Encouragement to Spiritual Growth:
A Deconstructive Critique of Unitarian Universalism's Relationship to Christianity
By Sarah C. Stewart

I am a Christian. Last year at this time—perhaps even six months ago—I could not have written that statement. I have had no transcendental experience that has convinced me of the absolute truth of Jesus as the Christ for all people. I have not converted from something else to become a Christian. I cannot accept the traditional claims of Christianity as being true for everyone, and in fact cannot claim to understand them all for myself. But I was born into a Christian family and baptized in a Christian church. I live in a largely Christian culture, and—even more to the point—I have oriented my life toward the Christian scriptures, rituals and messages for most of my life. I cannot have the confessional stance toward Islam, Buddhism or communism that I have toward Christianity. Finally, I accept the orientation of Christianity as a way to locate my faith in the mystery—G*d—which is beyond human experience and which I can only attempt to apprehend with the terms of human experience.[1] For many reasons, most out of my control, I accept and probe my human limitations in this way and not in another. I hold this stance in constant doubt, and in constant faith that I will not suddenly find myself lost, rudderless in a sea of mystery. If I move away from a Christian orientation, I will sail into another, and I will find the same encumbrances of responsibility to community and change over time there as I do now.

I am a Unitarian Universalist. The denomination is in a unique position in American religious thought today. The Unitarian Universalist Association's principles affirm "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" as well as "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (Unitarian, "Principles")." With these words we signal our commitment to religious pluralism in religious community. We acknowledge that pluralism in itself is valuable or even vital to the religious project. Our churches honor the coming together of many different people for the purpose of worship, religious inquiry and humanitarian effort. However, in our honorable commitment to pluralism, both our Christian history and the Christianity that exists in our movement today is being silenced. People who were reared Christian are leaving their childhood faiths in favor of religious humanism or paganism.[2] People of all faiths and religious backgrounds come to our churches, seeking community and solace. I am proud to be part of an religious organization that places such value on acceptance and pluralism. But Christians are often not accepted alongside all others; our faith is contained, denied, silenced, or explained away. Unitarian Universalists lose authentic Christian voices to add to their diversity, and the Christian community worldwide loses the valuable criticism and engagement Unitarian Universalists could bring to it.

In the body of this paper, I will draw primarily on the experiences of a New England Unitarian Universalist congregation. However, my experience of the Unitarian Universalist derision of Christianity goes beyond any single congregation. A story from my own experience, not as a minister but as a visitor to a church, exemplifies the current place of Christian faith in Unitarian Universalism today. We are a religious movement that professes to accept all the stories which make up our faith journeys. This unfortunate story of religious intolerance is at odds with that profession. This event occurred while I have been thinking about this essay, and it has framed the development of both my Christian and Unitarian Universalist faith during that time.

Over the summer, my boyfriend Andy and I visited his family, who live near Portland, Oregon. While there, I decided to visit their neighborhood Unitarian Universalist church. Andy and his family are Roman Catholics, but he came to church with me on this Sunday, as he occasionally does. He was my host in his hometown; I was his host in my home faith. We were both warmly welcomed by the people sitting near us in the pews. The congregation was lay-led by choice, a different member or group of members taking responsibility for each Sunday's service. The sermon topic for this Sunday was "Humor and Spirituality." The leader seemed energetic and we were ready for an enjoyable and worshipful morning service. What we got instead was a stream of anti-Catholic jokes. I remember sitting with Andy, wondering whether we should leave, or say something. We did leave immediately following the service.

Andy tells me now that he would not sit through a church service that mocked his religion again. When I told him recently about sitting in the congregation during a Presbyterian ordination of elders and deacons that did not include women, he said, "That's kind of like sitting in a Unitarian Universalist church and hearing the preacher say nasty things about Catholics." The oppression that keeps me out of other, more "conservative" traditions also keeps a part of me out of my chosen faith: in this Unitarian Universalist congregation, my Roman Catholic partner could not come to worship freely. I cannot imagine that the church would have made such jokes about Jews or Muslims or Buddhists. The preacher was herself a former Roman Catholic. Perhaps she felt that gave her license to ridicule the faith. The implication of the service was that it was far better to be Unitarian Universalist than to be Roman Catholic because of Unitarian Universalism's ostensible openness and commitment to plural religion. But Roman Catholicism is one faith outlook to which this Unitarian Universalist church was not open, and which was not included in the preacher's commitment to pluralism.

As a Unitarian Universalist, a candidate for our ministry, and a Christian, I would like to see Unitarian Universalists face their Christian histories critically and (de)constructively instead of reacting to them in violence and fear. I would like our involvement with Christianity to move beyond the aesthetics of our worship services and into active engagement with Christian traditions. We participate in an

historically Protestant tradition and many of us grew up in Christian denominations, so many in our churches could find personal, spiritual healing by engaging Christianity instead of running from it. More importantly, Unitarian Universalism affirms the value and perhaps necessity of religious pluralism for authentic religious life. We maintain that it is not just those who were born into a religion or who have had a positive conversion to it who can offer valid criticism and contribution to that religion. The religious project is plural. What Unitarian Universalists, Jews, Muslims, and Christians think about Christian theology and forms of Christianity in the world is important.

My project in this paper is twofold. First, I will explore how Derrida's theory of deconstruction can be used to work for liberation, citing examples of deconstruction or its failure in the face of patriarchal and colonial oppression. Secondly, I will apply that exploration of deconstruction to Unitarian Universalism's relationship to Christianity through a close reading of Isaac Watts's popular Christmas hymn "Joy to the World" as it appears in the Unitarian Universalist hymnal. I will maintain that the particular changes reflect Unitarian Universalism's undeconstructive reaction to Christianity. This mere reaction (as opposed to a considered response) damages the Unitarian Universalist tradition in three ways: first, it masks the true diversity in our movement and our history; secondly, it reasserts the hierarchical violence of dyadic thinking (the very sort of thinking refugees from fundamentalist faiths are seeking to escape); and finally, it limits our possible responses to the ethical demands the world makes of us as religious people. I will conclude with some modest suggestions for a deconstructive renegotiation of Unitarian Universalism's relationship to Christianity.

This project has some important limitations. I will for the most part only be exploring the place of Christianity within the plural focus of Unitarian Universalism. Christianity and Christians face problems in our churches that other faiths and their adherents do not, since Unitarian Universalism stands simultaneously within a Christian history and claims to have moved beyond that Christian history. The predominantly Christian forms of worship found in our churches also make the experiences of Christians and former Christians different from those of adherents or former adherents of other faiths. Nonetheless, the argument I will make that Unitarian Universalists affirm the right of all in our churches to engage with the plurality of faiths found there could apply to other traditions besides Christianity. For instance, what role does the Jewish idea of "chosen-ness" play in a plural community that includes Jews and non-Jews? Or what of Islam's privileging of "people of the book" over oral traditions? The critique I offer here focuses on Christianity, but it applies to a plural community's relationship to any of the faith views that make it up.

The second limitation is one of definition. Unitarian Universalism is a religious tradition defined by its diversity of belief far more than by its unity. It is difficult, therefore, to pin down what Unitarian Universalism *is*, or to identify *one* reaction it has (as a whole) to anything. One of the important reasons

I am choosing to dissect a hymn from *Singing the Living Tradition* is in response to this difficulty. The hymnal is published by the Unitarian Universalist Association for all its member churches, and is in fact in wide use in Unitarian Universalist liturgies continent-wide. *Singing the Living Tradition* provides model worship materials. There is nothing preventing a minister or worship leader from using resources other than the hymnal. However the hymnal was intended, it is now viewed as a Unitarian Universalist book. Not everything Unitarian Universalist is in its pages, but everything in its pages is Unitarian Universalist. That Unitarian Universalists themselves often disagree with its contents only reveals the particular challenge an authoritative body like the Hymnbook Resources Commission took up when it chose certain hymns over others, or certain alterations over original texts. I will return to this critical point later in the essay.

Different scholars, writing for different liberating purposes, have investigated the relationships of constructed theses/antitheses in unique ways. Joan Scott explores the feminist struggle for equal access to work through the lens of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, arguing that feminists should challenge the acceptance of socially constructed binary antitheses rather than align themselves with one side of the antithesis or the other. Leila Ahmed, writing about the British colonization of Egypt in the late 19th century, argues that nationalist leaders argued about the value of Islam in terms set by the British colonizers, rather than questioning those terms or articulating their own. Both of these writers apply a theory of deconstruction to the liberating enterprises they explore. They take note of the power differences inherent in socially constructed binary oppositions, and they imply that there is a difference between opposite but simple reaction to a thesis set by those in power and response to the power itself. I will go on to apply this same theory to the response of many Unitarian Universalists to Christianity today.

Joan Scott helpfully articulates how Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction can be used to work toward liberation, especially in feminist analysis. Scott notes that although academics use the term "deconstruction" loosely to indicate any careful reading or a dismantling of a text, Derrida defines it precisely. Scott writes, "Deconstruction involves analyzing the operations of difference in texts, the ways in which meanings are made to work" (37). Difference is often socially or historically constructed through the opposition of binaries, and it is the task of deconstruction to examine the binaries and the differences they are being made to bear. Scott focuses on the binary of "equality-versus-difference" in women's struggle for equal employment (38). In this case, the binary that has been historically constructed is women's equality with men on the one hand versus the inherent difference of women and men on the other. This in turn relies on other binary oppositions, most notably masculine/feminine. Rather than choose one side over the other, thereby affirming the binary opposition of "equality" and "difference," Scott suggests that feminists should question the usefulness or truth of the opposition of each term to the other. She writes, "Fixed oppositions conceal the extent to which things presented as

oppositional are, in fact, interdependent—that is, they derive their meaning from a particularly established contrast rather than from some inherent or pure antithesis" (37). The equality between men and women and the differences between men and women, when placed in opposition to each other, derive their meaning from each other and not from a fixed truth. The same is true of the masculine/feminine dyad.

Meaning, however, is not equally derived by each term of the dyad from the other. Scott continues, "Futhermore, according to Jacques Derrida, the interdependence is hierarchical with one term dominant or prior, the opposite term subordinate and secondary" (37). In the masculine/feminine construction, masculinity is assumed to be prior and preferable to femininity, and femininity depends on masculinity for its definition. This is more than simply linguistic meaning-making: the assumed dominance of men over women has been perpetuated by men in violence against women throughout history. But by claiming that the dichotomy is a natural one, men have been able to make their physical, economic, and emotional violence toward women seem justified. It is feminism's task to reveal that the very system of patriarchy that constructed the masculine/feminine dyad benefits from it, as well as benefiting from the false notion that the dichotomy is timeless and true in all circumstances. In light of this, philosopher Elizabeth Gross explains the importance of the liberating work of deconstruction. "One must both reverse the dichotomy and the values attached to the two terms, as well as displace the excluded term, placing it beyond its oppositional role, as the internal condition of the dominant term. This move makes clear the violence of the hierarchy and the debt the dominant term owes to the subordinate one" (Scott 49, n. 5; Gross 74). Liberating work, then, has the consequence of disrupting the established dichotomies from within and then displacing the terms, pointing to a path away from violence.

The first step Scott suggests feminists take is the step of working to expose the constructed, violent nature of dichotomies in our languages.[3] It is task of feminism, along with other liberating efforts, to show that dichotomies derive their meaning and their power from their constructed nature and not from a natural truth. Instead of defining what "femininity" is in a particular context, such as women's right to equal work and pay, feminists should question the binary definition of femininity in light of masculinity in the first place, seeking to expose its constructed rather than natural quality (46).[4] Or more precisely, feminists should place both the constructed and natural differences and similarities between the opposed terms in context (47). Simply denying the effectiveness of the binary terms—in Scott's article exemplified by the "equality" argument which claims that men and women are the same—reinscribes the violence by imposing yet another dichotomy: that of identity/difference. Rather, Scott argues feminists must make two moves in their liberating work.

> The first is the systematic criticism of the operations of categorical difference, the exposure of the kinds of exclusions and inclusions—the hierarchies—it constructs, and a refusal of their ultimate "truth." A refusal, however, not in the name of an equality that implies sameness or identity, but rather (and this is the second move) in the name of an equality that rests on differences—

> differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition. To do anything else is to buy into the political argument that sameness is a requirement for equality, an untenable position for feminists (and historians) who know that power is constructed on so must be challenged from the ground of difference (48).

Scott's analysis of the feminist struggle for equal access to well-paying jobs leads her to the carefully nuanced statement above of feminism's proper goals. First, feminists should deny the absolute truth of established dichotomies; second, they should investigate the multivalent relationships that exist in the world and in the languages we use through a lens of difference. I will return to this useful articulation of a liberating movement's goals in my discussion of one aspect of Unitarian Universalism's relationship to Christianity.

Leila Ahmed, in the eighth chapter of her book *Women and Gender in Islam*, discusses an historical case where a movement for liberation did not attempt to subvert the dichotomies of an oppressive regime, but rather reacted to the regime within the terms of a set dichotomy. When British colonizers and their collaborators defined the "backwardness" of Islam according to women's clothing, many male nationalist leaders responded within the category of women's behavior and dress, rather than questioning that category as set by the colonizers. Her analysis of this reaction shows how many nationalists' failure to question and subvert the dichotomy with which they were presented reinforced the violence of other dichotomous relationships, especially between patriarchal leaders and women.

In 1899, twenty years into the British domination of Egypt, the Egyptian writer Qassim Amin published *The Liberation of Woman*. Through this book, Amin claimed to want to improve women's status in the service of improving Egyptian civilization in general. To Amin, improving Egyptian civilization meant adopting European traditions and practices at the expense of Islamic ones. He singles out Egyptian women's dress and behavior to make his point.

While claiming to be writing on women's behalf, and although he was acclaimed as a feminist, Amin's work is in fact misogynist. Ahmed writes, "Amin's work has traditionally been regarded as marking the beginning of feminism in Arab culture" (145). Her reading of *The Liberation of Woman* shows that despite its title and stated purpose, it is in fact derogatory of women at every opportunity. Amin writes, "Most Egyptian women are not in the habit of combing their hair every day…nor do they bathe more than once a week. They do not know how to use a toothbrush and do not attend to what is attractive in clothing, though their attractiveness and cleanliness strongly influence men's inclinations" (Ahmed 157). Based on generalizations such as these, he argues that in order for Muslim society as a whole to be truly "free" (i.e., more European) women need to relinquish the veil. This is what racist and Eurocentric colonial writers, such as Lord Cromer (the British consul general in Cairo), had been saying all along (152-55). Amin, a native Egyptian writer, is reproducing the racist colonial discourse in the service of a false feminism.[5] These same European men (and sometimes women) promulgated the

oppression of colonized societies abroad and the oppression of European women at home. The contradiction in Amin's writing is uncritically lifted from the colonial discourse.

Ahmed uses Cromer's own writings to show the insidious interplay of feminism and political control in the colonial discourse. Cromer unabashedly used Western feminism abroad to oppress the colonial Other (both men and women in those societies) while fighting against women's liberation movements in Britain. His goal in all arenas was the maintenance of his social and political control: over women at home, over women and men abroad, over any native Egyptian government. He opposed women's suffrage in Britain, notably as a founding member of the Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage (Ahmed 153). He then used the language of the liberation of women to degrade Muslim society, arguing that Muslim practices regarding women were " 'the fatal obstacle' to the Egyptian's 'attainment of that elevation of thought and character which should accompany the introduction of Western civilisation' ([Cromer] 2:538-39); only by abandoning those practices might they attain 'the mental and moral development which he [Cromer] desired for them'" (153).

Both at home and abroad, what Cromer sought was for women to become or remain the Victorian ideal. He opposed British women's suffrage efforts because they were attempting to subvert the ideal; he wished Egyptian women to leave off their Muslim practices and become more Western—more Victorian—but not in fact more feminist. The language of feminism provided him with a way to make his real oppression of the Islamic Other seem enlightened. Unfortunately, Western feminists were not any more savvy or considerate in their application of feminism to colonized societies (see note 3 above). Ahmed writes, "Whether in the hands of patriarchal men or feminists, the ideas of Western feminism essentially functioned to morally justify the attack on native societies and to support the notion of the comprehensive superiority of Europe" (154).

Qassim Amin uncritically appropriated the rhetoric of Western feminism to continue the attack on Egyptian women, men and society from within. Angered by Amin's unapologetically pro-British argument in *The Liberation of Woman*, Egyptian nationalists reacted in writings of their own. In addition to making anti-Islamic, pro-Victorian recommendations for Egyptian women's behavior and dress, Amin had praised British rule and insulted the Egyptian khedive, denigrated native customs and shown disrespect for the 'ulama (Ahmed 162).[6] However, most nationalist rebuttals of Amin's work remained as uncritical of his "feminist" standpoint (appropriated from the colonizers) as Amin himself had been. The nationalist reaction took place over the issue of women: if a pro-British work told nationalist men that Egyptian women should adopt Western ways, those men then asserted that women should retain Islamic ways. They argued that the veil and Islamic marriage practices were essential to a true Islam and therefore Egyptian nationalism. Ahmed writes, "In a way that was to become typical of the Arabic

narrative of resistance, the opposition appropriated, in order to negate them, the terms set in the first place by the colonial discourse" (162).

It is important to note that not all nationalist responses to Amin's work were uncritical reactions. Mustapa Kamil, a non-Islamicist nationalist agitator, published critiques of Amin's book that emphasized need for women's and men's equal education while resisting the move to adopt Western culture uncritically. Nationalist responses that hinged more centrally on the value of Islam for Egyptian independence were quicker to argue that the very practices Amin abhorred, and veiling in particular, were essential to an independent, Islamic Egypt. These responses reacted to Amin's claim of feminism by being unapologetically patriarchal (163).

Ahmed reemphasizes the uncritical nature of the nationalist reaction to the colonial discourse. "This narrative of resistance appropriated, in order to negate them, the symbolic terms of the originating narrative" (163-64). By making clear that the nationalist resistance negated the symbolic terms of the colonial discourse, Ahmed shows that the substance of those terms was not questioned. Amin insisted that it was necessary for Egyptian women to give up the veil in order to become more Western. Nationalists reacted by insisting that Egyptian women retain the veil in order to remain Egyptian and support the nationalist cause. More to the point, the nationalist reaction insisted that Egyptian *men* "[learn] to affirm that the wife's duty was to attend to the physical, mental, and moral needs of her husband and children" as prescribed by Islamic patriarchy in order to ensure the freedom of their culture and independence of their country (163).

In this historical instance, Ahmed points out how deconstruction failed. Instead of questioning the dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, West/East, Christian/Islamic, or feminist woman/traditional woman, much of the nationalist movement simply reacted to the colonial discourse within these dichotomies. The colonizers had established the dichotomies and exerted their control and violence through them, and the nationalist reaction from within those dichotomies simply reified their power and legitimacy. The nationalist reaction may have had some effect in the struggle for independence, but it reinscribed the violence done to Egyptian civilization by Britain in terms of violence done by Egyptian men to Egyptian women. Presented with the dyad of British liberated women/Egyptian subjugated women, nationalists reacted by insisting either that their women were not subjugated or that Egyptian treatment of women should be the dominant term in the dyad. They recast Islamic patriarchy as superior to Western patriarchy rather than questioning the need to make such an assertion at all (163). This, in turn, does nothing to question the category of patriarchy itself, and thereby does nothing to cease the actual physical and economic violence being perpetrated against Egyptian (and British) women. Liberation of women, stated as the goal of Amin's original work, disappears in the struggle for dominance.

We have now seen two examples of the use of Derridaean deconstruction in analysis of oppression. Joan Scott showed how deconstruction of the feminine/masculine and difference/equality dyads could aid the feminist struggle for women's equal access to paying work. She articulated two steps in this process: criticism of the hierarchy of these dyads as well as their appeal to absolute truth, and resistance to the hierarchies not on their own terms but on the terms of diversity and plurality of women and women's experience (48). Leila Ahmed critiqued the predominant Egyptian nationalist reaction to an anti-Islamic diatribe promulgated in the name of feminism. Many nationalists failed to take either of Scott's steps. They reacted to the dichotomies set by the oppressor using the terms of those dichotomies. They did not answer by claiming a diversity of Islamic practice or of women's experiences, but rather by claiming that Islam had an essential definition and Islamic women an essential role to play in that definition. Where deconstruction failed in each case, hierarchical violence was perpetuated. These two examples of the response of oppressed peoples in the face of power make clear the importance of deconstruction to liberating work.

Dichotomies are at work in many Unitarian Universalists' approach to Christianity. The effects of fundamentalist[7] forms of religious thought in the personal histories of Unitarian Universalists are structurally similar to the effects of political colonization or patriarchal oppression. Unitarian Universalists who, in the earlier part of their lives, perceived Christianity as monolithic, as oppressive, and as fundamentally at conflict with their own spiritual understandings, tend now to perceive Christianity as *only* that way. Christianity set up the hierarchical dyads for them: Christian/pagan,[8] saved/damned, holy/unholy. Many Unitarian Universalists found themselves on the secondary, lesser sides of those dichotomies. Unitarian Universalism provides a religious environment that claims to eschew such dichotomies altogether; and indeed, it is one of our successes that many who have traditionally been kept from full participation in other churches have been welcomed in ours.

The predominance of "converts" from fundamentalist faiths has shaped many Unitarian Universalist churches' relationship to Christianity. Far from leaving behind the oppressive aspects of fundamentalist religious dogmas to embrace a different form of Christianity, many Unitarian Universalists have denied the presence or influence of Christianity in their lives at all, preferring to adopt a humanist or non-specific theist theology. Nonetheless, Christian ritual remains important to many. A Unitarian Universalist minister in the Midwest relates this anecdote: "It is the staunchest humanists, who never want to mention the words "God" or "Jesus" during the year, who most want to sing traditional carols at Christmas." In light of the analysis of hierarchical dichotomies and deconstruction offered by Scott and Ahmed, Unitarian Universalism's relationship to Christianity remains undeconstructed. The terms of Christian discourse have been set by fundamentalist churches and we Unitarian Universalists have not reclaimed them.

This undeconstructed reaction to Christianity leads to an attempt, in much current Unitarian Universalist discourse, preaching, and liturgy, to deny the oppressive Christian Other by masking or removing Christian content altogether. At the same time, Unitarian Universalists corporately and often individually, have a rich Christian history that informs their ecclesiology and personal spirituality, however much the content of that Christian message may have been spurned. Some aspects of Christianity still fulfill their cultic and spiritual needs. Moreover, some Unitarian Universalists continue to confess Christianity while remaining committed to Unitarian Universalism. The free expression of this Christian faith is suppressed in the attempt to protect the larger community from the presence of the Oppressor Christianity. In other words, Unitarian Universalists need Christmas celebrations, even if they do not proclaim the Christ: they have learned to hinge their religious lives around the sacred celebration. The combination of removing the content of Christianity from Unitarian Universalist religious expressions while silently using Christian forms in worship life is a reaction against the oppressive form of Christianity rather than an honoring of Christianity as an aspect of Unitarian Universalist commitments to pluralism.

I wish to recall at this point of Joan Scott's two-fold recommendation for the application of deconstructive criticism to liberating work. First, she writes, we must take up "the systematic criticism of the operations of categorical dfference, the exposure of the kinds of exclusions and inclusions—the hierarchies—it constructs, and a refusal of their ultimate 'truth.'" Secondly, we must refuse that appeal to truth "in the name of an equality that rests on differences—differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition" (48). Moreover, in order to be effective, deconstructive critiques must always come in some sense from within that which they critique. Derrida writes, "The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it" (24; Gross 74, n. 4). The Unitarian Universalist reaction to Christianity is not in fact a "move out" of the Christian tradition, but rather an unsuspecting, undeconstructive habitation of it. In three ways, this reaction to Christianity damages the Unitarian Universalist tradition: first, it masks the true diversity in our movement and our history; secondly, it reasserts the hierarchical violence of dyadic thinking (the very sort of thinking refugees from fundamentalist faiths are seeking to escape); and finally, it limits our possible responses to the ethical demands the world makes of us as religious people.

We can see the results of this reaction against oppressive forms of Christianity clearly in the Unitarian Universalist treatment of the familiar Christmas carol, "Joy to the World." The Unitarian Universalist version, found in both the 1993 and the 2000 editions of *Singing the Living Tradition*, is set next to the original on the following page. *Singing the Living Tradition* is widely used in Unitarian

Universalist churches and is accepted as broadly representative of Unitarian Universalists' religious outlook. It is the only book or resource that offers comprehensive liturgy for Unitarian Universalist churches. It includes hymns, service music, and readings to use in weekly services as well as life passages. It was compiled by the Hymnbook Resources Commission, a group of ministers and other leaders in the denomination. They write, "Within this thicket of diversity and doubt [which characterizes Unitarian Universalism in the late twentieth century], the Hymnbook Resources Commission, with the help of many, sought to express the center and edges of our living tradition. We found a wealth of music and poetry, wisdom and beauty, from which we made a good and useful selection" (Unitarian, *Singing* vii). Although it is used in many churches, *Singing the Living Tradition* continues to be a touchstone for Unitarian Universalists' worries about the history and diversity of their movement.

"Joy to the World" by Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
As found (unaltered) in the 1940 Episcopal Hymnal
No. 319 (Protestant)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;
let men their[9] songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love.

"Joy to the World" by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), alt.
As found in the 1993 and 2000 Unitarian Universalist Hymnal,
Singing the Living Tradition, No. 245

Joy to the world! The Word is come:
let earth with praises ring.
Let every heart prepare a room,
and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! Now gladness reigns:
let hearts their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground.
Let righteousness its glories show
as far as love is found.

The first effect of the changed text is to mask the richness and diversity of our own theological history. From a purely historical point of view, it is strange that the Unitarian Universalist Association found it necessary to change this hymn at all. Isaac Watts, an independent English minister, wrote "Joy to the World" (James 66, no. 245; Bennett 979). Watts's hymnody was ground-breaking for its time: it was emotional, fervent, and lay outside the strict limits set by John Calvin on liturgical music at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Bennett 979).[10] Watts himself was a dissenter from the Church of England. His theology grew more radical during the course of his life and ministry. In 1719, the same year he wrote "Joy to the World," Watts voted not to demand independent ministers to accept the doctrine of the Trinity.[11] "He did not believe it necessary to salvation," historian Henry Bennett writes; "the creed of Constantinople had become to him only a human explication of the mystery of the divine Godhead…" (980). By the end of his life, some of his close contemporaries affirmed that he had "passed to the unitarian position, and wrote in defence of it…[T]he last belief of Watts was 'completely unitarian,'" one friend claimed.[12] As a dissenting minister who grew more unitarian in his theology over the course of his life, Isaac Watts stands directly in Unitarian Universalism's historical tradition. Even if it did nothing else, the alteration of "Joy to the World" in *Singing the Living Tradition* obscures part of the truth of our own institutional history.

Given this, it would seem unlikely that the Unitarian Universalist Association would alter the meaning and theology of one of his most popular hymns so drastically. An explanation comes when we recognize that the current emphasis is on the hymn as Christian, and not on Watts as a liberal. "Joy to the World" in its original form proclaims the saving power of the coming Christ and the joy the world feels at this coming. Indeed, many Unitarian Universalists grew up singing this hymn in jubilation at Christmas without recognizing it was historically liberal. Now, however, they do not proclaim the Christ, but they still find comfort in Christmas carols. The Unitarian Universalist Association has attempted to negotiate this cultic need by removing the Christian content from Watts's hymn while continuing to offer the familiar form of singing the words "Joy to the World" to Handel's tune (Unitarian, *Singing* no. 245). Although James calls Watts a "liberal" and praises him for "emancipating English-speaking churches from a hymnody consisting almost exclusively of psalms in rhyme," she does not comment on Watts's unitarian tendencies or explain why the Hymnbook Resources Commission felt it necessary to mask them (66; no. 245).

This sort of change to Christian hymns masks the true diversity of our tradition in another way, as well. It is crucial to note that hymns from other (non-Christian) traditions are usually not altered in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Of the 415 hymns in the hymnal, 10 are specifically labeled "Jewish" (no. 214-223). Of those 10, 3 are at least partly in Hebrew (no. 214, 216, 222), and only one has been altered from the original English text (no. 223). A Unitarian Universalist minister wrote one of the hymns (no.

220). The hymns or songs of other traditions are all collected under the heading, "Wisdom from the World's Religions" (v). Of the 23 hymns in this section, two are labeled "Hindu" and the words to both are given only in Indian languages with English language notes explaining what the hymns are about (no. 176, 178). Two hymns in English come from Buddhism and appear in their original forms (no. 183-84). Two hymns relate the Muslim tradition, although neither is very descriptive of it. One simply repeats the word "Alhamdulillah," (which is "Alleluia" in Arabic) while the other is a simple poem from Rumi (no. 180, 188). Notably, a few hymns in this section were written by members of the Brahmo Somaj, an Indian liberal religious group to whom the Unitarians and now the Unitarian Universalists have always had ties (no. 185, 191, 197).

Compare the hymns found in the specifically Christian section of the hymnal.[13] Approximately one-third of these hymns are by Unitarian Universalists; possibly another third appear unchanged; and another third are traditional Christian hymns that have been altered. I say that "possibly" one third appear in their original form, because at least two hymns appear altered but with no note indicating the change.[14] These make up 44 hymns in this section; five others are not noticeably Christian (no. 226, 234-35, 248, 250) and one is based on the gospel of Mark but is in Hebrew, with no translation offered (no. 260).

Judaism and Christianity are honored equally in Unitarian Universalism's sources (Unitarian, "Principles"). Yet the hymnal has one-quarter as many explicitly Jewish hymns as it does Christian hymns, and one-third of the Christian hymns have been altered to fit current Unitarian Universalist outlook, compared to one-tenth of the Jewish hymns. This is evidence of the particular and peculiar relationship Unitarian Universalism has to Christianity. Despite Unitarian Universalism's pluralist intentions, Christianity remains the dominant tradition, the term against which most struggle occurs. Not only does this do a disservice to the Christian tradition (see note 11 above), it simultaneously relativizes and valorizes other religions. Christianity is perceived as a (bad) monolith that must be cut down to size in order to fit in the Unitarian Universalist hymnal; other religions appear as smaller (good) monoliths that do not present any problems. There is little room, in this hymnal or in the liturgies it offers, for Christians, Muslims, Hindus, or Jews to wrestle with the positive and negative aspects of their faith traditions.

Is it possible that the Commission is, in fact, encouraging the "processes of cultural negotiation that take place in relationship to canon" when it changes the words but not the tunes of well-known Christian hymns (Brown 90)? Anthropologist Jonathan Smith offers an explanation of ritual that emphasizes the affective component over the cognitive component. About this discussion of hymn-singing, Smith might ask why it focuses on the theological intent of "Joy to the World" or other hymns rather than the affective experience of singing the hymn in worship. He might argue that Unitarian Universalists are negotiating their relationship to their own historical canon in the current tradition by

changing the words to reflect current theological views. The outline of the words, however, and the familiar tune remain the same: in this view, the tension between the affective experience of singing the hymn and the intellectual process of contemplating the words creates ritual and carries the tradition forward (93).

Smith distinguishes between ways in which communities accomplish this ritual transformation, however. "Every ritual, that is, every performance of the contrast between the actual and the ideal, carries within it a range of potentiality that may be demarcated in a threefold way—as the power to promote ratification of the given…,or to promote flight from the given to the ideal…,or to promote play between them…" (Brown 94). The first two demarcations are understandings of ritual that are never fully realized, so in some way all ritual activity is play. Members of a community play with their tradition, "…performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are" (93). Smith is imagining a community that lives in tension with its received tradition. In his model, the tradition is an authority carrying the weight of the past, the ritual embodies the possibility of the future, and the community's lived experience negotiates the difference or plays between them. In the aspect of Unitarian Universalism we are discussing here, the Hymnbook Resources Commission and the Unitarian Universalist Association have stepped into the authoritative role. The received tradition is two thousand years of Christianity, as well as Isaac Watts's participation in unitarian thinking in the eighteenth century and all of liberal Christianity's discourse with more conservative voices. By imposing a single interpretation of those traditions before passing them on to the people in the churches, the Unitarian Universalist Association has stifled the free play of affect in ritual.

Unitarian Universalists themselves notice that they are not given the chance to play with their own traditions. I made an attempt to discover what Unitarian Universalists think about the change from "Lord" to "Word" in "Joy to the World" as it appears in *Singing the Living Tradition*. As part of my research for this paper, I asked 68 members of a New England church where I have worked for the past two years what the opening lines of "Joy to the World" meant to them (see Appendix A). I had not discussed any part of my paper or my critique of the hymn with them when I wrote to ask for their help. I received 28 replies expressing a variety of responses to the hymn. Several were critical of changing traditional hymns at all, and some cited Unitarian Universalism's commitment to religious tolerance and diversity as reasons *not* to change hymns. They applied this reasoning even to Christian hymns, which many see as representative of a tradition which has itself historically been stifling of other faith claims. The following e-mail is representative of this view:

> I am very conflicted about changing the words to traditional hymns. In many instances I feel it is appropriate to use politically correct, gender neutral, inclusive or whatever you want to call it language. Perhaps it is better to write and sing new UU [Unitarian Universalist] hymns, rather than change the words to others. In some ways I feel

> changing or updating the words separates UUs from other denominations in a bad way...and goes against some of the basic UU principles of the freedom of religious expression, tolerance of religious ideas, and worth and dignity of other religions (Anonymous, 14 March).

This response advocates a position closer to that of the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal's treatment of hymns. In that version of "Joy to the World," the hymn has been made gender inclusive but the theology remains unchanged (Episcopal no. 100).

The Hymnbook Resources Commission of the Unitarian Universalist Association has stifled the reception of tradition in more subtle ways as well. The most notable change in the Unitarian Universalist version of the hymn from the original comes in the first stanza. "Joy to the world! the *Lord* is come," has been changed to, "Joy to the world! the *Word* is come" (Protestant no. 319; Unitarian, *Singing* no. 245, emphasis added). This is a significant alteration, coming in an early and well known part of the text and changing the stated intent of the hymn. Singers no longer welcome or announce the "Lord"; they now proclaim the coming of the "Word." In the companion volume to *Singing the Living Tradition*, editor Jacqui James describes the Unitarian Universalist Hymnbook Resources Commission's theological intent in introducing the new term. She writes, "Arius (4th century CE) taught that the "Unknown Unbegun" (i.e., God) had radiated the Logos (Word, the Known, Reason, etc.) and that the human being, Jesus of Galilee, had, by his good work and humility, received the Word into himself, thus becoming a Christ" (66; no. 245). She does not reveal the Commission's intent in changing the word from "Lord" to "Word," but we can imagine that they hoped to avoid the imperialist and sexist tones inherent in "Lord."

Although James does not mention this, Watts himself was sympathetic to the Arianism of his day. "His theory," writes Henry Bennett, "…was that the human soul of Christ had been created anterior to the creation of the world, and united to the divine principle in the Godhead known as the Sophia or Logos (only a short step from Arianism…); and that the personality of the Holy Ghost was figurative rather than proper or literal" (980). This is slightly different from the pure Arianism that James attributes to the Hymnbook Commission. Watts thought that the Christ's human aspect and divine aspect were separate. The human aspect was created by God, but the divine aspect was a part of God which God united with Christ. Christ was different from other humans in that he was a special creation of God before the earth was created, but Christ was not coequal with God. James, on the other hand, writes that "Lord" was changed to "Word" in order to reflect an Arian humanist christology. Jesus, a man created in nature like any other, was so enlightened as to receive the divine principle during his earthly life (66; no. 245). This is a slight but devastating change. The effect of the change is hardly noticed among Unitarian Universalists, but the intent of the Hymnbook Resources Commission was to alter Watts's own Arian theology. This revisionist approach obliterates the truth and diversity of Unitarian Universalism's own theological history.

The change from "Lord" to "Word" reasserts the hierarchical violence of the dyadic structure of modern authority. "Lord" stands opposite the term "servant," implying domination, masculine control, Jesus or Christ as master. If Jesus is the "Lord," non-Christians or post-Christians find themselves in the "servant" or "slave" category, almost against their will. These categories appeal to unchanging meaning for their power: the dyad draws its authority from the idea that Jesus *is* Lord, and that the rest of the world relates to him as servants. Rather than offering churches a chance to deconstruct the hymn's meaning for themselves, however, the Hymnbook Resources Commission has rearticulated the false authority of the dyadic structure. In changing "Lord" to "Word," the Commission has simply substituted the dominant word in the dyad. "Word" seems less imperial, more friendly; Unitarian Universalists may have an easier time identifying with this dominant term and will be able to avoid painful identification with the secondary, excluded term of "slave."

But "Word" is not less imperial than "Lord," and retaining the dyadic structure continues to wield the violence of hierarchies. "Word" as a meaningful concept comes to Christianity through the prologue to John's gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:1-5).[15] "Word" is creation, life, light, totality; it opposes the silence of the uncreated, death, darkness, fragmentation. In some ways "Word" is an even more dangerous than "Lord": proclaiming that the "Word" has come at Christmas affirms that Christ brings with him light, life, creation and speech for all people, whether they confess him or not.[16]

One response shows that it is possible to take the change from "Lord" to "Word" in the spirit in which it was intended.

> My immediate reaction to these words is, of course, to be reminded of my Christian roots and singing these phrases or their variants in celebration of the arrival on earth of Christ-the-Savior. If I were singing these words in a church service *now*, I'd believe that the congregation and I were affirming and celebrating the gift of the Word, which is that thing within us that makes us able to transcend the mundane, to love, to be fully human. Both "the Word" and "Christ-the-Savior" are metaphors for this quality. In the Gospel of St. John, "the Word" is a metaphor (or alternate name) for God. So -- the congregation and I would be celebrating our humanity, our self-awareness, our ability to make and take joy and love as a god-like quality, or god itself (McReynolds).

This was the only response I received which made direct, positive reference to the gospel of John.

Another singular response voices the opposing view. This person brings up the very problem of the switch from "Lord" to "Word."

> If I refuse to allow myself to be swayed by the millions of Born-Again people out there who vocally insist that The Word is a direct reference to Jesus and His Divinity (and

> Divine Will), I would tend to recall what was actually said in the New Testament, when Jesus teaches that the Word of God is Love. So then my interpretation might be, "Joy to the world!... Everlasting Love is with us! We should really rejoice now." […] I would caution that in this case, since the phrase 'The Word' is very, very highly charged for us refugees from the Born Again parts of the universe, it is little different from saying, "The Lord is come." In which case, the change has not accomplished its goal of possibly degenderizing and universalizing…the verse, since the version of The Word that I'm seeing has a beard and a glowing thingy over his head. Which means I still hear in my head, "Let Earth receive her King" (Anonymous, 13 March).

This response shows how insidious the change from "Lord" to "Word" can be. In attempting to change the terms of an oppressive, dichotomous structure, the Hymnbook Resources Commission managed to rearticulate the violence of that very structure. Word is not a safer word than Lord; creation of all things and language through Christ is not necessarily a more comforting concept than the domination of Christ over all reality. It continues to oppress refugees from Christian fundamentalism.

The change also does not necessarily accomplish the Commission's presumed goal of applying "…inclusive insights to carols and some familiar hymns so that our tradition is not merely received" (Unitarian, *Singing* vii). People who hail from non-Christian traditions or who have made a positive conversion to another faith stance find this hymn offensive, even with its new words. Three of my respondents (one Jewish, one neo-pagan, and one former Christian) had a purely negative reaction to the theology expressed in the Unitarian Universalist version of this hymn. The following response from the neo-pagan church member shows this reaction:

> My immediate emotional reaction to the song is that I would not sing it, just stand politely while it was being sung…It seems to me it is meant to be a less offensive version of Joy to the World by substituting Word for Lord/King (which I wouldn't sing either...I substitute son/sun)…I like it less than the original because I don't think there is a Word, not one for everyone at any rate. I think it also implies (maybe unconsciously) a preference for religions of "the book" (Anonymous, 16 March).

Not only does this respondent find the hymn unacceptable, s/he likes it *less* than the original version, even though s/he would not sing the original in worship either. The original comes clearly from a Christian tradition and (less obviously) from a Christian part of Unitarian Universalism's own intellectual history. The changed version carries with it the implication Unitarian Universalist authoritative approval of the change. Presented with the hymn, Unitarian Universalists must either accept it as a "proper" Unitarian Universalist reading of the text or find themselves at odds with their own representative Association. Dissent, then, comes to be voiced not against the Christian tradition but against the Unitarian Universalist authority. The dissent still takes the form of rebellion within a dyadic, hierarchical structure. Unitarian Universalists find themselves presented with the choice of associating themselves in complicity with the dominant proffered "Word" or resisting—now not in the category of slave or servant versus Lord, but in the category of silence versus the Word of Christmas and Unitarian Universalist authority. The most

dangerous silence is the silence of non-Christians or other dissenters such as the neo-pagan above. Hymn-singing or discussion of hymn-singing could be an opportunity for their voiced response to a received Christian and unitarian tradition (an opportunity affirmed as necessary to religious life in Unitarian Universalist ecclesiology). By providing an "approved" but still oppressive change, the Unitarian Universalist Association has effectively limited dissenters' response to the small silence of remaining quiet while all around them sing.

Finally, by another change to "Joy to the World," the Unitarian Universalist Association implicitly limits its ethical response to the evils of the world. The third and fourth stanzas of Watts's original hymn have been conflated into one final stanza in *Singing the Living Tradition*. The final two lines of the original third stanza read: "he comes to make his blessings flow/ far as the curse is found" (Protestant no. 319; Episcopal no. 100). The final two lines of the Unitarian Universalist version have been edited: "Let righteousness its glories show/ as far as love is found" (*Singing* 245). The first two lines of the stanza are the same in both versions, including the mention of "sins and sorrows" (see page 19 above).

The first thing this change does is to remove the agency of Jesus or the Christ as redeemer of sins, sorrows, or curses. This perhaps reflects the majority of Unitarian Universalists' thinking about Jesus. More importantly, however, the breadth and efficacy of the redemption which is offered has been curtailed. In the original, "blessings" stands opposite "curse," and encompasses all that is: where there are blessings already, no more are needed; where there is curse, blessings will come instead. G*d no longer delivers blessings and curses, according to the people's obedience; Jesus offers blessings and redemption to all. This carries within it notions that Unitarian Universalists, in their commitment to pluralism, might find offensive: that the world needs Jesus's redemption, or that those who do not now receive the blessings of Christianity are "cursed." A criticism of these lines is a fair and expected Unitarian Universalist response.

The reaction that is offered, however, is questionable. "He" has been replaced with "righteousness," an understandable change since Jesus is accorded "righteousness" in the final (omitted) stanza of the original. But this righteousness does not extend to all people everywhere, nor does it address the evils of the world, whatever they may be. It extends only where "love is found." This may in fact reflect Unitarian Universalist thought: where there is love, there will be righteousness. But the altered hymn misses an opportunity to rejoice at the eradication of all evil. What of the places, relationships, or political situations where love cannot be found? Will righteousness come to those situations as well? Especially given the eschatological tenor of the stanza, it is limiting to restrict righteousness to the places where there is already love. The reaction to the dyad blessings/curses has not been deconstructed, but rather replaced with the dyad love/hate. This new undeconstructed dyad still

appeals to a notion of truth. It claims that where there is love, there will be righteousness, and where there is hate, there will not be righteousness. It makes this claim uncritically: hate is the unclaimed, subservient term in the dyad, silenced in the hymn. The Unitarian Universalist version has replaced the objectionable Christian supercessionism of Jesus Christ's universal salvation with a refusal to comment at all on evil in the world.

Instead of relying on Unitarian Universalism's authorities to make Christianity palatable to most churchgoers, I propose a response along the lines of Scott's proposal for liberating work. She first proposes that communities take up the work of deconstruction: that they disrupt dyadic thinking and writing where they find it. She goes on to suggest that communities take on this disruptive critique not in the name of sameness or essentialism but in the name of difference. In making this argument, I have had to be careful not to assert that Unitarian Universalism is essentially Christian, either through an appeal to absolute truth or historical necessity. Unitarian Universalism, is, however, committed to religious diversity in religious community. It welcomes people of all faith backgrounds to our churches. It is in the name of this diversity and pluralism that Unitarian Universalism should embrace the complexity of its institutional and intellectual history, as well as include Christianity in the "thicket of diversity and doubt" that constitutes its collective theology (Unitarian, *Singing* vii).

As I have argued, Unitarian Universalism does not do justice to Christianity or the history of its own tradition by changing hymns like "Joy to the World." The particular changes made to the hymn are evidence of Unitarian Universalism's undeconstructive (and therefore dangerous) reaction to Christianity. The changes made to the hymn mask the true diversity in our movement and our history; reassert the hierarchical violence of dyadic thinking; and finally, limit our possible responses to the ethical demands the world makes of us as religious people. The Hymnbook Resources Commission was right to be suspicious of the dyads that appear in the original text of "Joy to the World": Lord/servant or Lord/slave, King/subject, blessings/curses, and others. Substituting other dyadic structures for the offensive originals, however, reiterates the danger of hierarchical thinking rather than challenging it. The dyads in the Unitarian Universalist version of Word/silence, righteousness/sinfulness and love/hate are just as dangerous as the original structures. In fact, they are more dangerous, since they are presented to the churches as an authoritative Unitarian Universalist reading of the hymn.

Theologian Gordon Kaufman suggests that we humans take the historicity of our religious traditions and commitments seriously. Once we can recognize that all religious claims are claims made in and on history, that no one has privileged access to that which may lie beyond history, the constructed nature of religious imagining comes into focus (81-82 and passim). This places all human religious imagination on the same level, preventing any one religious community from making claims over any other. It provides a level starting place from which all people can work together to create the

commonality they need to confront the global dangers we now face: environmental disaster or nuclear holocaust. He propose humanization as the criteria by which humans can judge all claims and movements.

> [W]hatever tends to enhance and strengthen the culture-creating processes through which our original animality is transformed into humanity is good; whatever tends to corrupt, block, or destroy these processes of humanization—in any human beings, regardless of race, class, nationality, or gender—is evil; whatever rescues us from or otherwise overcomes such evil processes, powers, or events is salvific (93).

This theology provides Kaufman with a rich understanding of the value of pluralism in human community. The threats that face us are global; we are therefore better equipped to meet them if all of us work together in our diversity. This involves not an authoritative mandate of relativism or secularism, but rather a working out in faith of what our common ground can be in the midst of our diversity. It means struggling to give up exclusivist truth claims in order to create more common ground.

Unitarian Universalism is already engaged in this process. Our churches are committed to being a common ground where people of all religious backgrounds, sexualities, races, gender identities and nationalities can gather in sacred worship and to work toward a better world. That commitment is not always easy, and maintaining it requires constant work and negotiation on the part of individual congregations and our larger denominational associations. Christians and Christianity, however, are largely excluded from this work. Although Christianity is prominent in Unitarian Universalism's institutional and intellectual histories, and although ten percent of members of our churches identify as Christians, the Christian presence is not welcomed equally into conversations about the nature of Unitarian Universalist pluralism (Unitarian, "1997"). By altering the hymns in the hymnal or otherwise keeping Christian views and Unitarian Universalism's Christian history hidden, the Unitarian Universalist Association is complicit in their exclusion from our plural faith.

My suggestion for how to treat worship materials in particular is simple. "Joy to the World" and other Christian hymns or resources (both from our own tradition and from Christianity generally) should be presented to the churches unchanged. This would simultaneously give Christians a voice in their congregations and present an honest account of the Christian faith for Unitarian Universalists as a whole to grapple with. Unitarian Universalism comes from a rich Protestant, Christian, and humanist history. In order to understand our present community and continue to grow toward our goals of "peace, liberty and justice for all," we would do well to grapple with and come to understand our own theological and institutional roots. In order to remain committed to a true pluralism, we must struggle to include Christian faiths alongside others, even if this process is at times painful. Deconstructing our complicated personal and corporate relationship to Christianity will help us be more welcoming to people from non-

Christian faith backgrounds. It will release us from the desperate struggle against Christianity and open us up to the struggle for pluralism.

Works Consulted

Anonymous. "RE: Your help with my thesis." E-mail to Sarah Stewart. 13 March 2001. Used anonymously with permission.

Anonymous. "RE: Your help with my thesis." E-mail to Sarah Stewart. 14 March 2001. Used anonymously with permission.

Anonymous. "Re: Your help with my thesis." E-mail to Sarah Stewart. 16 March 2001. Used anonymously with permission.

Bennet, Henry. "Watts, Isaac." *DNB*. 1921-22 ed.

Brown, Delwin. *Boundaries of Our Habitations: Tradition and Theological Construction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans. 28 March 2001. Unitarian Universalist Association. Accessed 29 March 2001. <http://www.cuups.org/content/intro.html>.

Cromer, Earl of. *Modern Egypt*. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1908.

Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. New paperback ed., with an original reintroduction by the author. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

The Episcopal Church, ed. *The Hymnal 1982, According to the Use of the Episcopal Church*. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1982.

Gross, Elizabeth. "Derrida, Irigaray, and Deconstruction." *Intervention* 20 (1986): 70-81.

Holt, Peter. "Egypt." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. *Britannica.com*. 1999-2001. Accessed 27 March 2001. <http://www.britannica.com>.

James, Jacqui, ed. *Between the Lines: Sources for* Singing the Living Tradition. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1995.

Kaufman, Gordon. *God, Mystery, Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

McReynolds, John. "Re: Your help with my thesis." E-mail to Sarah Stewart. 14 March 2001. Used with permission.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, ed. *The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*. New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1940.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Schüssler-Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist* Ekklesia-*ology of Liberation*. New York: Crossroad, 1993.

---. *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

Scott, Joan. "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 14:1 (1988): 33-50.

Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*. 20th anniversary ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

Steiner, George. *Real Presences*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1: Reason and Revelation, Being and God*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1951.

The Unitarian Universalist Association. "The 1997 Unitarian Universalism Needs and Aspirations Survey." *The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*. 23 December 1998. Accessed 1 April 2001. <http://www.uua.org/promise/results.html>.

---."The Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association." *The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*. 26 March 2001. Accessed 30 March 2001. <http://www.uua.org/principles.html>.

---, ed. *Singing the Living Tradition*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

"Watts, Isaac." *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. 1997.

[1] This way of writing the ineffable divine name comes to me through Jewish traditions and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's book *Discipleship of Equals* (10, n. 13).

[2] According to a 1997 survey, 46% of Unitarian Universalists are humanists, 19% are earth- or nature-centered, 13% are theists and 9.5% currently identify as Christian. Buddhists, Jews, Hindus and Muslims together make up 5.4% of the denomination (Unitarian, "1997").

[3] Scott defines language as "any system—strictly verbal or other—through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices organized and by which, accordingly, people represent and understand their world, including who they are and how they relate to others" (34).

[4] See Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*, especially chapter 1, for a careful and detailed exp loration of the feminist challenge to binary oppositions (13-43).

[5] Ahmed does not apply the qualifier "false" to the feminism Amin claimed to espouse. Indeed, authentic Western feminism of the time (carried out by Western women actually engaged in the liberation of Western women from Western sexist systems) collaborated in the oppression of colonized societies and especially colonized women, all in the name of feminism. Ahmed writes, "Well-meaning European feminists, such as Eugénie Le Brun…, earnestly inducted young Muslim women into the European understanding of the meaning of the veil and the need to cast it off as the essential first step in the struggle for female liberation" (154). I describe this feminism as "false" because I would not now claim it as a feminist standpoint. I prefer Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's definition of feminism as that which seeks to liberate and increase the opportunities for agency for all. For her, feminism includes the liberation of "wo/men," meaning women in all their diversity and oppressed men (186, n. 5).

[6] The *khedive* was the hereditary ruler of Egypt, compelled to rule according to British desires during the colonial period (Holt). The *'ulama* are authoritative scholars "who know" the law (Schimmel 61).

[7] By "fundamentalist" I mean to indicate a type of religion and not just the Christian Biblical Fundamentalist movement. A fundamentalist religious structure is one that claims to teach the entire truth about the world, and especially about religion's place in it, and that claims to have the only such access to truth about the world. Pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism and Protestant Fundamentalism fall into this category, as well as some forms of Orthodox Judaism and Islam.

[8] I make a distinction between "pagan" and "neo-pagan." I use the first term in its classic sense of "non-Christian," where in our Christian culture it retains a pejorative connotation. Neo-paganism is the practice, often found in Unitarian Universalist churches, of honoring the sanctity of the earth and the natural cycles of the cosmos. It is often associated with goddess worship. It may be derided by American culture at large, but it is an accepted and welcomed movement within Unitarian Universalism. See Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* on neo-paganism and goddess worship; for information about neo-paganism in the Unitarian Universalist Association, see *Covenant*.

[9] In the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal, "men their" has been changed to "us our." The hymn is otherwise identical (Episcopal no. 100).

[10] "…Calvin had laid [a stern embargo] on the use in the music of sacred worship of everything except metrical psalms and canticles" (Bennett 979).

[11] For the composition date, see Protestant no. 319. For Watts's vote at the "conference about the ministers at Exeter held at Salters' Hall," see Bennett 980.

[12] The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* writes, "In his later years he seems to have inclined towards Unitarianism" ("Watts" 1722-23). I prefer the common noun to the proper, as unitarianism in the early eighteenth century was a theological position but not a distinct denomination.

[13] These sections are labeled: Christmas, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, and The Christian Spirit (Unitarian, *Singing* v).

[14] The two hymns are the well-known Christmas hymns "Silent Night, Holy Night" (Unitarian, *Singing* no. 251) and "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (no. 253). The verses beginning "God of God" and "Yea, Lord, we greet thee" have been cut from "O Come, All Ye Faithful." Cf. James 68; no. 251, 253 and Protestant no. 12. I have difficulty seeing the unmarked changes to these hymns as anything other than duplicitous. On a different note, it is interesting that "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" by Edmund Sears, a Unitarian, appears unaltered.

[15] All Biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[16] I thank Sarah Sentilles for this insight.