

Unitarian Universalist Teachings:

The essential, historical Teachings of our tradition are:

- There is a Unity that makes us ONE (Unitarian)
- All are ultimately held as worthy and sacred (Universalism)

In the words of Rev. Forrest Church,
We Unitarian Universalists have inherited a magnificent theological legacy. In a sweeping answer to creeds that divide the human family, Unitarianism proclaims that we spring from a common source. Universalism, that we share a common destiny. That we are brothers and sisters by nature, our Unitarian and especially our Universalist forebears affirmed as a matter of faith: Unitarianism by positing a single God, Universalism by offering the promise of a shared salvation.

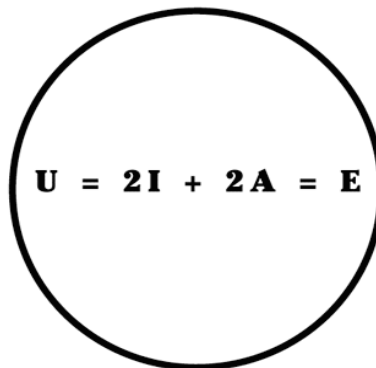
These theological underpinnings provide the basis of our covenant, currently articulated as the Principles and Purposes of Unitarian Universalism.

In the 1500's the Unity (Oneness) of God came to the early Unitarians from their reading of scripture. They found this model of divinity to be more biblically justified than the traditional doctrine of the trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and correctly observed that the trinity is entirely absent from both the Old and the New Testament. Historically, the trinity concept did not become part of Christian doctrine until three hundred years after Jesus!

Unitarians understood Jesus to be exactly what the bible said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." (John 3:16) In other words, Jesus was not God, but a *child* of God.

Buddhism: The essential truth of Unity is perfectly aligned with Buddhism, which teaches an elemental non-dualism between subject and object, between the knower and the known, the observer and the observed. The model below from Rev. Koyo S. Kubose is but one of many, many examples of how Buddhism represents this truth. It is a favorite because of its simplicity, and because it demonstrates how the foundational truths of Impermanence and Interdependence are simply building blocks of the whole.

Way of Oneness Formula


$$U = 2I + 2A = E$$

U = Right Understanding
I = Impermanence
I = Interdependency
A = Acceptance
A = Appreciation
E = Enlightened Living

Judaism, in its largest sense is Monotheistic. That is, Judaism teaches that there is only One God, one creator, one divinity, a single source for all of creation. And, Judaism has a strong mystical component of great interest to our purposes. In Jewish mysticism, (Kabbalah), underlying everything is Ein Sof, the infinite, undefinable origin of all things, the cause of causes. Ein Sof is seen not as a personal God at all, but as an impersonal, unnameable Being without qualities, thoughts or feelings, more like a kind of animating Life Force with which a Kabbahlist can achieve a temporary union. It is considered very dangerous for someone not trained or properly prepared for this union to attempt it.

Here is a short passage from The Zohar, one of the central texts of Kabbalah.
The essence of divinity is found in every single thing - nothing but it exists. Since it causes every thing to be, no thing can live by anything else. It enlivens them; its existence exists in each existent. Do not attribute duality to God. Let God be solely God. If you suppose that Ein Sof emanates until a certain point, and that from that point on is outside of it, you have dualized. God forbid! Realize, rather, that Ein Sof exists in each existent. Do not say "This is a stone and not God." God forbid! Rather, all existence is God, and the stone is a thing pervaded by divinity.

Islam is based on the concept of the Unity of God. Muslims are strictly monotheistic, and fiercely reject any attempt to make God visible or human. Islam rejects any form of idol worship, even if its intention is to get "closer" to God. Islam also rejects the Trinity or any attempt to make God human.

From the Qur'an - 112:1-4

"Say, 'He is Allah, the One;
Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;
He begets not, and neither is He begotten;
And there is nothing that can be compared to Him."

In Muslim understanding, God is beyond our sight and understanding, yet at the same time "nearer to us than our jugular vein" (Qur'an 50:16). Muslims pray directly to God, with no intermediary, and seek guidance from Him alone, because "...Allah knows well the secrets of your hearts" (Qur'an 5:7). In the Qur'an, people are asked to look around them for the signs of Allah in the natural world. The balance of the world, the rhythms of life, are "signs for those who would believe." The universe is in perfect order: the orbits of the planets, the cycles of life and death, the seasons of the year, the mountains and the rivers, the mysteries of the human body. This order and balance are not haphazard nor random. The world, and everything in it, has been created with a perfect plan, by the One who knows all. (Source: About.com:islam)

Taoism is a wonderful example of the Unity worldview. Tao is a word that essentially means "The Way," in its largest, cosmic sense.

*The way that can be defined to death is not the Way to Life.
The road that can be measured is not the endless road.
From nothing, the infinite universe began. From no number, the countless things
appeared.
From no name, their limitless sources will be known.
Looking out, its effects are seen;
Looking in, their cause is discovered.
With words, these are considered separate;
With vision, they are recognized as one.* (Translation, Benjamin Hoff (1981))

Native American and other indigenous traditions have a strong theme of Unity. Here is a passage attributed to Chief Seattle.

*How can you buy the sky? How can you own the rain and the wind?
My mother told me, Every part of this earth is sacred to our people. Every pine
needle. Every sandy shore. Every mist in the dark woods. Every meadow and
humming insect. All are holy in the memory of our people. My father said to me, I
know the sap that courses through the trees as I know the blood that flows in my
veins. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our
sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests,
the meadows, the ponies -- all belong to the same family.*

*The voice of my ancestors said to me, The shining water that moves in the
streams and rivers is not simply water, but the blood of your grandfather's grandfather.
Each ghostly reflection in the clear waters of the lakes tells of memories in the life of
our people. The water's murmur is the voice of your great-great-grandmother. The
rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our
children. You must give to the rivers the kindness you would give to any brother.*

*The voice of my grandfather said to me, The air is precious. It shares its spirit
with all the life it supports. The wind that gave me my first breath also received my last
sigh. You must keep the land and air apart and sacred, as a place where one can go to
taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers. When the last Red Man and
Woman have vanished with their wilderness, and their memory is only the shadow of a
cloud moving across the prairie, will the shores and forest still be here? Will there be
any of the spirit of my people left?*

*My ancestors said to me, This we know: The earth does not belong to us. We
belong to the earth.*

*This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not
weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do
to ourselves. We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. If we sell
you our land, care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the
land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land and the air and the rivers for your
children's children and love it as we have loved it*

Lastly, **modern science** has powerfully affirmed ancient wisdom and religious teachings around Unity. Here is the scientific story of how the universe came to be, paraphrased from Bill Bryson's marvelous book, A Short History of Nearly Everything.

In order to start our universe, you would have to gather up everything there is – every last mote and particle of matter between here and the edge of creation – every last atom and quark from every last star and galaxy, every last molecule of every bit of space dust, (all of everything) and squeeze it into a spot so infinitesimally compact that it is immeasurable. Not just really small. So small that it is billions of billions of billions of times smaller than any number science can come up with. When you do this, it will be known as a singularity.

When you have done this, you're ready for the big bang. Naturally, you will want to move away to a safe location to watch the event unfold, but there's a problem. There is no "where" to go, because there is no "outside" of the singularity. When the universe does begin to expand, it won't be expanding out to fill a larger emptiness. The only space that exists is the space it creates as it expands.

It is natural, but scientists tell us it is also wrong, to visualize the singularity as a kind of pregnant dot hanging in a dark, boundless void. There is no space, no darkness. The singularity has no "around," around it. There is no space for it to occupy, no place for it to be. We can't even ask how long it has been there – whether it just popped into being, like a good idea, or whether it has been there forever, quietly waiting for the right moment. Time doesn't exist. There is no past for it to emerge from.

Then, from this nothing, everything begins.

And it gets better. In a single, blinding pulse, an instant too quick and too expansive for words, the singularity simply becomes a universe – space beyond comprehension. In the very first second, gravity comes into being, and all the other forces that govern physics. In less than a minute, the universe is a million billion miles across, growing fast, and really hot. About ten billion degrees, setting off nuclear reactions that quickly settle into hydrogen, helium, and traces of lithium. Within three minutes, 98 percent of all the matter there is, or ever will be has sprung into being. An incomprehensible field of magnificent beauty and possibility that has been going on now for about 13 and a half billion years, and which very recently coalesced to create you.