde Chapel ^[3] (Gee Cross, Greater Manchester) and Brook Street Chapel ^[4] (Knutsford, Cheshire)

Within neighbouring Ireland, similar congregations can be found under the related 'Non-Subscribing Presbyterian' moniker. The Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland has formal links with both the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and the Unitarian Christian Association—including the shared use of theological and ministry training colleges.^[5] They also consider themselves to have a shared heritage. As such, they could be viewed as connected to the same 'Free Christian' current.

Today, Free Christians remain primarily within the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches co-existing with Unitarians. On occasion this had led to dispute^[6] with those Unitarians who consider themselves Agnostic, Atheist, Pagan, Buddhist, or Nontheist, or do not accept a religious label of any description.

Theology / Principles

Because of their focus on a form of Christianity without official written statements of doctrine and creed, Free Christians do not have a set list of unifying beliefs beyond a reverence for God and a commitment to studying and following the teachings and example of Jesus of Nazareth.

The nearest one can find to a list of beliefs is usually a through a statement of uniting principles as seen outlined by the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland:

"We declare allegiance to the principle that:

- the teaching of Christ must take precedence over the doctrines of a later time, and
- Christian unity is to be sought, not in the uniformity of creed but in a common standard of duty and adherence to the commandments set out in the Holy Bible.

Our faith:

- is governed by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible
 - asserts and upholds the right of each and every individual to search these scriptural records for themselves and to use reason and personal conscience to discover God's Divine Truth
 - removes Human Tests and Confessions of Faith that restrict private judgement and prevent free enquiry
-

- upholds the beautiful simplicity of the great commandments as defined by Jesus Christ: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind” and “You must love your neighbour as yourself.”^[7]

References

Notes

- [1] See "James Martineau Biography (paragraph 18)" *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, <http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/jamesmartineau.html>
- [2] <http://www.flowerfieldchurchhyde.co.uk/>
- [3] <http://www.unitarian.org.uk/ecu/HydeChapel/>
- [4] <http://www.brookstreetchapel.org/>
- [5] See "About the College" *Unitarian College Manchester*, <http://www.unitarian-college.org.uk/college.htm>
- [6] See "Post-Christian?" *Boy in the Bands*, <http://boyinthebands.com/archives/post-christian/>
- [7] See "Our Faith" *NSPCI*, <http://www.nspresbyterian.org/pages/faith.htm>

External links

- The New Affinities of Faith: A Plea for Free Christian Union, James Martineau (online book) ([http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1IYuAAAAYAAJ&dq=new affinities of faith a call for free christian union&pg=PA11#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1IYuAAAAYAAJ&dq=new+affinities+of+faith+a+call+for+free+christian+union&pg=PA11#v=onepage&q&f=false))
- Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (<http://www.nspresbyterian.org/>)
- General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (UK) (<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/>)
- James Martineau Biography (<http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/jamesmartineau.html>)
- Unitarian Christian Association (UK) (<http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/christian/index.htm>)
- Way-Farers - Free Christian resource (<http://www.way-farers.org.uk>)

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