

Prairie Star District
Unitarian Universalist Association

Media Project of the Heritage and Archives Committee

Bringing Our History to Life: Unitarian Universalist Stories from the Midwest

Volume One – Curriculum for Unitarian Universalist Senior High Youth

To accompany the films

Heritage of Heresy: Bisbee and Tuttle on the Universalist Frontier

and

Full Circle of Life: The Mabel Tainter Memorial Theater

A two-session religious education curriculum developed for the Prairie Star
District UU Prairie Heritage Project

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Overview

Purpose

Unitarian Universalism has no overarching creed, no specific text, and no convenient dogma to look to as a starting point for understanding our denomination. Youth groups in UU churches today are a blooming and rare bunch: youth raised in the Unitarian Universalist faith. There is a unique opportunity in the Religious Education experience to help relate what this faith does hold in common, what pulls it together. No scripture or source of authority, perhaps, but a shared fount of history, and shared values. The purpose of screening these films with UU youth in the Prairie Star District is to share with them the stories of their own faith, their Prairie heritage. More than that, it is to give them space to ask questions about where the faith has come from, as well as what values they and we should carry into the future.

Structure

For each film, this teaching guide provides several follow-up activities which can be combined and edited to suit your group. Each of the two sessions should open up with a brief explanation of the film, followed by the actual watching of the film. Once the group is finished viewing, a half hour extension session completes the hour.

Materials

The only materials needed are the Heritage Media Project's DVD: *Bringing Our History to Life Volume 1*, and projection equipment. During the discussion section, it may be helpful to have a large flipboard and markers available. The supplemental activities may call for more materials, none of which need be more than writing utensils and surfaces. See each section for additional material suggestions.

Participation

Depending on the size of the group, most activities can be conducted in one large circle and viewing area. However, if the group is too big to allow all members space to speak and think aloud, then small groups may work better. In some activities, pairing or small groups is suggested, but activities can be adjusted to fit the group dynamics and size.

Session One – Heritage of Heresy: Bisbee and Tuttle on the Universalist Frontier

Purpose

To share the story of the Universalist epicenter of the Midwest, the conflict between neighboring ministers, and the way that questioning individuals help shape and grow the religions they uphold; to introduce youth to the importance of conversation and conflict.

Preparation and Materials

In this teaching guide you will find several possible activities for each viewing session. Depending on which activity or combination of activities suit your group, preparation and materials will vary. *Set up DVD and viewing station. Give each student something to write on, and to write with.*

Introduction

Open with a discussion of the enduring conflict between orthodoxy and heresy. Start with defining the words orthodoxy and heresy. Students can come up with these definitions, but here are the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions:

Orthodoxy: 1. The quality or character of being orthodox; belief in or agreement with doctrines, opinions, or practices currently held to be right or correct, esp. in religious matters. 2. The body of opinions, doctrines, or beliefs held to be orthodox by a particular religion, society, or group.

Heresy: 1. Theological or religious opinion or doctrine maintained in opposition, or held to be contrary, to the 'catholic' or orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, or, by extension, to that of any church, creed, or religious system, considered as orthodox. 2. By extension, opinion or doctrine in philosophy, politics, science, art, etc., at variance with those generally accepted as authoritative.¹

It is interesting to note that the Greek root of the word *heresy* simply means to choose, and that orthodoxy means right belief (literally, true teaching). Allow students to discuss what they know about heresy from any era. Discuss in popcorn style, but don't drag it out. The point of this introduction is to frame the film in terms of our own faith's history with orthodoxy and heresy, between right belief and choice.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary Online.

Before beginning the film, explain a little about the story of Bisbee and Tuttle, two ministers of the same Universalist faith, in the mid-1850's who lived nearby in St. Anthony (later incorporated into Minneapolis). Their conflicts with each other's religious beliefs were brought to national attention. Bisbee's insistence on evolution, natural religion, and questions was considered heretical in his time, but these ideas have now become part of our faith and tradition.

Pass out writing materials for each student. Ask each student to make note of what especially strikes them while they watch the film about their own early faith, and to think about the following questions:

- How did Universalism function in the 1850s? (Who was it for? What was its essence? What was it closely linked to and why?)
- Around what issues did Bisbee's questions and conflict with Universalism center?
- How does this relate to Unitarian Universalism today?

Activity One: Analyze the Winchester Profession

The film mentions the Winchester Profession of Faith, a document of the Universalist faith outlining the beliefs of the denomination. It was born out of a Universalist convention in 1803, making it over 200 years old. This activity allows students a chance to evaluate the old professed beliefs of their faith, and to reflect on what a current-day version of this document would look like.

Pass out copies of the Winchester Profession (pages 16 and 17 below), and read it aloud together. Have students underline that which sounds familiar, which still holds true today, or which resonates with them personally. Share which phrases and ideas are underlined, and which phrases and ideas seem foreign or surprising.

Discuss together the reason for a profession of belief. Why do religious groups need creeds, professions of belief, or similar documents at all? Continue on to discuss the importance of the liberty clause. Why did Universalists find this to be an important conclusion to the document? How does this relate to the ideas of orthodoxy and heresy? How has this evolved into the Unitarian Universalist faith we know and practice today?

Activity Two: Update the Winchester Profession

Divide into small groups of 2-4, and ask students to update the Winchester Profession to include what is true about Unitarian Universalists today. Give them red pens (if available), and tell them to edit away. Suggest that each group brainstorm what would go into the articles of belief section now, and what kind of opening and closing would be important in our era. Tell them they can change as much or as little as they want, that it can be flowery, formal, or funny. Stick to the same format as the original.

When all groups have come up with new Professions of Faith, have each group read its version aloud for the whole class. The activity can continue on to combine to consensus into a document that can be shared with the church (write it large and proud on the flipboard), or it can be left at the shared stage.

Pass out copies of the UUA's Seven Principles and compare the language and ideas of the official Unitarian Universalist principles with the updated professions of belief. Do these documents serve similar purposes? What is the difference between our principles and the Winchester Profession?

Conclude with a circle discussion, asking each student to share one thing they learned or realized or discovered during the session.

Activity Three: Modern Day Heresy (Up to 30 minutes)

Bisbee and Tuttle were of the same faith, but differed enormously on a few issues. Surprisingly, the ideas from heretical Bisbee are more in line with the current Unitarian Universalist faith. This exercise will allow students to evaluate the beliefs and stances of their own modern day faith on a variety of topics. By discussing the practical orthodoxies of the present, students will have a chance to understand where Universalism was coming from, and to envision where it could go.

Break students into pairs. Tell your pairs that they are no longer Unitarian Universalists – they are Universalists from the 1870s. Mark Twain just published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; the West is still “wild” and Custer is busy. But more practically, each pair has turned into Bisbee and Tuttle themselves. Designate a Bisbee and a Tuttle in each group and ask them as a large group to brainstorm the issues over which they had conflict.

Write on the flipboard the major disagreements that came between the heretic Bisbee and orthodox Tuttle. Ask Bisbees and Tuttles to come up with their stances on each subject. Students may bring up such issues as: evolution, use of nonbiblical religious texts, the fallibility/inerrancy of the Bible, the place of nature, the place/power/purpose of religion, God, partial belief in the Christian religion, individual interpretation.

Once the full group of Bisbees and Tuttles have gotten into character, understanding their roles, pass out the UU Principles. Ask them to take a look at our current Seven Principles from the perspective of their characters in their own groups. What would Bisbee think of our modern belief system? What would Tuttle think? Ask for some arguments and some reactions. How would the old orthodox Tuttle react to our faith today?

This can be a fun role-playing activity, especially for outgoing folks. Bring possible costumes or music of the time, set the stage and help students get into character. You could improvise clerical collars from black and white construction paper. Having each pair do the exercise simultaneously should give shy or quiet members of the group an opportunity to be involved at the degree to which they are comfortable.

Once each group has gone through the Seven Principles, pull the pairs together into the big group again. Ask for reactions to the exercise: What are the implications of religious belief if it can change this much? Was it hard to be Bisbee or Tuttle today? Would it have been hard to be Bisbee or Tuttle in the past?

Activity Four: Examining Our Own Orthodoxies

If you sense interest in continuing the discussion, ask students to think about our own orthodoxy. Are there beliefs the students wish were incorporated or emphasized in our religion more than they are? Are there any progressive ideas they believe to be true, but that would feel like heresy in our church? What inconsistencies and controversies do they see in the UU denomination now?

Close the day by reminding students that it was outspoken heretics like Bisbee who helped our denomination embrace the ideas of evolution, freedom of individual belief, and liberal religion.

Activity Five: Discussion (Up to 30 minutes)

Overview (10 minutes): Once the film is finished, all students should have at least a few notes about what struck them most. The discussion that follows will make use of these notes. Have each student share what they have written, and write it all together on the flipboard so each member of the discussion can see.

Discussion (20 minutes): From these remarks, you will be able to tell where a good discussion could center and start. The following questions will perhaps be helpful in initial creation of the discussion, but should be changed and reformatted depending on the group's interest.

Who were the Universalists at the time?

- The film mentioned that the Universalist denomination was prominent in Minneapolis. How were Universalists able to establish themselves here?
- Who were the Universalists?
- Do you think the demographic of Universalists has changed since the 1800s? Why?
- Why was Universalism so popular in the 1800s here in the Twin Cities?
- Why were the Minneapolis Radical Lectures such great entertainment then? Would they be now?
- Does a religion need to be conservative, close to the Christian mainstream, to be successful?
- How has Universalism changed in the past centuries?
- What was Bisbee advocating and why was his voice important?
- Bisbee compares himself to Luther. What great truths did Bisbee uncover along the lines of the Reformation? (Possible answer: the Reformation sprang from what could be called discoveries, that is, the wide availability of scriptural texts thanks to Renaissance scholarship and to the new

technology of printing. Luther and others asserted that certain church practices were inconsistent with New Testament Christianity. Bisbee found that Biblical literalism clashed with the discoveries of geology and paleontology.)

- What is the danger in a creed, and in removing the liberty clause from the Winchester Profession of Faith?
- Should churches be able to discuss and decide on their interpretations of a shared faith? What does this do to the idea of truth?
- What is threatening to a religious establishment about an infallible Bible?
- What is threatening to a religious establishment about evolution?
- What is threatening to a religious establishment about truths in other religions?
- Can you question something without throwing it away?
- How is this related to our faith today?
- What would our Winchester Profession of Faith look like today?
- What would be our current equivalent of the issues by which Bisbee was excited?
- Are UUs in danger of a dogma? Or are they in more danger of a lack of substance?
- How do we share a faith if we do not share exact beliefs?

Background and Suggestions for Further Reading

The film by itself does a great job of explaining the historical and political context of the time. If students are interested, or a discussion requires a little further grounding, refer to Darwin's essential work: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. Published in 1859, this was the culmination of Darwin's thoughts and observations during his voyage on the Beagle to the Galápagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador. Here, Darwin noted that the variations among finches on separate islands seemed to be adaptations to the available food supply and that they may have originally been a single species. Upon return, his theories of natural selection and of speciation turned out to revolutionize biology and challenge religion. The concluding paragraph of *Origin of Species* makes clear his belief that one species could evolve into two or more others, and that complex forms of life had developed from simpler ones:

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us... Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

In *The Descent of Man* (1871) he elaborated on what he had implied in *Origin of Species*: that the laws of evolution had also guided the development of human beings. The introduction to the later work states that "a crowd of . . . facts . . . all point in the plainest manner to the conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor."

The groundbreaking idea of evolution² was not introduced solely by Charles Darwin, but perhaps it is referred to as his idea since the idea took hold in scientific circles with much more vigor than before.

The discussion of Darwin is more than relevant to the discussions between Bisbee and Tuttle. Here are two quotes from Bisbee and Tuttle about the

²

In classical times, the Roman poet Lucretius introduced a notion of evolution. His ideas were abandoned as Christianity became dominant; but Augustine had a similar theory, which he put into a Christian context. The Biblical literalism growing out of the Protestant Reformation put even Augustine's ideas beyond the pale.

implications of evolution for religion:

Tuttle: There is something in man besides chemical properties. Life the chemist cannot give. How do these materials come together so as to produce life? A watch we know is made of metals, but it required the watchmaker to construct it and give it proper conditions. So it required a God to form the human body, and when formed, a God must give it life. The watchmaker can regulate the motions of his watch, but the Almighty in the view of these scientists, cannot regulate any of the incidents connected with the Universe which He has made. How can we trust a Deity such as that? What guarantee would we have that the world would not end in failure?

Bisbee: Let me ask you which watchmaker you would feel most confidence in? The one who constructed a watch that did not need interfering with, or the one who constructed a watch that required setting every twenty-four hours, and repairing every month? On what is our confidence based that the world will not end in failure? Certainly not in the idea that God will come down and mend matters, as often as they get out of repair, *but that he so made it in the first place that it never gets out of repair.*

Further reading for curious folk:

The Voyage of the Beagle: Charles Darwin's Journal of Researches – Charles Darwin; *The Beak of the Finch* – Jonathan Weiner; PBS website
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/students/index.html>

For concise information in graphic form on human origins, see the online Educator's Guide for the Hall of Human Origins in the American Museum of Natural History:

<http://www.amnh.org/education/resources/rfl/web/hhoguide/concepts.html>

Natural Religion and American Transcendentalism (1800s)

Bisbee was influenced also by Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists. His travels to the East Coast brought him to the center of these circles of thought, and he came back, as he says charged:

“In the last two years I’ve passed through a religious experience that has tried me as ore is tried in the fire. Such a breaking up as Luther and his converts experienced in passing out from the shadow of the Roman church. Such a breaking up as every seeking soul must encounter in its journey towards the land of promise. If I cannot work and worship as a man, with a man except as he believes all that I believe and rejects all that I reject, then I am not a Christian. Jesus, so affectionate, so forbearing who gave us those blessed precepts, ‘Love thy enemies and love thy neighbor as thou love thyself’ could have not designed this alienation.” –Bisbee

The Transcendentalist movement emphasized personal empowerment in understanding spiritual matters, casting off creeds and mediation by religious institutions. In fact, our connections within and throughout this world make us sacred and able to search for the divine, to have it within us. An excerpt from Emerson’s essay IX in 1841:

“The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character, and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand, and become wisdom, and virtue, and power, and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. Only by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith. Every man's words, who speaks from that life, must sound vain to those who do not

dwell in the same thought on their own part. I dare not speak for it. My words do not carry its august sense; they fall short and cold. Only itself can inspire whom it will, and behold! their speech shall be lyrical, and sweet, and universal as the rising of the wind. Yet I desire, even by profane words, if I may not use sacred, to indicate the heaven of this deity, and to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law.”

This is clearly problematic for the church because of the emphasis it gives to the individual search, and its undermining of overall church authority.

The Winchester Profession – Universalist Faith

The film mentions the Winchester Profession of Faith, a document with only three Articles, and a freedom clause, drafted for use in the Universalist faith. The Winchester Profession adheres to mainline Christian beliefs, but opens up the floor for debate within individual churches. When the freedom clause was deleted, the document verged on dogma. It is a brief document, reproduced in full below.

Profession of Belief, and Plan of the General Association of the Universal Churches and Societies of the New England States. (1803)

The Churches and Societies of Universalists of the New England States, assembled in General Convention, holden at Winchester, in New Hampshire, on the 21st and 22nd of September, A. D. 1803.

To the individuals of the several Churches and Societies, and to all persons whom it may concern, Greeting.

Brethren and Friends, Whereas the diversities of capacity and of opportunity for obtaining information, together with many attendant circumstances, have occasioned among the sincere professions of the Abrahamic faith some diversities of opinion concerning points of doctrine and modes of practice, we, therefore, think it expedient, in order to prevent confusion and misunderstanding, and to promote the edifying and building up of the Church together in love, to record and publish that *Profession of Belief* which we agree in as essential, and that plan of ecclesiastical fellowship and general subordination which we as a Christian Association conceive we ought to maintain.

And we continue to claim the external privileges, which, according to the free Constitution of our country, every denomination is entitled to enjoy.

Yet while we, as an Association, adopt a general *Profession of Belief* and *Plan of Church Government*, we leave it to the several Churches and Societies, or to smaller associations of churches, if such should be formed, within the limits of our General Association, to continue or adopt within themselves, such more particular articles of faith, or modes of discipline, as may appear to them best under their particular circumstances, provided they do not disagree with our general *Profession and Plan*.

And while we consider that every Church possesses within itself all the powers of self-government, we earnestly and affectionately recommend to every Church, Society, or particular Association, to exercise the spirit of Christian meekness and charity towards those who have different modes of faith or

practice, that where the brethren cannot see alike, they may agree to differ; and let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Article I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

Article II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

Article III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.

As we believe these to be truths which deeply concern the honor of the Divine character and the interests of man, we do hereby declare that we continue to consider ourselves, and our societies in fellowship, a Denomination of Christians, distinct and separate from those who do not approve the whole of this *Profession of Belief*, as expressed in the three above Articles.

And as a distinct denomination, we continue to claim the authority of exercising among ourselves that order for the glory of God in the good of the church, which Christianity requires.

Session Two – Full Circle of Life: The Mabel Tainter Memorial Theater

Purpose

To understand the work of liberal religion as the work of community and creativity, directly connected to spirituality. To understand how our own congregations were started and how and why they grew.

Preparation and Materials

In this teaching guide you will find three possible activities for each viewing session. Depending on which activity or combination of activities suit your group, preparation and materials will vary. Set up DVD and viewing station. Give each student something to write on, and to write with.

Introduction

Start with a warm up exercise to get people talking and interested – a fast and furious brainstorm regarding favorite things about your building. Do the students enjoy their youth room and their ratty couches? Do they feel fond for the pews? Do they like the old stained glass left over from Protestant days?

Once students have come up with plenty to love about their congregational spaces, *introduce the film for the day*. It will tell the story of the Mabel Tainter Memorial built of Menominee, Wisconsin in 1889. The church is worship space for the Unitarian congregation there, but it is also a community space.

Ask students to take note of their favorite thing about the Memorial building as they watch the film.

Activity One: Discovering Art in Congregations (Up to 30 minutes)

One of the most important take home messages from this film is to realize the role congregations can have in communities. This activity will help students think through the ways their congregation does the same, and perhaps some ways it could expand to foster more community and activity spaces.

Start with a brainstorm of events that happen year round in your building or sponsored by your congregation. Who is involved in the events? Have the students ever attended? What value did they find in them?

Once you've got a good list, take a tour of the building. Keep your eyes open for art installations, places and spaces where music, poetry, stories, sculpture, art, etc. might be. Take some time to appreciate the art you find. Where did it come from? How does it relate to our faith? Does it need to? Why or why not?

A great addition to this activity would be to meet with the artists or writers in the congregation that have work on display or have had work on display. Ask them to speak about congregational life, as well as community, and the place of arts in a whole way of life.

As these discussions happen and students are moving through the church, keep in mind and foster thoughts about ways the congregation could outreach more, the importance of doing so, as well as how the church could encourage and expand outlets for creativity. Does the youth group have activities that give space to youth art projects? If not, take the conclusion of this time to come up with a way to grow youth art:

Special youth art wall? Spoken word and poetry readings? A literary magazine? Art Wednesday nights? Concert or coffeehouse?

Ask the youth to think about ways they could share their creativity together. Implement if possible!

Activity Two: Building and Congregational History (Up to 30 minutes)

This activity requires a few special guests. Ask some of the longtime members of the church to come speak with the group after the film showing.

Have each student write a question immediately after the film about their own congregational history. Once your longtime members arrive, ask the students to share what they already know about their church and building. Then ask the guests to share what they know, what history they have lived through.

Here are some possible prompts for the guests:

- How long have you attended this church? What was your religious life before that? Why did you choose this church as a place of worship?
- Has this congregation always been housed in this building? What changes to the building(s) have been made and for what reasons?
- How was the church founded in the first place? How has growth and expansion changed the community?
- What are some of your favorite memories or traditions of this place? How did these traditions begin?
- What have been the biggest changes since you have been a member? What has stayed the same?

This activity will be most effective if students are engaged in a discussion with the guests. Facilitate questions from the students and keep the speaker on topic. Ask them to conclude by talking about why knowing the history of your church is important. How can student explorations of church history continue?

Close the session with a discussion about the future of the congregation. What would students and guests like to see happen and grow together?

Activity Three: Discussion (Up to 30 Minutes)

Overview (10 minutes): Once the film is finished, all students should have at least a few notes about what struck them most. The discussion that follows will make use of these notes. Have each student share what they have written, and write it all together on the flipboard so each member of the discussion can see.

Discussion (20 minutes): From these remarks, you will be able to tell where a good discussion could center and start. The following questions will perhaps be helpful in initial creation of the discussion, but should be changed and reformatted depending on the group's interest.

What do you know about the history of this congregation?

- How long has the congregation been around? How did it start?
- Where did the building come from?
- What kind of growth has happened?
- What was different about the first congregation as opposed to the current congregation?
- How can students learn more about the congregation's history?

How is the faith of a congregation connected to an individual's well being?

- What is the purpose and importance of attending a church?
- What can a congregation give to an individual?
- What can an individual give to a congregation?
- What would a whole, fulfilling life look like for you? How can a congregation serve those needs?
- Does a congregation ever hinder an individual? How can this be avoided?

What is the role of a congregation in its community?

- Does a congregation have any obligation or responsibility to its surrounding non-attending community? Why or why not?
- The Mabel Tainter Memorial was an enormous investment made by upper class Unitarians. Is there a responsibility that comes with manifestations of wealth?
- In what ways does your congregation foster community? Should it do more? How?

Background Information

Western Unitarianism

The Tainter Center was designed not only as a meeting place for a congregation but also as a base for serving the wider community by housing a public library, city offices, and a theater.

This approach to church design was characteristic of the Western Unitarian Conference. The intense Unitarian concern for social justice resulted in churches designed for purposes broader than those of housing formal worship, Sunday school, and fellowship. For example, see the online *Dictionary of UU Biography* (www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/carolinebartlettcrane.html) for an article on Rev. Caroline Bartlett Crane, a Unitarian minister in Kalamazoo, Michigan during the 1800s.

See also Charles H. Lyttle, *Freedom Moves West: A History of the Western Unitarian Conference, 1852-1952* (Providence, RI: Blackstone Editions, 2006). The author describes how Jenkin Lloyd Jones made All Souls Church in Chicago the heart of a community center which housed a wide variety of activities and which operated autonomously.

Lyttle also describes how this concern for society led Unitarians clergy and laity in the Midwest and the West to found universities (he cites Antioch College, Washington University, and Reed College) and to campaign against slavery and in favor of tax-supported secular public education, among other causes.

The Tainters

Andrew and Bertha Tainter were prominent and respectable people, but not conventional ones.

Andrew was first married to an Ojibwe woman. After they divorced, he married Bertha. Did he have enlightened racial attitudes, or did he simply take a Native American spouse for sexual pleasure and companionship, later casting her aside for a white woman? Minnesota's first territorial governor, Alexander Ramsey, went through a similar sequence of relationships and has been accused of the preceding.

Bertha Tainter was concerned for the future of freed slaves after the Civil War and spoke publicly on behalf of the Freedmen's Bureau. In doing so she broke two social taboos: public speaking by women, and appearing in public while visibly pregnant.