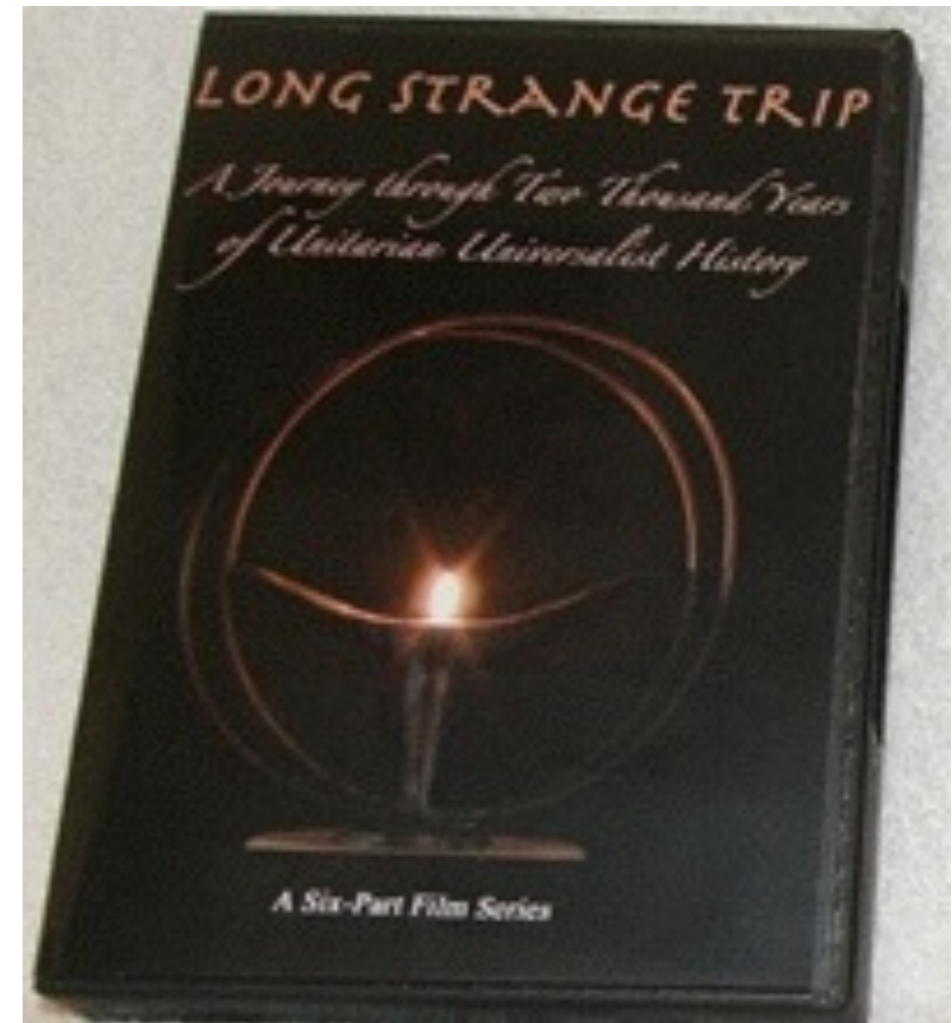


MFC Questions

- Name an important event in our history before 1600 C.E.
- I'll give you a name; you tell me where, when & why: *Michael Servetus*
- Whom would you like to invite to dinner from UU history (pre-1600), and what would you talk about?
- Tell us something about: *Arius*
- Tell us something about: *Origen*
- How does UUism fit within Protestant Christianity historically? Why should this matter to the ordinary lay person today? Can you think of ways we're still Protestant?
- Could you take the issue of the divinity of Jesus and how that plays out in our own history?

Housekeeping

- Add to **email** list?
- **\$5/session** is requested but not required.
- **Other?**



1. 5/6: “In the Beginning” (? - 1553 a.d.)

Skip 5/13

2. 5/20: “Birth of Unitarianism” (1553 - 1794)

3. 5/27: “American Unitarianism” (1620 - 1860)

4. 6/3: “Universalism” (1600 - 1860)

5. 6/10: “Evolution” (1861 - 1961)

6. 6/17: “Unitarian Universalism” (1961 -)

Covenant

- Use **“I” statements**: *speak from your own experience.*
- **Ask permission before sharing** other participants’ stories outside the group.
- **Step-up, step-back**: be conscious of the level of participation that you bring to the conversation. Allow everyone a chance to speak before you speak again.
- You always have **permission to “pass.”**



Chalice Lighting

We light our chalice,

This ancient symbol of communion and
equality,

Symbol of mystics and heretics,

Reformers and refugees,

Artists, activists and Unitarian Universalists
everywhere.

(Rev. Lee Bluemel)



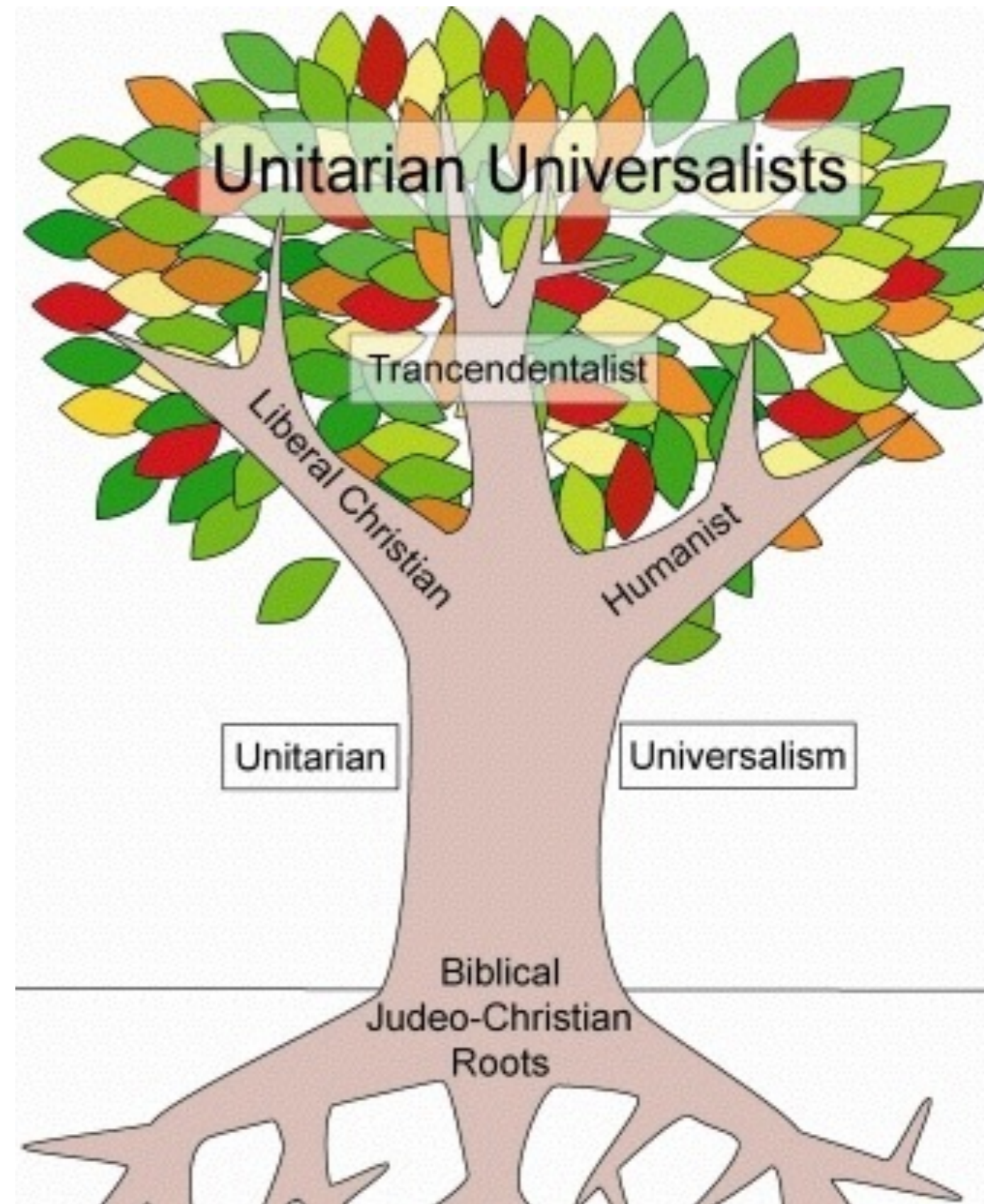
Introductions

Reflect on a time when you learned something **new about the history** of your congregation, or about Unitarian Universalism, that shifted your sense of identity as a Unitarian Universalist.

If you heard a story of **achievement and courage**, did you feel *unexpectedly proud*?

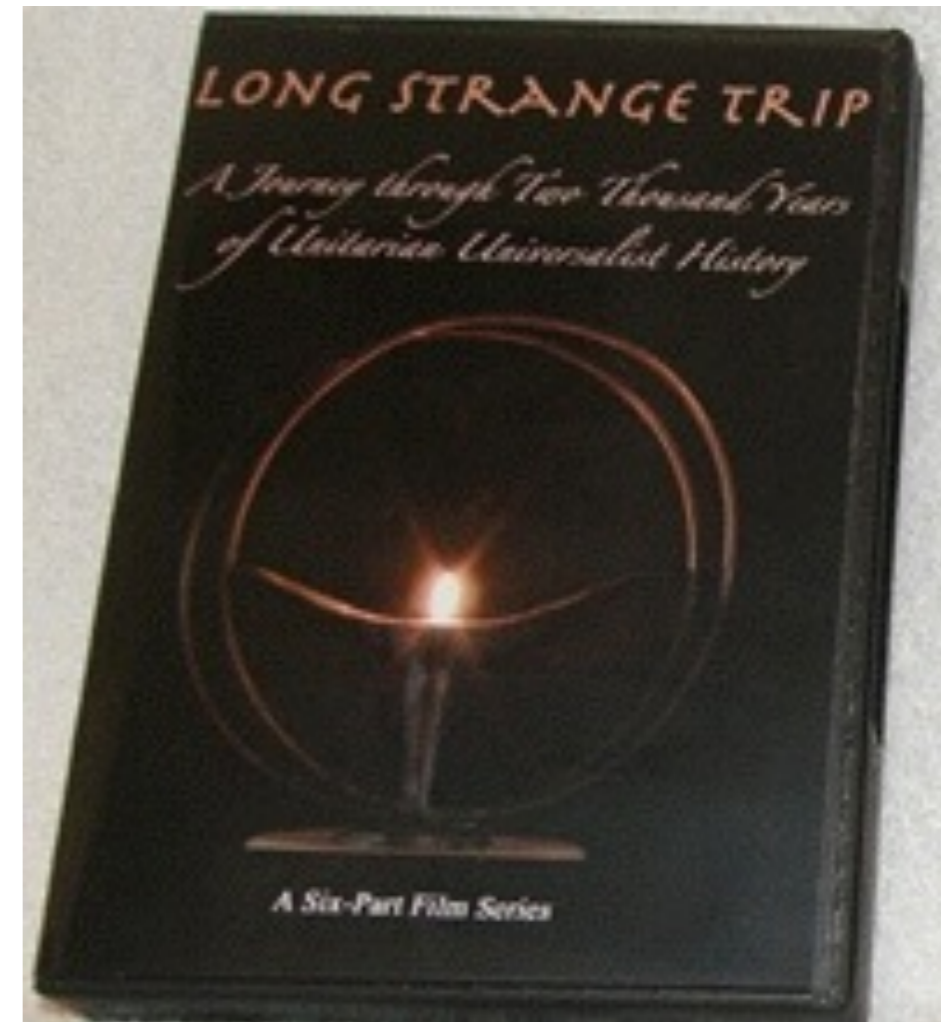
If you heard a story about a time when our forebears **fell short** of UU ideals, you may have felt *chagrined or sad*.

Wrestling to find the right thing to do in the face of difficult choices, you might have felt a *connection to the struggles* of others.



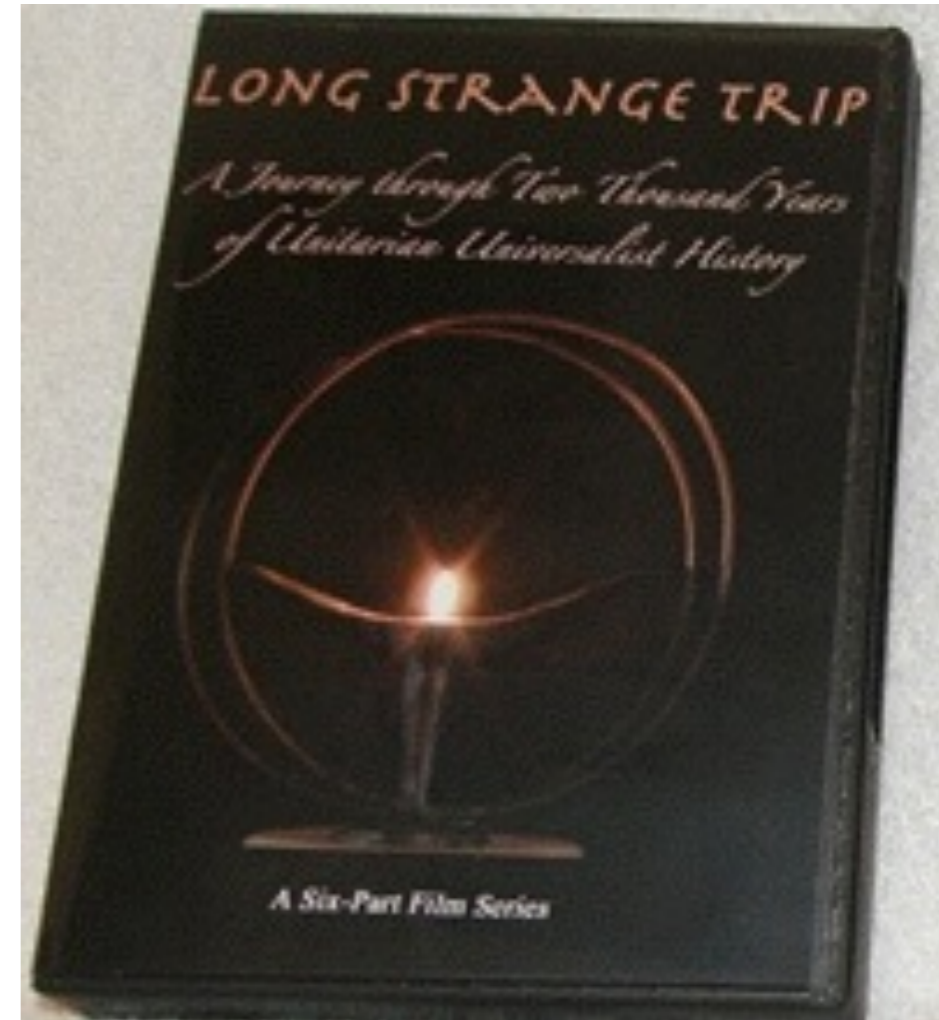
In the Beginning (? - 1553 a.d.)

- Early roots of liberal religious thought,
- Isolated declarations of Universal Salvation in the early years of the Christian era,
- Early anti-trinitarians such as the monk Arius and his role in the Council of Nicaea
- Pre-Reformation heretics such as John Wycliffe and Jan Hus,
- Life and work of Michael Servetus.
- 16th-century Reformation was both theologically *conservative* (catalyzed by Martin Luther) and *liberal* (catalyzed by works of Servetus)



Timelines of UU History

- <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop1/workshopplan/handouts/175621.shtml>
- <http://www.uufilms.com/timeline.pdf>



Jaroslav Pelican (1923 –2006)

History of Christianity, Yale

be wary when

tradition

(“the living faith of the dead”)

devolves into

traditionalism

(“the dead faith of the living”)

*The Vindication of Tradition: The 1983 Jefferson
Lecture in the Humanities, 65.*





Jeffersonian Spirituality

Scalpel and Glue to tradition

40th Anniversary of UUA

UUs may not believe, with Henry Ford, that history is bunk, but many probably do believe that history is for historians — not a matter of concern for the average member of a local congregations.

We tend to ignore the warning of George Santayana that **those who forget their history may be condemned to repeat it**, or the admonition of Rebecca Parker, that there is a **shallowness that comes from each generation defining itself**, assuming it can ignore whatever came before.

Putting it positively, Alice Walker said “To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that **we did not make ourselves**” (xiii).

WARREN R. ROSS

THE PREMISE & THE PROMISE

The Story of the
Unitarian Universalist Association



Framework

History is ***not* simply "what happened,"** but what is *remembered* and *recorded*, or *forgotten* and *ignored*. It is about point of view.

The historical adventure is a process of **discovery and rediscovery** for each person, for each generation.

Studying Unitarian Universalist history together will give us opportunities to encounter anew the stories of our faith and consider what to make of them and what to do because of them.

“Standing on the shoulders of giants”





25 Beacon Street



© John Benf...



24 Farnsworth

from 25 to 24

- Beacon Street headquarters is so close to the State House (designed in 1795 by Charles Bulfinch, a Unitarian) that one imagines the UUA president **goes next door to ask the governor for a cup of sugar**. The **official residence of Boston's mayor is even closer, sharing a wall** with the UUA.
- American Unitarian Association completed the current 25 Beacon Street in **1927**
- Beyond a sense of place and history, many UUs see an archaic, ill-configured, energy-wasting, command-and-control style building with a broken elevator that, as President Peter Morales put it in 2009, “reeks of privilege and hierarchy.” To him, 25 Beacon is “a symbol of our past, not our future.”
- Importance of Boston?



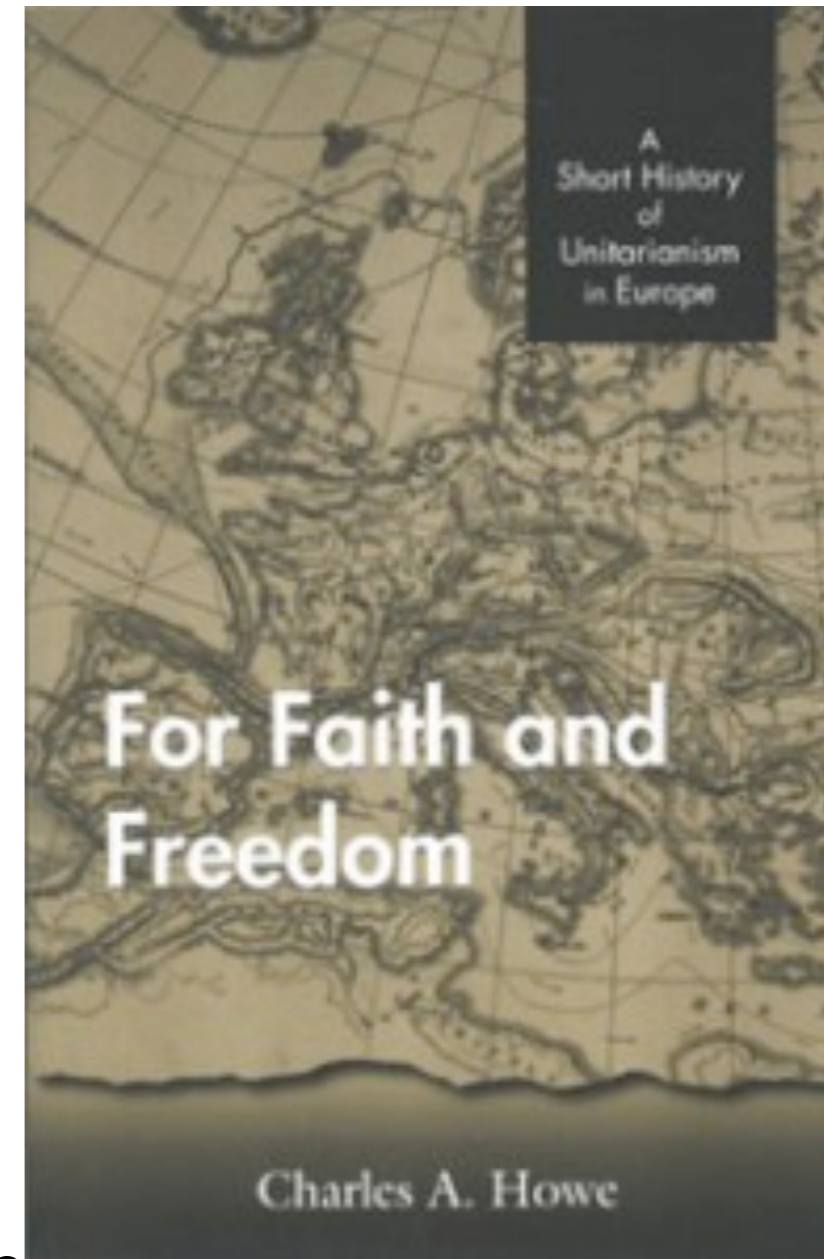
DVD Segment: Servetus [34 min...rewind 30s to Spain]

- What events and stories highlighted in the video **surprised** you or **resonated as important** to describing Unitarian Universalism today?
- What stories might you **share** with others?
- How should we **tell and honor the stories of martyrs** such as Jan Hus and Michael Servetus today? In which ways were their words and deeds prophetic? Do they matter to us today?
- “If those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it,” what can we as UUs learn from our history so we don’t have to **repeat it?**”
- *Reforming or purifying* Christianity by going back to original texts or original practices of early Christians was important to our theological forebears. **In which ways do the writings and practices of early Christians matter to us today?**
- Why was it so important for the Christian Church to **eliminate heresy?** Why were heretical ideas so **difficult to extinguish?**
- In what ways are we **still heretics?** In what ways are we **not?** How might claiming an identity of “heretic” be an asset to our faith? How might it be a **hindrance?**

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- **Radical** (*from the Latin for “root”*) has various meanings in English from
 - return to the beginning (the “**root**” out of which a tree has grown) or a
 - revolutionary shift (the **radicalization** of a splinter group).
- Modern day Unitarian Universalists, as contemporary heirs of The Radical Reformation, have sought *less* to turn back the wheels of time to a some mythological time of pure roots and *more* to discern the **true essence or root of authentic religion**. And their “free and responsible search for truth and meaning,” has most often led them *away from* external authorities and *toward* **pluralism and critically-examined experience**.



(1997), 211 pages

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- “a spirited account of the trinitarian debate that started with Michael Servetus in 1531, and traveled through Poland, Transylvania, Hungary, and England to become the Unitarian movement,” synthesizing:
 1. Earl Morse Wilbur’s two-volume *A History of Unitarianism* (1945 and 1952), weighing in at **1,135 pages**, is the “first comprehensive study of the Unitarian movement” and “**remain[s] the basic work in the field**” (xi).
 2. George Hunston Williams’ *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd Edition (1962/1992), weighing in at **1,513 pages**, details “the interconnected stories of radical groups operating at the margins of the mainline Reformation.”

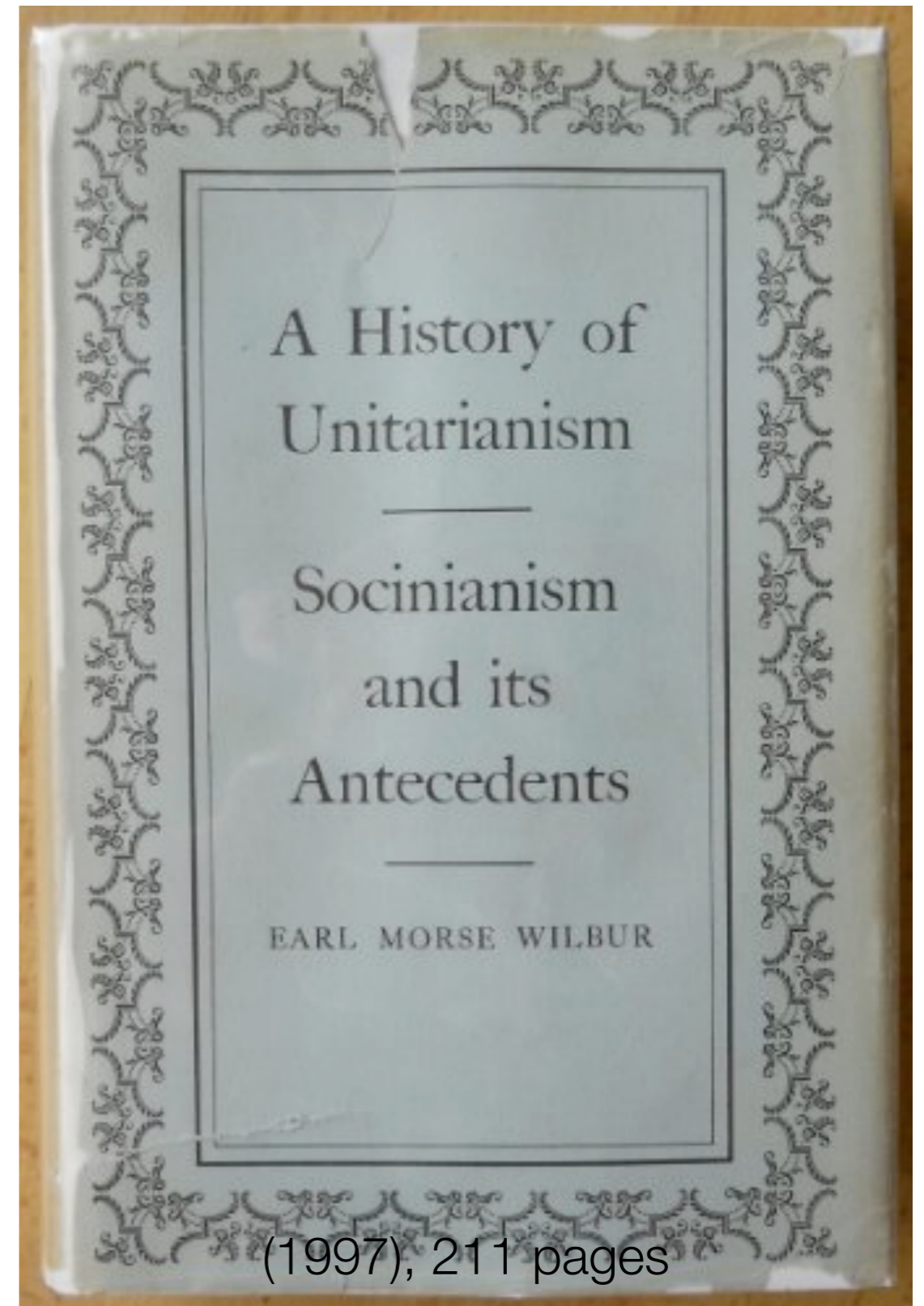


(1997), 211 pages

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- One of the reasons Wilbur's work and remains the basic work in the field is that Wilbur was willing to do the hard work linguistic work
- not only “in Latin and in the more familiar languages of western Europe,”
- but also in the essential — for this history — work “buried in **Polish and Hungarian.**”

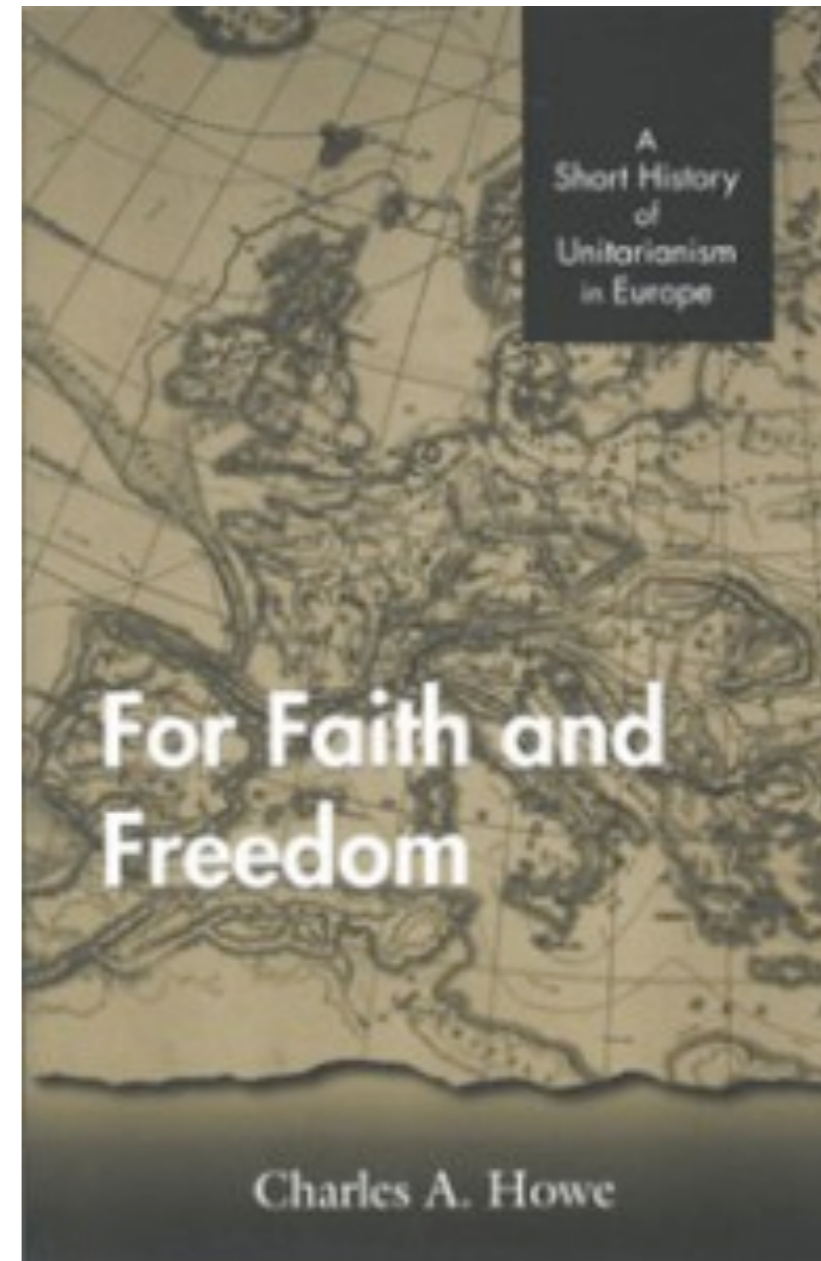


(1997), 211 pages

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- Three overall trends that Wilbur draws from his massive study of the diverse individuals and movements that contributed to the history of Unitarianism:
 - **freedom** of religious thought,
 - unrestricted use of **reason**,
 - **tolerance** of difference views & practices”
- Indeed, the ***Liberal Turn in Religion*** can be seen precisely as the move *from* authority vested in hierarchy, community, and (alleged) historical precedents of unchanging divine revelation *to* reason and individual experience as equally valid, if not more valid, criteria of authority.

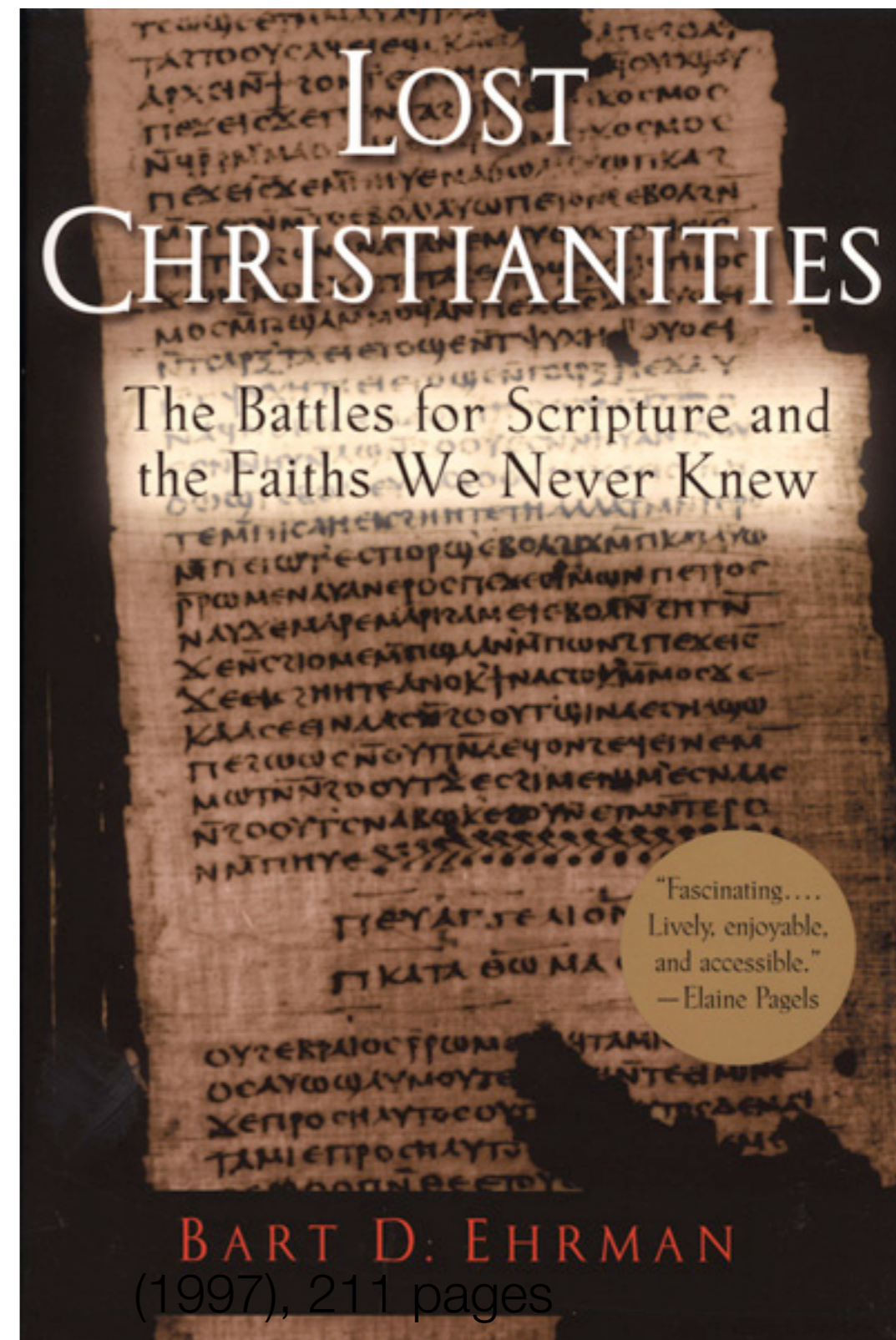


(1997), 211 pages

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- reminder of how many people were persecuted, intellectually repressed, tortured, or killed in the various movements against trinitarianism or for some form of Unitarianism.
- A classic fault line is the 4th-century rivalry between Arius (250 or 256–336) and the trinitarian Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-298 – 373).
- it was *not until 1928* that the use of the Athanasian Creed was made optional in the Church of England” (145).

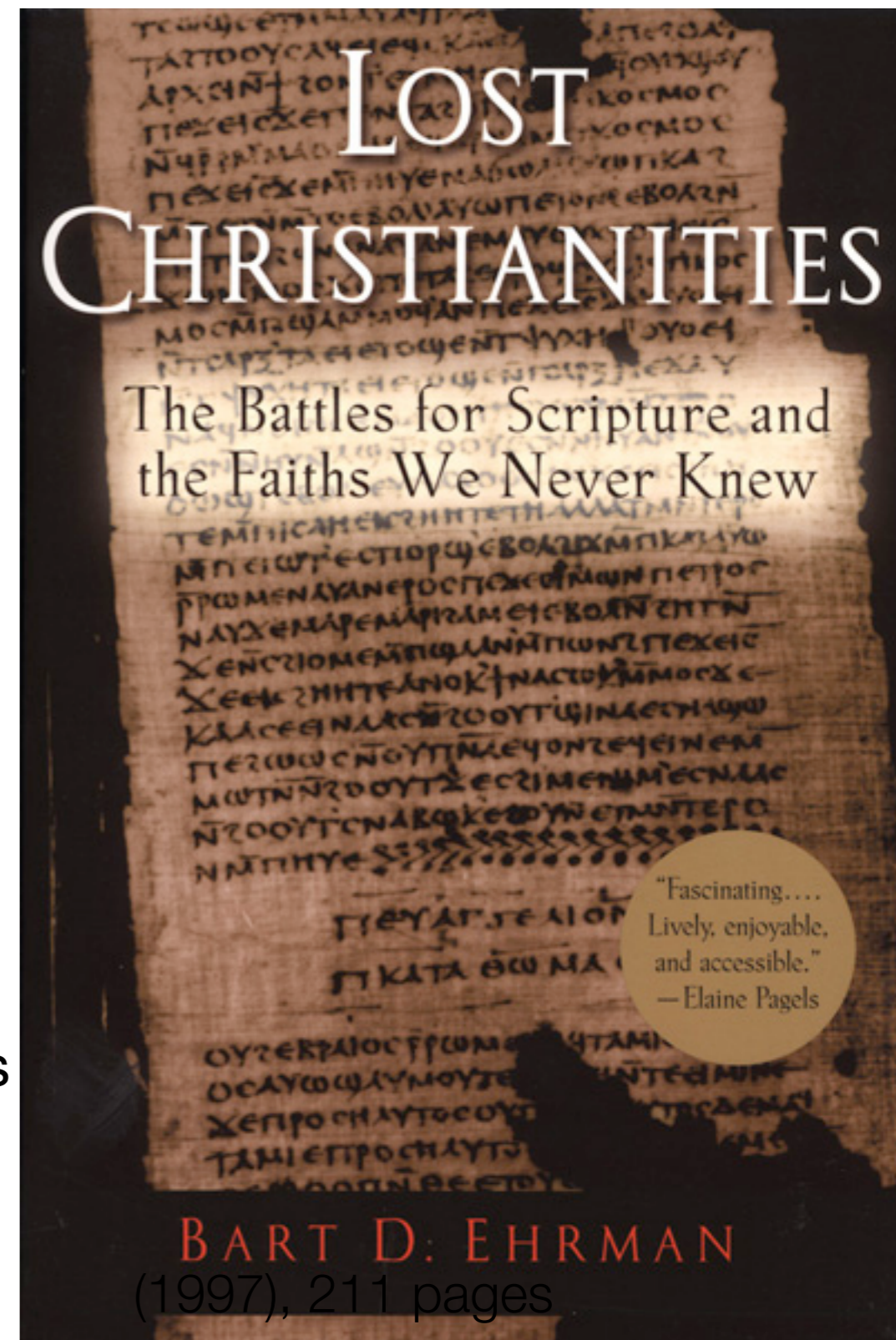


“Proto-orthodox”

Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- Many of the Reformers, including Melanchthon, Luther, and Calvin, did **not emphasize** the doctrine of the Trinity
- But they were willing to **persecute nonconformist proto-Unitarians** to protect their own safety, power, and influence (2).
- That is not to say that the Reformation's leaders were against the Trinity, but it was **not central** (or even necessarily biblical) in many of their views; however, they were not willing to grant the same freedom to the proto-Unitarians that the Reformers sought for themselves from Rome.

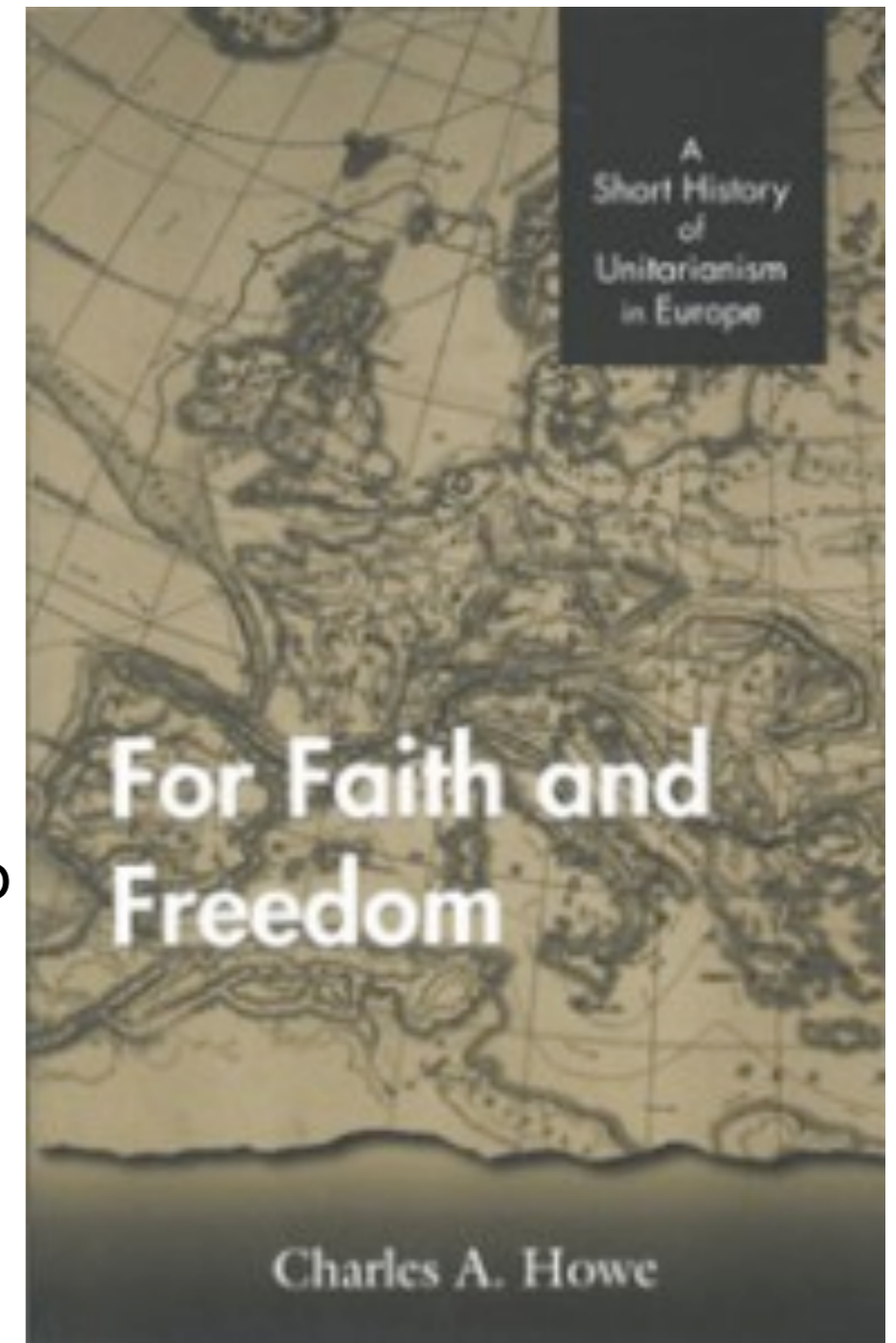


“Proto-orthodox”

Liberal Religious History: The Radical Reformation

As the French theologian Sebastian Castello (writing as “Martin Bellius”) wrote in the wake of Servetus’ martyrdom:

- “We are **all heretics** in the eyes of those who do not share our views...
- Let us be **tolerant** towards one another, and let no one condemn another’s belief....
- Who would not think Christ a Moloch or some such god, if he wished that [humans] should be immolated to him and burned alive?” (42-43)



Liberal Religious History:

The Radical Reformation

- Starting with Michael Servetus' 1531 *On the Errors of the Trinity*, there was a trend of rejecting the Trinity based on the **lack of scriptural support** for this doctrine (19).
- Overtime, participants in what became the Unitarian movement began to also question the Bible as a criterion of authority — seeing it increasingly as a book **written by humans**, not a product of direct divine revelation.
- Andrew Wiszowaty's posthumous 1685 *Rational Religion* (Religio rationalis) assert human reason as a vital criterion of authority. In contrast, Wiszowaty's grandfather, Faustus Socinus (1539–1604) — the namesake of the important proto-Unitarian movement Socinianism — saw scripture as “the sole source of religious truth” (92).



Themes

- Danger and threat of censorship for publishing materials religious authorities would likely find controversial: “The manuscript was burned leaf by leaf as the printed pages were set in type” (103).
- A perceived need to keep Christianity clean: “purge Christianity of such filth, such deadly pestilence” (107). Servetus’ death sentence included the accusation, “you have obstinately tried to infect the world with your stinking heretical poison....” Thus, “desiring to purge the church of God of such infection and cut off the rotten member...” (141). “There was absolutely nothing about any political offense. **Servetus died as a heretic” for anti-Trinitarianism and anti-paedobaptism** (140). [In contrast, see Jesus’ subversion of the purity commandments.]



Themes

- A perceived need to protect God: “The Calvinistic God is not an abyss of being but the sovereign Lord” (117). For Calvin, “it was all so perfectly clear that the majesty of God, the salvation of souls, and the stability of Christendom were at stake” (142):
- “The severity of Calvin was born of zeal for truth and even concern for the victim. Death itself seemed to him not too harsh a penalty for perversion of the truth of God. Today any of us would be the first cast a stone against Calvin’s intolerance; and seldom do we reflect that we who are aghast at the burning of one man to ashes for religion do not hesitate for the preservation of our culture to reduce whole cities to cinders.” (146)



Themes

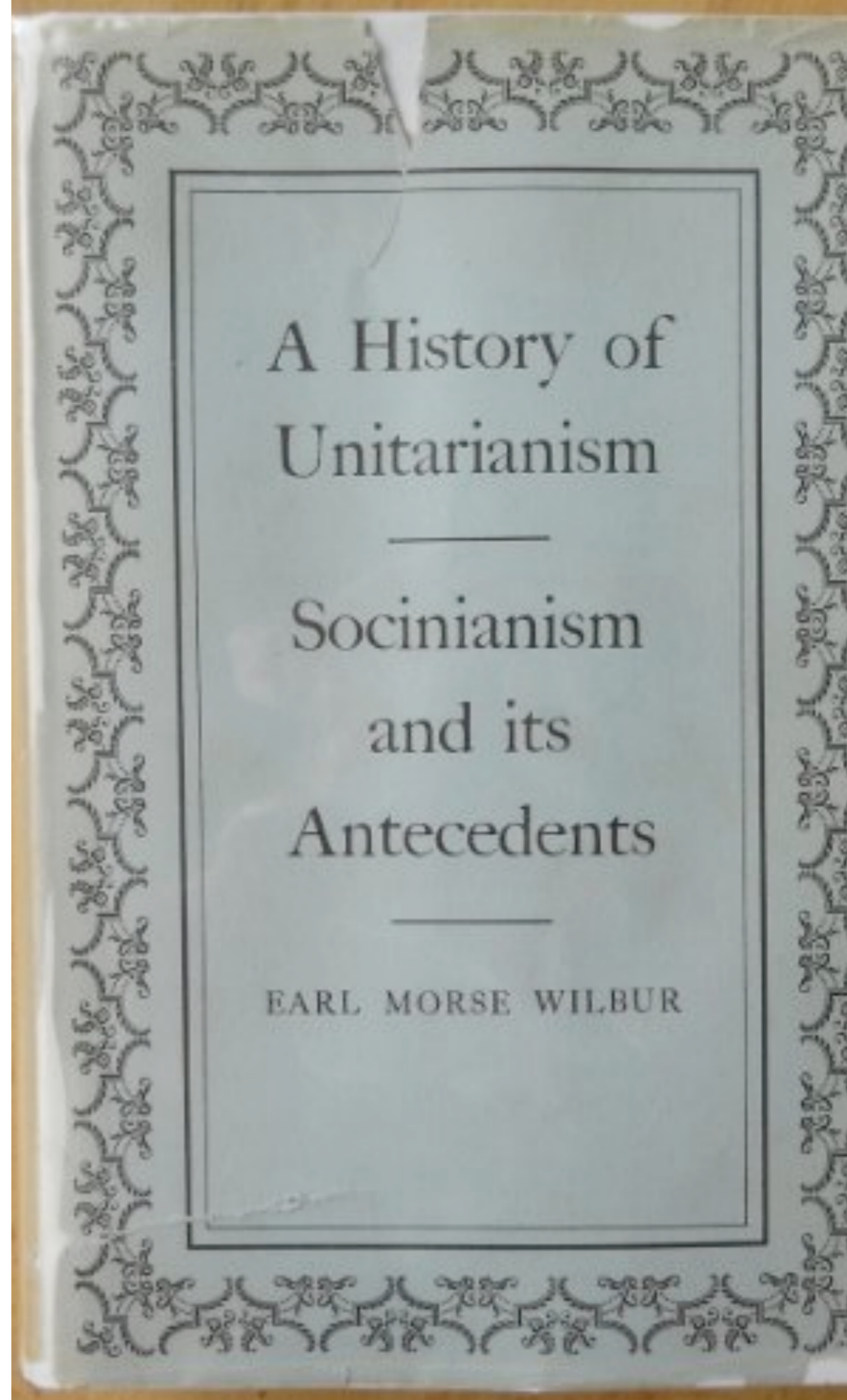
- Bainton's biography likely influencing his interest in Servetus:

“Roland Bainton knew what it meant to hold an unpopular belief. In 1917 he was a pacifist while almost all around him, including his fellow students and the faculty at the Yale Divinity School, were caught up in the war frenzy. The Dean declared that **those students who did not enlist were “morally deficient”** (155).



Themes

- Servetus does have a certain brashness and arrogance. At the same time, there is a genuinely earnest concern that so many have been unnecessarily killed or persecuted for anti-Trinitarian beliefs:
- “In place of a doctrine whose very terms — Trinity, hypostasis, person, substance, essence — were not taken from the Bible but invented by philosophers, and whose Christ was little more than philosophical abstraction, he wished to get men to put their faith in a living God, in a divine Christ who had been a historical reality, and in a Holy Spirit forever working in the hearts of men.”
- *[Sounds similar to the later emphasis in Emerson and elsewhere on not secondhand, but firsthand religion!]*



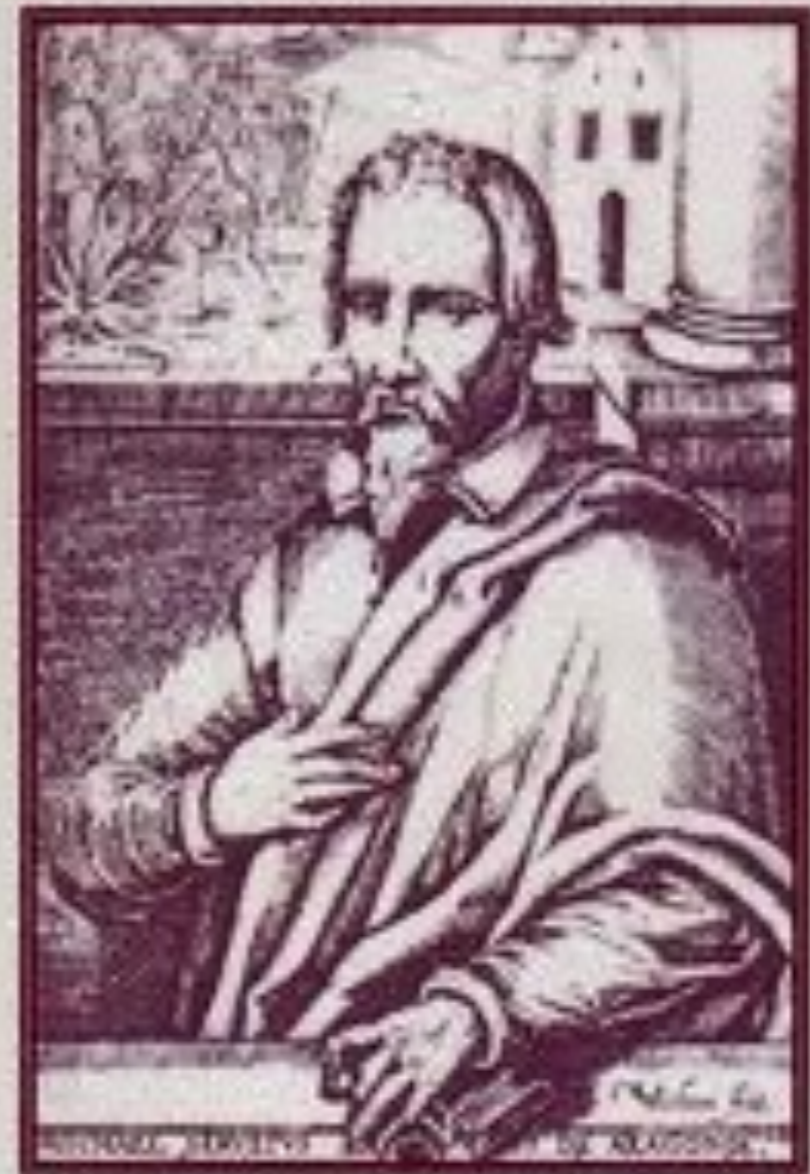
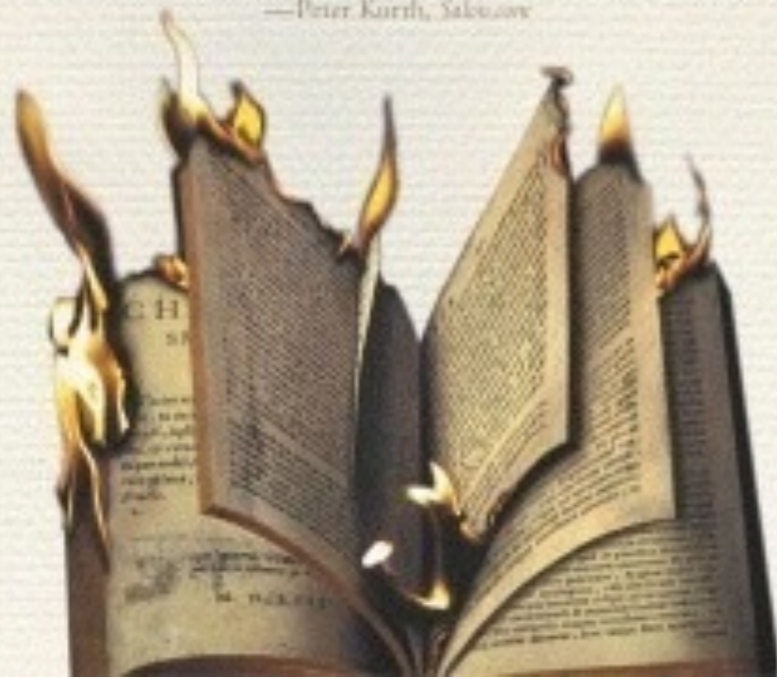
*The Remarkable Story of a Fearless Scholar, a Fatal Heresy,
and One of the Rarest Books in the World*

OUT of the FLAMES



LAWRENCE & NANCY GOLDSTONE

"I guarantee you won't read a more entertaining story this season—
part biography, part history, part mystery, and part plea for justice."
—Peter Kurth, Salon.com



THE RESTORATION OF CHRISTIANITY

AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
OF *CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO*, 1553
BY MICHAEL SERVETUS (1511-1553)

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER A. HOFFMAN
AND MARIAN HILLAR

Whitney Bellows Olympia Brown Jeffrey Campbell Paul Carus W.
Ellery Channing Augusta Jane Chopin Lydia Maria Child James
Freeman Clarke Lewis C. Cornish Robert Cummins Caroline Dall &

A People's History

McLean Gooch Natalie Gulbrandsen Frederic Henry Hodge Thomas
Wentworth Higginson John Maynard Holmes Julia Ward Howe Mrs
Husbands Josiah Lloyd Jones Joseph Fletcher Jordan Thomas Starr
King Abner Knowland Mary Alice Livermore Gordon McKimman
Mendelssohn Peter Morales John Murray Judith Sargent Murray
Mary White Ovington Theodore Parker Elizabeth Palmer Peabody C.
Eugene Pichett John Pierpont Thomas Patten Joseph Priestley James
Reeb William F. Schuler Clinton Lee Scott Quillen Shinn William
G. Simpfendorfer Clarence B. Skinner Deane Starr Lucy Stone Henry
David Thoreau Robert Nelson Wait Thomas Whittemore Annie B.

Universalists AND Unitarians IN America

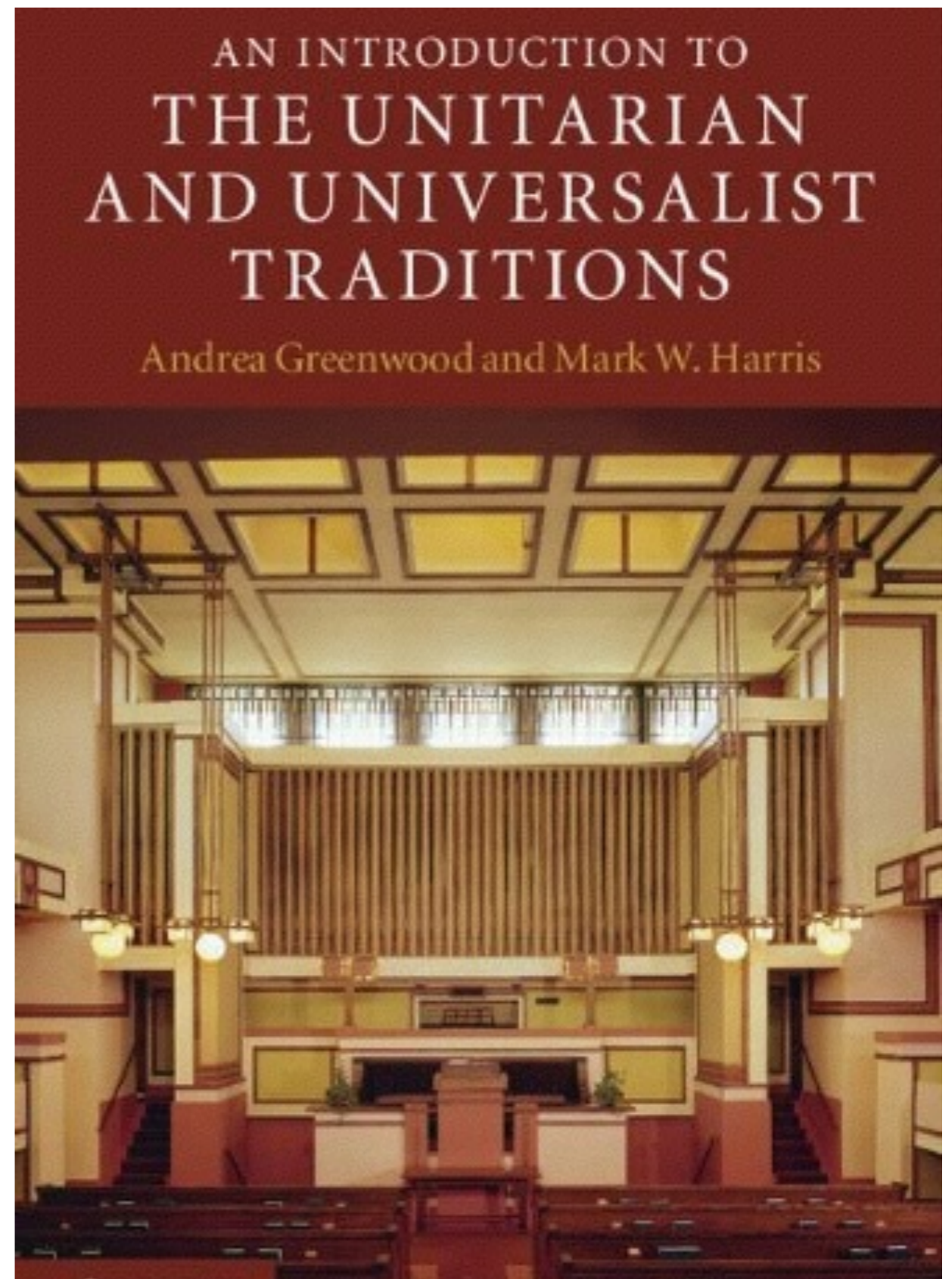
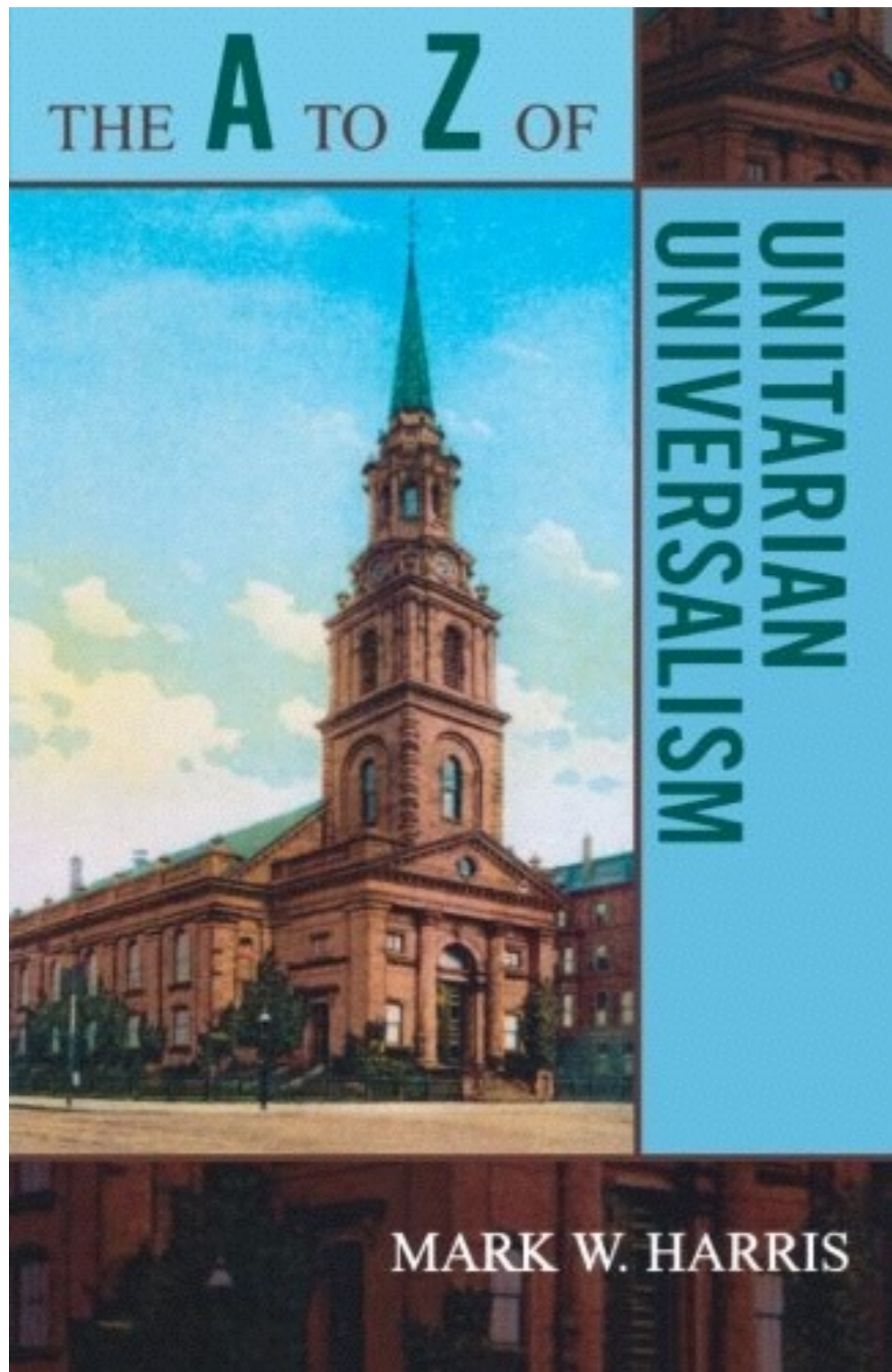
JOHN A. BUEHRENS

Unitarian Universalism

a narrative history



By David E. Bumbaugh



The Making of
American Liberal
Theology

*Imagining
Progressive
Religion*

1805–1900



GARY DORRIEN

The Making of
American Liberal
Theology
*Idealism,
Realism,
& Modernity*

1900–1950



GARY DORRIEN

The Making of
American Liberal
Theology
*Crisis,
Irony, &
Postmodernity*

1950–2005



GARY DORRIEN