

## Current “Sources”

Unitarian Universalism (UU) 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.

## Proposed “Sources”

The living tradition we share draws from many sources.

Unitarianism and Universalism are grounded on more than two thousand years of Jewish and Christian teachings, traditions, and experiences. Unitarian Universalism is not contained in any single book or creed. It draws from the teachings of the Abrahamic religions, Earth-centered spirituality, and other world religious traditions. It engages perspectives from humanism, mysticism, theism, skepticism, naturalism, and feminist and liberation theologies. It is informed by the arts and the sciences. It trusts the value of direct experiences of mystery and wonder, and it recognizes the sacred may be found within the ordinary.

Wisdom and beauty may be expressed in many forms: in poetry and prose, in story and song, in metaphor and myth, in drama and dance, in fabric and painting, in scripture and music, in drawing and sculpture, in public ritual and solitary practice, in prophetic speech and courageous deed.

Grateful for the traditions that have strengthened our own, we strive to avoid misappropriation of cultural and religious practices and to seek ways of appreciation that are respectful and welcomed.

# One Congregation's Comments

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## General Comments

What are my reasons for opposing this rewrite?

1. Other than this is the time for review of the Principles and Sources, there is no justification given for why the Sources need such a drastic rewrite. Why? Is it broken? If not, why are we making such a huge fix? We should eschew change for change's sake. Like the Constitution of the United States, changes should not be made for light or transient reasons.
2. The rewrite is not moving or ennobling. It is merely descriptive and not as descriptive, oddly, as the original Sources. This is simply a wordier, less compelling version and is overall a poor substitute for the power of the Sources as they currently stand. At best, I only like the change in the last sentence. The living tradition we have is very important and I think the Six Sources as laid out above tell it like it is with power and grace. The new one is not as compelling or even as clear.
3. The rewrite does not clearly acknowledge the contributions to our faith of the various Sources. Rather it "blenderizes" them into a "word salad" that renders their unique contributions meaningless.
4. Given this lack of clarity, the Sources can no longer serve as a compass for how we should approach the world religiously. The Principles set out general guidelines, foundational principles, but the Sources tell us where we come from and where we should be going in a rich tradition, a living tradition. Separating the sources into six distinct lines of religious reasoning, gives us a easy way of articulating to ourselves as well as others how we want to be in the world. We should not lose this power.

These are my reasons for opposing this rewrite. You can (and probably will) find others. I hope if you find yourself opposing this rewrite of the Sources, that you will sign the petition located at:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/table-the-proposed-revisions-to-uua-psps>

## Specific Comments

Well, being "cumbersome as hell" as one correspondent said to me and changing for change's sake may be reasons enough to reject the proposal. The previous Six Sources were not broke.

For me, however, it takes what are direct and meaningful and compelling statements acknowledging the contributions of each source and destroys their power by convoluting it into something that makes them almost like an afterthought. "By the way...."

In particular it takes Humanism, which is a distinct and important source in the original, and relegates it to a list then concedes it is "vital" without saying what about it is vital. It goes from:

"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"

which is both meaningful and compelling, to:

"Humanism, earth-centered spiritual traditions, and Eastern religions have served as vital sources."

which is uninformative and relatively dismissive. What was the contribution to our faith from Humanism exactly? Or "earth-centered spiritual traditions"? In the Six Sources, this is clear:

"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."

again, both meaningful and compelling.

The new "sources", if it can be called that, is dry and clinical. Unlike the original Six Sources, it give serious prominence to Judeo- christian roots. Instead of being one source of many, given equal prominence:

"Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves"

which both acknowledges the source and says what we find most compelling about it. Instead it is placed in a paragraph on its own which takes up a significant bulk of the words:

"Unitarian Universalism is rooted in two religious heritages. Both are grounded on thousands of years of Jewish and Christian teachings, traditions, and experiences. The Unitarian heritage has affirmed that we need not think alike to love alike and that God is one. The Universalist heritage has preached not hell but hope and courage, and the kindness and love of God."

So, this gives primacy of place to Judeo-Christian beliefs, "rooted in two religious heritages [...] grounded in thousands of years of Jewish and Christian teachings."

How can you beat thousands of years? I can see how this will make us more attractive to the unchurched Christian and Jew, but I don't think this reflects where we really are today.

And at the end of the paragraph they tack on:

"Contemporary Unitarian Universalists have reaped the benefits of a legacy of prophetic words and deeds."

which is a pale tribute to the Second Source:

"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"

From something that says "wow!" to something that makes you go "what?"

This is why I want more discussion on this rewrite.

There is more I could say, but I think this is enough in my mind to table this proposal for another year of contemplation.