



THE CUUPS NEWSLETTER

MidWinter/Spring 1998

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Meditation on My, Spinning Wheel

BY SPIDERWOMON

The Wheel is our Mother: Earth
Watch Her spinning Her endless circles

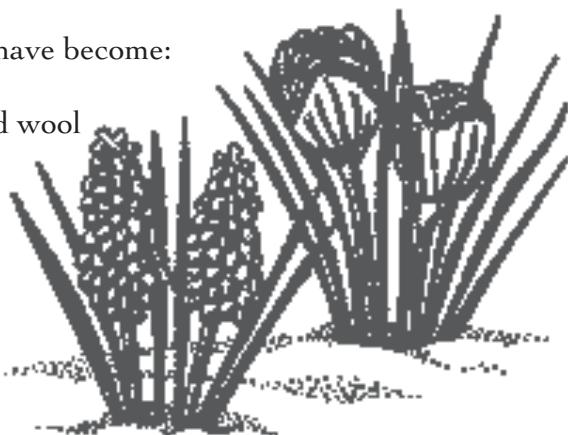
The bobbin is Her phasing Moon
Virginal when empty
Pregnant when full
Croning when emptied
Only to become virginal again

The treadle is our heart:
Without pumping the treadle,
the wheel ceases to spin
Without the passionate beating of our hearts,
we cease to be

The yarn She creates is what we have become:
Once raw fibers
Now cleansed, combed, carded wool

She treadled us:
We spun
We bonded

She treadles us
We continue to spin
We bond evermore



*Poem published in Glimpses of Grace, a book published by the UU Women's Federation
by Valerie Lalinsky Illustration copyrighted and produced by Lauren Foster MacLeod*

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Brydie Palmore
Stacey Greenstein
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8190A Beechmont Avenue #555
Cincinnati, Ohio 45255-3154
Phone: 817.557.5949
Email: CUUPS@aol.com

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Ancient cultures purposefully added mistakes into their work to show it to be the work of humans. While we will work to make our publications as perfect as possible ...we will always be human!

From the President...

Members and Friends of
CUUPS,

It's hard to fathom that we are well into 1998 already. Good grief! Either the years are getting shorter or my perspective is lengthening. It's probably a function of age, but if this keeps up, years will start to change faster than I can find time to purchase new calendars. Oh well.

Lately, I've been reading a number of articles and letters in The World and online about how marginalized many Humanist-oriented UUs now feel within Unitarian Universalism. I find this intriguing in light of the fact that one of the chief complaints I hear from UU Pagans is that they, too, feel marginalized in their congregations. I've also heard this same lament from UUs with Christian, Jewish and Buddhist orientations. I find it incredible to think that UUism, which itself has been described as being on the margins of mainstream American religion, may soon become a movement where everyone is on the margins and nothing occupies the center.

When I stop to think about, however, I realize that this mass marginalization might not be such a bad thing - at least in the short term.

If everyone is feeling marginalized, then no one particular spiritual orientation is dominant. I want to believe that this is a sign that UUism is in the process of redefining itself to become even more welcoming of true pluralism in its response to growing religious diversity.

When I talk about pluralism, I'm using the definition developed by Diana Eck in her book *Encountering God*. She defines an exclusivist response to religious diversity as one that insists on the sole truth of one's own tradition.

The inclusivist believes that one's own tradition actually includes the others and might even fulfill them. The pluralist, however, accepts that many voices, each in its own terms, must take part in the dialogue if it is to bring us to a deeper understanding of one another's faith and our own. (Eck, p. xii)

Of course, we all can't stay on the margins forever with nothing central to bring us together. That surely leads to fractionalization and ultimate separation. But if we can now begin the work of letting the dialogue itself become the centering factor, then there will be plenty of room for UU Humanists, Pagans, Jews, Christians, and others to participate fully in a pluralistic Unitarian Universalism. This time of marginalization will then be seen as a healthy prelude, a time to gather our thoughts, before engaging fully in the dialogue that leads to deeper understanding.

My hope is that CUUPS will be a major force in creating and fostering this central dialogue.

Joan Van Becelaere
CUUPS President

From the Vice President of Communications...

Many Thanks to Lauren Foster MacLeod for her beautiful cover illustrations once again in our newsletter.

Our website will be updated within the next month. We are currently forming a team to keep the site edited and updated. I would like to thank all of you who have sent in errors and edits needed on the site.

Our journal projects are currently on hold. If you have any experience in transcribing taped presentations and have time to support this project

please contact me. The hope is to get at least two of these journals ready for sale at GA this year.

Some new volunteers have stepped forward to support the newsletter production each month. Please send articles you would like to share to the CUUPS Office.

I am currently representing the organization with a group of Pagan leaders continentally in soliciting dictionary companies to shift their outdated definitions of the NeoPagan movement. A proposal was sent to six major publishers. One has responded to date very positively.

Anyone interested in the publications created by the organization and interested in volunteering is invited to contact me at the CUUPS address or my email address at kishilde@earthlink.net.

Brightest of Blessing to you!

Jerrie Hildebrand
VP of Communications

From the Treasurer...

As of today, January 18, 1998, We have:

Funds available \$ 366.39
on deposit

Debts outstanding (not including buyout agreement)

Lawyer's fees \$ 1,216.75
(down from original of
\$ 1,916.75)

Reimbursements \$ 603.20

A check was cut for the 501 (c)3 application last week as well. As soon as this status is conferred we can get an interest bearing checking account at our bank.

We are seeing an increased incidence of bad checks. We have had four checks with

insufficient funds or accounts closed returned since October totaling \$ 184.00 and costing us \$ 3.50 each (\$ 14). I am not asking for a remedy on this but rather an awareness that it is good to tell those writing checks to us that it may take 30 to 60 days for us to receive and process a check and to not assume it has cleared until it actually has. David Pollard has or will be given the information on these folks to contact them for possible remedies and reimbursements.

Patrick Price

CUUPS Treasurer

From the Secretary...

Membership as of the end of January CUUPS had 665 voting and 121 inactive members.

You may notice that the number of inactive/associate members is much lower than in my last column. This is because we have changed how lapsed members are counted. Until the Convo board meeting (held in November) there was a twelve month grace period to renew your dues - now that has been tightened up to six months.

Please check your mailing label. If the date on it is 10/31/97 or earlier this is probably your last newsletter until you renew your membership or subscription. In order to avoid problems renewing you are always welcome to "pay ahead" on your dues. Just indicate what you wish to do on your renewal form.

If you have any questions about this or your current status - write, phone or email the CUUPS office.

David Pollard

CUUPS Secretary

GA Programming to Feature Issac Bonewits...

The CUUPS General Assembly Committee has established a line-up of workshops and lectures for Rochester, June 25-29, 1998. CUUPS is proud to host a lecture by Isaac Bonewits, who plans to address the future of Contemporary Paganism within UUism and the larger culture. There will also be a introductory workshop shamanic techniques lead by the Rev. Dr. Crow Swims-away and the Rev. Bekki Shining Bearheart. CUUPS' musical talent will be highlighted in a workshop on chants to be presented by Chris Wagner (Khrysso), the Rev. Mary Grigolia and the Rev. John Gilmore. (I hear tell that John plans to dig out his conga to lead the drumming.)

The annual meeting and luncheon will take place on Saturday afternoon, June 27, after the Bonewits lecture. The Rev. Patrick Price will give a presentation on the place and meaning of covenant within the Covenant of UU Pagans. It will then be followed by our (slightly late) Summer Solstice ritual. If you can only attend GA for one day this year, you should plan to attend on Saturday, June 27.

Thank you,

Joan Van Becelaere

Chair GA Committee

No File Unchecked or Dust Bunny Undisturbed

The CUUPS Religious Education Committee would like to ask all CUUPS members and chapters to please check your file drawers, computer drives, bookshelves and under your beds for past Sunday Services and/or ritu-

als that could be shared with the greater UU community. While you are at it, we'd also like you to search your records and memory for ideas, activities, and other material that would be useful in teaching children about the Wheel of the Year.

Why are we asking you to brave the lair of the insidious dust bunny? To help the RE Committee create two new resource booklets in time for General Assembly this coming June.

One resource booklet will focus on Pagan-oriented liturgical and ritual elements suitable for use during Sunday Service. We welcome individual liturgical or ritual elements (e.g. chalice lightings, calls of the directions, guided meditations, final words, etc.) as well as integrated Sunday Service formats.

The other booklet needs your ideas, projects, activities, and such items suitable for use by religious education teachers in presenting the Wheel of the Year to children.

The inspiration for these projects rises from a large number of requests that were received by CUUPS at GA in Phoenix. Literally dozens of people came to the CUUPS table at GA looking for things to help them teach the Wheel of the Year and/or Pagan-friendly ideas for Sunday Service. At that time, we had nothing to offer.

If you have any items that you would like to contribute to these projects, please send them to me at:

Joan Van Becelaere
c/o CUUPS
8190 A Beechmont Ave. #335
Cincinnati, OH 45255-3154

We will, of course, list all proper attributions and authorship so please include a short note telling us who wrote what and giving us per-

mission to use the material in the resource booklet. If you have any questions, you can reach me at gaia-spirit@worldnet.att.net or leave a name and phone number on the CUUPS voicemail at 817-557-3949. I'll call you back as soon as possible.

Joan Van Becelaere

Chair RE Committee

Welcoming New Chapters...

We would like to welcome new chapters to CUUPS:

Mystical Flame CUUPS which is affiliated with the Fredericksburg UU Fellowship of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Mountain Dance CUUPS of Flagstaff, Arizona who are affiliated with the Flagstaff UU Fellowship.

CUUPS of the Seven Acres who are affiliated with the UU Church of Amherst near Buffalo, NY.

Tampa-St.Pete, FL, who are affiliated with the UU Church of Tampa, FL.

We welcome the re-establishment of a chapter at First Unitarian Church of San Antonio, Texas after a several year hiatus.

There will be a full listing of all registered CUUPS Chapters in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Renewal packets were sent out at the end of the year. Please make sure that yours is filled out and sent back in - so your chapter is included in the listing. If for some reason your chapter did not receive a registration packet - please contact the CUUPS Office.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS HUMANISM?

BY JOAN VAN BECELAERE

With all of the discussion lately about the relation of Contemporary Paganism and Religious Humanism, I thought it might prove interesting to review the major propositions of Religious Humanism. I have drawn the following statements from an online abbreviated version of the Humanist Manifesto and apologize in advance if I have inadvertently misread any of the propositions.

As you read the following list, check and see how many of these propositions are also consistent with a Pagan worldview. I think you will be surprised. (*I also find it interesting that at least one Pagan writer I know has said that Contemporary Pagans are Humanists with a sense of aesthetic!*)

FIRST: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

SECOND: Humanism believes that humans are a part of nature and that they have emerged as a result of a continuous process.

THIRD: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

FOURTH: Humanism recognizes that human religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.

FIFTH: Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Obviously humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relations to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.

SIXTH: Humanists are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought".

SEVENTH: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation --all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

EIGHTH: Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the chief end of human life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

NINTH: In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds her/his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

TENTH: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

ELEVENTH: Humans will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his/her knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. Humanists assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.

TWELFTH: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in humanity and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.

THIRTEENTH: Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.

FOURTEENTH: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.

FIFTEENTH: Humanists assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intentional humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow. ☸

CUUPS!... WHAT IS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT: PART I OF III

CERRIDWYN/CINDY GLAZE

Unitarianism is the heresy where people refused to accept the concept of God-In-Three-Persons, the Blessed Trinity. God is one. It was a heresy born in tolerance and academic wrangling. The Unitarians tend towards humanism and intellectual integrity.

Universalism is the heresy stating that God is love and that EVERYONE is going to go to heaven. Universal Salvation was their battle cry and soft seats and no hell their appeal.

Unitarianism thrived in urban areas and in the intelligentsia. Colleges loved it. Universalism flowered in rural and small town areas. Farmers loved it. Both religions had a strongly liberal stand and accentuated tolerance. One joke that describes the UUs says that Universalists believe that God is too good to damn man and Unitarians believe that man is too good to be damned. (Thomas Starr King)

Over time the intelligentsia grew to know the spirit and the farmers and 'housewives' became more educated. The religions came closer together in beliefs and practices.

In 1961 it was decided, after (of course) much discussion, to join the two churches into a single Association. Individual churches either retain their Unitarian or Universalist atmosphere or in some cases combined into one. The main thing that changed was the merging of the central offices.

Both Unitarians and Universalists believed strongly in the democratic process and so the churches of both sects needed to vote on the merger. There are UU churches that maintain their historic Christian rites and beliefs and UU churches that celebrate more the Jewish, Mystic, Humanistic or Atheistic traditions. There are also UU churches that are basically pagan circles.

There are no Ten Commandments guiding the UU churches because we are a creedless association. We do, however, have what are jokingly called the Ten Suggestions. Congregations in the Unitarian Universalist Association agree to the Principles and Purposes listed here:

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 the 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.

We as pagans fit in well with this set of 'truths.' They have been accepted (more or less modified) as the basic ethical stand of many pagan circles, covens and groups. UU pagans simply accept them as they are and promote the continued use of these ideas as the driving force of our spiritual or religious direction.

Blessed Be ☘

Cindy Glaze is a student at Colgate University, a member of the S'BAT Chapter of CUUPS in Rochester, NY and a member of the UU church in Rochester NY.

CHILDREN'S IMBOLC RITUAL

TOM HICKEY

A beautiful Imbolc ritual for children was held during Sunday school at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Silver City, New Mexico. Fourteen children heard how the Great Goddess and her rituals evolved in Ireland into the Goddess Brigid, then into Saint Bridget and the holiday of Candlemas, and then in the United States into Groundhog Day. Statuettes and a stuffed animal were arranged on a table to represent each deity.

To illustrate the evolution of myths, the children then played "telephone", whereby the whispered phrase "*I like chocolate with cherries*" became "*I like sandwiches with jelly*". The children then wove grains and vines into Brigid's crosses or sunwheels and placed them on the altar.

Finally each child placed a lit tea-light candle on the altar and made a "*spring wish*" in the name of whichever deity or doll seemed most appealing. They were taught how to make their own little altars at home, using favorite toys, and night-lights instead of candles.

The class and ritual may appear in a forthcoming collection of liturgy for Unitarian Universalist congregations and religious education programs.

Tom Hickey is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Silver City, New Mexico

WARRIOR'S KIVA

DAVE BURWASSER

Some Native nations, that are organized around Kivas, have a distinct Kiva that inducts all men who have taken the life of another in combat. The Warrior is not better or worse than others, but has a different life history, and need a spiritual life that reflects that.

How can a UU Pagan man be a Warrior? How can an ex-Humanist man like EarthMan, who was able to return to God/dess-talk only by finding Deities who shared none of the patriarchy that made Scripture so unappealing, set foot on the Warpath? More: What impels a man who has received clear midlife divination that it is time for him to quit brawling and become a Healer, beat his plowshare back into a sword?

The only excuse is that the outcome would be worse if he didn't. But that is just the first step. If the Warpath is indeed a Path, what wisdom is there?

It seems simple enough, that a Warrior must know what the fight is for. But if one is not fighting just to fight, one should know one's reasons this well: To be prepared to *stop* fighting and begin negotiating, if those aims become attainable through diplomacy. Aztec generals, and 19th century British Naval captains, held commissions as ambassadors as well as officers because of the impossibility of detailed communication back to the imperial court when a situation on the frontier called for making peace, not just making war.

The distance between Healer and Warrior looks bigger from the Healer side. Each must understand what is going on inside the person with whom they deal. What is done with that knowledge may be the opposite in the two instances. But the mind that can accomplish combat or healing competently, understands that everything carries the implication of its own opposite. And the spiritually competent person must be able to walk in his or her own Shadow, or be forever stalked by it.

The "Dorsai" science fiction cycle by Gordon R. Dickson, centers on a world specializing in Warriors. The stories have a lot more to say about how Warriors think than about how they fight. Taken together, there runs through them a never-stated but clear ideal of combat at its best: Victory with zero casualties on either side. Actual war falls short of that ideal, but the ideal is important, because it gets back to knowledge of goals: Combat for a purpose is pointless if it destroys what one is fighting for.

This cannot close without the observation that, in UU Pagan circles, most of the Warriors -- including some of the

fiercest -- are women. These are not questions that apply to men only. But boys are admonished to "fight fair" in circumstances where girls are told they should not fight at all. Each must as adult Warriors resolve these issue in their own frame. ☺

THE POPE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

STEPHEN ESTES

At Mass given January 25th in Havanna, Pope John Paul II said:

"A modern state cannot make atheism or religion one of its political ordinances. The state, while distancing itself from all extremes of fanaticism or secularism, should encourage a harmonious social climate and a suitable legislation that enables every person and every religious confession to live their faith freely, to express that faith in the context of public life and to count on adequate resources and opportunities to bring its spiritual, moral and civil benefits to bear on the life of the nation."

Coming from the head of the Roman Catholic Church, this is a stunning statement, and at least a hypothetical challenge.

We plainly do not live in a world of perfect religious freedom and pluralism. However, the challenge to bring "spiritual, moral, and civil benefits to bear on the life of the nation," is a general challenge for any movement, mainstream or not, that professes itself religious.

Although we Pagans have difficulty enough reconstructing our spirituality after its attempted eradication, and although our work is sometimes closeted work, we should not hesitate to develop, promote, and practice civic virtue.

To do so openly as Pagans, *"in the context of public life,"* may seem a stretch. Yet I can't think of another group better inclined in this direction than CUUPS. ☺

UNPUBLISHED NEWSLETTER ADVERTISEMENTS

Due to the tardiness of this newsletter and our budget constraints this printing we will be printing all advertisements in our next newsletter. In the future we will work to not have this be a problem. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

COMMISSION STUDIES MARGINALIZATION IN UU CONGREGATIONS

DAVE BURWASSER

In spite of our fourth Principle -- to affirm and promote "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning" -- it seems fair to say that both anti-Christian and anti-Pagan biases exist among a significant number of Unitarian Universalists. With the adoption of humanism and existentialism as normative theological perspectives within Unitarian Universalism, the implicit message became: We support people in their theological search as long as they don't land at either end of the Unitarian Universalist theological spectrum with Christianity at one end and neo-Paganism at the other.

[...] Four tendencies contribute to the conflict: pre-judgment -- our collective unwillingness to engage in serious theological dialogue or to understand what premises are held by Unitarian Universalist Christians, Pagans, and those of other theological orientations; a focus on points of difference rather than on points of unity as Unitarian Universalists; varying communication styles; and resistance to authority.

– UUA Commission on Appraisal,
Report on Congregational Polity

The UUA Commission on Appraisal has just released a massive study on Congregational Polity, the basic UU idea that, while we have a continental Association for organizational convenience, there is no authority higher than the individual UU congregation.

The UUA is in the midst of one of its periodic concerns with diversity. Section Eleven of the Commission report, "*Marginalized Groups*," is very candid about the fact that congregational polity can be used to restrict diversity -- an observation that comes as no surprise to UU Pagans -- and delves deeply into the history and sociology of marginalization in the UUA.

Marginalized groups are listed, and there are the expected entries – people of color, LesBiGays – and some unexpected ones: Canadians, and ministers or directors of religious education (MREs/DREs). From the UU Pagan viewpoint, two passages stand out from the text on marginalization of RE. After a list of some common biases about MREs: "*Such assumptions tend to spread like wildfire throughout congregations and the Association.*" This is a process with which Pagans are all too familiar.

The Commission touches on the UUA's Black Empowerment crisis of the late Sixties and early Seventies, a period in which I was present and deeply involved. I aver that the Commission does the best job I have seen yet of candor about those days while avoiding revival of old feuds. One

passage merits expansion: "*[The competing viewpoint groups] flew in the face of existing structures of governance and presumed consensus about how the business of the Association should be carried out.*"

To be precise, one side flew in the face of existing structures of governance, declaring UU norms to be wholly inadequate; and the other side not only supported UU norms but presumed to define exactly how they were manifested and in what manner implemented. Both reeked of intellectual arrogance. At present, UU Pagans are confronting the latter form: Those who hold out their version of UU norms as the one, true version. My strategic intuition, from those bad old days, is to allow the other side a total monopoly on the market for intellectual arrogance.

An Aversion to Theology

From the Religious Education topic:

"Marginalizing children's religious education in Unitarian Universalism may be related to a discomfort with theology among UU adults. All the evidence points to a general skepticism, if not fear, of serious theological engagement. If parents and adults have not resolved their own theological issues (or if they are unclear about what they believe), it is not surprising that they are uncomfortable with religious education for their children. [...] Until we address our personal theological ambiguities, we will unconsciously continue to marginalize children's religious education."

This suggests that a lot of the animus in UU congregations against UU Paganism arises, not from a Humanist retreat of the Christian animus in the larger culture, but from aversion to any engagement with theology.

It also points to an impending collision in UU Pagan engagement with UU RE. It may be helpful, as of one marginalized group in coalition with another, for a CUUPS group in a church to make common cause with the RE function as a back door into acceptance when the pulpit minister is Pagan-averse. But as we become more seriously engaged in UU RE on behalf of our own kids and others, we are likely to raise the anxiety level among many UU adults. From the same passage as above:

"[M]any religious educators told the Commission that one of the questions parents consistently ask is: What are you going to teach my child about the Bible (or about Christianity)?"

If we succeed in one of our fondest collective hopes, we will be adding "Witchcraft" to that list of anxious questions.

From the topic of Theological Biases:

"It is difficult to say which theological perspectives are dominant in Unitarian Universalism at this point."

For all its mildness of expression this is a stunning statement, given the hegemonic position of Humanism in the UUA for the past several decades. In it may be seen the tension between what might be called the "traditional" and the "spiritual" UU Humanists, who have so much discomfort sitting through one another's services that they can no longer be regarded seriously as the same theological cohort. But there may be more, I put this statement together with the aversion-to-theology statement and draw from them jointly a validation of a concept I have held for some time, to wit:

That a lot of UUs never get much beyond a UU self-definition of not being Presbyterians or Baptists or Catholics or whatever they were before -- ie, never move to "*I am this*" but remain stuck at "*I am not-that*." That this is the cohort most averse to theology, and that this cohort has adopted the self-designation "Humanist" as a way of fitting into the UU background. So in addition to the traditional/spiritual dimension we have "default" and "intentional" Humanists, and the default Humanists may be at the same time the least moored and the most numerous of the UU flavors.
(End of author's speculation.)

Upheavals and Sleeper Issues

There is wry irony in the Commission's analysis of why the UUA is suddenly undergoing theological upheaval:

"At least three factors have contributed to this shift in our theological understanding and identity:

- constant and predictable pendulum swings in religious ideas and movements the world over
- fewer new Unitarian Universalists who come with a deep commitment to anti-authoritarianism and religious freedom
- a longing for more spirituality among Unitarian Universalists."

Certainly UU Pagans fit the first and third criteria. But I would observe that UU Pagans are typical of North American NeoPagans generally, in placing a very high priority on religious freedom, and in instinctive skepticism of authority. I dare say we cluster more closely to these "normative" UU positions than UUs in general!

Besides RE, there is another "sleeper" issue waiting for us: Do we ever want to organize explicitly Pagan UU congregations, along the model of Panthea UU Congregation? Culturally specific, or "intentional," UU congregations already exist, and they are already controversial:

"A number of new and emerging congregations seek to affirm particular racial, ethnic, or cultural groups and to meet the needs of particular communities (e.g., gays and lesbians, Unitarian Universalist Christian congregations, Spanish- or Korean-speak

ing congregations). Although the Association has established sanctions against congregations that discriminate against individuals on the basis of racial, ethnic, or sexual or affectional orientation, there remains a need for a deeper understanding of intentional congregations whose raison d'être is to express an identity that differs from the Unitarian Universalist norm.

"Some Unitarian Universalists believe that intentional congregations (or a special emphasis on any one group within a congregational or associational context) are exclusionary and thus inconsistent with the UUA Bylaws...."

At present CUUPS has no such plans, but it should be noted that Panthea formed *sui generis* and not as a CUUPS project. CUUPS might do well to be ready for another such eventuality, in terms of responding to the anxieties it is bound to evoke among UU Pagans and UUs generally.

Norms

"A prevailing assumption among Unitarian Universalists -- one that reflects cultural assumptions among the mainstream in the United States -- is that marginalized groups should or will be integrated or assimilated into the mainstream. But since the 1960s, US history has shown that this rarely happens. Instead, groups that stand at the margins have challenged dominant group perspectives, norms, values, standards, and assumptions, asserting their own identity, understandings, and interests."

This certainly is germane to UU Paganism. My personal contribution to UU Pagan letters, *The Well-Grounded CUUPS Chapter*, may be seen as a guide to adhering as closely as possible to UU norms while articulating Earth centered spirituality in a UU context.

Perhaps this is wishful thinking. But it certainly can do us no harm to be fully aware of where we are aligned with general UU norms, and where we differ.

Recommended Reading

There is much more meat to this section of the Commission report, and I am advised that the entire report is worth the time to peruse it. I invite you to ask your church's leadership for an opportunity to read it. ☺



**The Tenth Annual
Covenant of
Unitarian Universalist
Pagans Continental
Festival & Gathering**

**Friday, September 18 to
Sunday, September 20, 1998**

at Camp Fontainebleau, Louisiana
(near New Orleans)

Theme for this year's family-oriented Convo

"Weaving an Institution"

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Helen Berger

Associate Professor of Sociology, West Chester University and
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More details in our next newsletter.

To register and get early registration rates
contact the CUUPS office today!!!

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