

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 9, The Emergence of American Unitarianism. Religion in the American Revolution

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 9, The Emergence of American Unitarianism. Religion in the American Revolution.

And we are down to number five. We're talking about the reaction of the churches. Some of the churches were particularly affected by the American Revolution, either Anglicanism, because the numbers dropped considerably in America because they were pro-British, obviously, or Congregationalism, on the other hand, which was largely for the Revolution and supported the Revolution.

So, we talked about the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and American Methodism. Number five, other denominations. There are other denominations that were not affected, and I'll just mention three by way of example.

And those were the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Quakers. So, some denominations weren't affected one way or another, such as Baptists, Presbyterians, and Quakers. In 1976, as a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Revolutionary War in 1776, there were lots of displays and so forth.

And I was very interested. I went down to Faneuil Hall to see some of those displays, and it demonstrated very clearly that many of those denominations, especially the ones I mentioned, Baptists, Quakers, and Presbyterians, weren't really affected, but there were certainly Christians who were on either side of the story, who some were pro-Revolutionary, some were pro-British, but the denominations themselves weren't so seriously affected. And then we come here to Universalism, number six, because we haven't talked about Universalism yet, and so we'll just mention that.

Yes. Celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Revolutionary War. In Boston, for example, there were lots of displays and events going on in 1976 as we celebrated that 200th anniversary.

Okay, let's talk about Universalism because we haven't talked about that yet, and then we'll say a quick word about church attendance during this time. Universalism, obviously, is a belief that all people are going to be saved, that all people, there is not going to be kind of hell, everybody's going to go to heaven, everybody's going to be redeemed, everybody's going to be saved. So, we haven't talked about Universalism yet.

The founder of Universalism was a man by the name of John Murray, and these are his dates, and he founded Universalism in Britain. Then, in 1770, he came to America, and he began to spread the Universalist message in America. Universalism was a message that was squared with a lot of people's rational beliefs in Christianity.

Christianity was a rational religion, a reasonable religion, and it certainly appeared to people that it was reasonable to believe that God's grace was going to save everybody, kind of reasonable to believe. There were three kinds of views of the Universalists that I just want to mention because they didn't have a singular view; they had three kinds of nuanced views in a sense. The first was that Christ made full payment on the cross.

So, these people looked to the cross of Christ; they said he died on the cross, he died for all people, and he made full payment. And under this first point, what they're reacting against is any kind of a Calvinist understanding of the elect. They're reacting against any understanding of predestination.

So that's number one in terms of the Universalists: Christ died for everybody. Number two, they believe that when people die, they're going to be immediately taken into the presence of God. So, everybody, nobody will come under judgment; they will believe, and their divine blessedness begins when people die.

Number three is where the nuanced part comes in. What about a recognition that there is human freedom to say no to God? What about recognizing that there is such a thing in this world called sin? What about that? What about people who are sinners in rebellion against God in this world? How do they fit into the story? Well, the Universalists believed that after death, there would be a time of purification. It wasn't exactly the purgatory of Roman Catholicism, but there would be a period of purification at which time then they would be prepared to, at some point in their after-death experience, at some point they would be able to go and meet with God.

But this time of purification is not eternal. It's not hell. It's not eternal punishment.

It's more of a purging in preparation to meet God. So, when you look at the Universalists, they have three kinds of points that they're trying to make. 1790, so after the Revolutionary War, the Universalists held a convention.

They were strong enough. I don't know actually how many were at the convention. I should look that up.

But they were strong enough to hold a convention. So, where did they hold that convention? In Philadelphia. Philadelphia City, brotherly love.

Everybody seemed to like to go to Philadelphia to hold their conventions in the Universalist world. All right. Let me just, you can see in your outline, I just want to make a word about church attendance during the time of the Revolution, and then we'll move on here.

Okay. Church attendance at the time of the Revolution. There are two extremes to be avoided.

And the truth is probably somewhere kind of in the middle. The one extreme, I would say, is the mythological extreme in terms of church attendance. The mythological extreme to be avoided says that everybody went to church.

All these people were in church every Sunday, and they were very devout believers. They belonged to all these different denominations, so the whole American population was in church. Well, there's nothing that can support that. We've mentioned that many of these people were deists.

They didn't have regular church attendance, and so forth. So, that would be the mythological extreme to avoid in terms of church attendance. I don't think we want to go down that route.

Now, the second extreme to avoid is a myopic view of church attendance. And the myopic view says you can only measure church attendance by actual church membership. And in some places, church membership was rather low.

But that would be a myopic view because the fact of the matter is a lot of people who did not become members of churches attended churches. So, a lot of people were going to church, but they had not joined any particular denomination. They were going to the local congregational church or the local Anglican church or whatever.

So, generally speaking, scholars have found that church attendance is much larger than church membership. So, generally speaking, that seems to be the case. If I were to give us one statistic about 1780 or so, it seems as though about three-fifths of the population attended church on a regular basis in 1780, after the American Revolutionary War, and after we settled into being a new nation.

So, about three-fifths of the population attends church. It seemed to have dropped lower during the time of the Revolutionary War, but now it's starting to pick up again. And now, something's going to happen later on in a lecture called The Second Great Awakening, but we'll get to that later.

Okay, just to make sure we're all caught up here, let's go to lecture number six, The Emergence of American Unitarianism. We'll give the background, and then we'll talk

about Unitarianism in America, especially here in Boston. So that's lecture number six, and the exam covers up to and including lecture number six.

That's why I wish we had been here Monday. I could have done this lecture, and I would like to finish my lectures about a week before you take the exam so you've got plenty of time to study. But we're doing okay. Okay, so first of all, here is the background.

Well, what is Unitarianism? Unitarianism, of course, is a disbelief in the Trinity and a belief in the oneness of God. Unitarianism wants to emphasize monotheism, and in order to do so, the Unitarians believe that the Trinity speaks against monotheism. Now, there were Unitarians in the early church who didn't call themselves Unitarians, but Unitarianism in the early church was around where people were denying the Trinity and embracing just pure monotheism, but who called themselves Christians nevertheless.

But the Unitarianism that we're interested in, Unitarianism that really comes forward into American life and culture, really starts in the 16th century, and it starts with a man by the name of Michael Servetus. That's the name that you would associate with the beginning of Unitarianism during the time of the Reformation. Now, Michael Servetus was a Unitarian and argued against John Calvin, who was also a monotheist, but John Calvin, of course, believed in the Trinity.

So, long story short about Michael Servetus, Michael Servetus came to Geneva in 1533. That's where Calvin was preaching and teaching in Geneva. Geneva had become kind of one of the great centers of the Reformation.

Michael Servetus, now, I want to make sure we understand this because even though it doesn't relate directly to this course, Calvin is often blamed for burning Michael Servetus at the stake. Calvin did not do that. People who say that Calvin burned this guy at the stake just don't know their history.

Calvin tried to convince Michael Servetus not to come to Geneva. He thought that if Servetus came to Geneva, Servetus would be in trouble. So, he tried to convince him not to come to Geneva.

Servetus wanted to come to Geneva. He wanted to debate with Calvin. Servetus was arrested by the authorities, not by the civil authorities, not by Calvin, and then Servetus was burned at the stake.

Now, we've got to take our minds back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Why were people burned at the stake at that time? To preserve the common good, to preserve society, the social order, and heretics are a threat to the social order. So, Michael

Servetus was burned at the stake for that reason, not by Calvin, but by the civil authorities.

So, we do want to mention Servetus. The man who interests us most, however, is, or there are a couple of names, but one is John Biddle. Because John Biddle, here are the dates of John Biddle.

John Biddle began to organize what he called Unitarian thinking in England. Yes, okay, yeah, yes. Calvin, long story short, but Calvin had been at Geneva, and then they kind of ran him out of town.

But then, when they saw how his theology and his preaching had had such a good influence on the culture and upon the world of Geneva, they invited him back. So, he became a person who helped Geneva, in a sense, to set forth a moral, cultural tone in Geneva. It wasn't a theocracy.

He was not a civil servant of any kind. He was a preacher and had his church, but he was great; he influenced Geneva's life greatly. It became a Protestant-reformed city.

And other people in fact, he set up the Geneva Academy so that people from around Europe could come and study at the Geneva Academy and take his thinking and his thoughts back to their own countries and so forth. So, Geneva is a model kind of reformed city, and the civil authorities were grateful to Calvin for the influence that he had upon civic life in terms of morality and so forth. Does that help a bit? How long did Geneva last as a reformed city? Well, I mean, it still has a strong Protestant heritage today, I would say, but it certainly lasted; I mean, some of the Puritans found refuge in Geneva.

Because it was such a strong Protestant Calvinist city, they were Calvinists. He warned Servetus not to come because he knew what the civil authorities would do to Servetus if he came to Geneva. Servetus was, Servetus came, Calvin even visited when he was imprisoned.

He went to visit him in prison. And he really thought he thought, you know, he wanted Servetus to see God in its fullness, in its Trinitarian fullness. So he tried to have that ministry with Servetus, but it didn't work.

Civil authorities burned him at the stake. Okay, John Biddle. John Biddle is the one who's interesting to us because he's the one who shaped Unitarianism in England.

Now, Unitarianism in the 17th century fit very well in an English rationalistic society. So, Unitarianism and rationalism really go together really beautifully because

Unitarians kind of explained the Christian faith in a very rational way. Now, what happened in England is that it has begun to grow.

It really began to take on some strength in England for two reasons, under Biddle. Reason number one: well, not both under Biddle, but he got it started.

But reason number one is that under Biddle, it became a kind of missionary endeavor. The Unitarians tried to be missionaries throughout England to convince people that they should be Unitarians. And actually, they convinced a lot of Baptists and Presbyterians who moved into Unitarianism.

So, under Biddle, the kind of missionary- kind of, I don't know, missionary impulse- helped to spread Unitarianism in England. Okay. The second reason it grew in England is after Biddle's day, but it leads us to another name, and his name is Dr. Joseph Priestly.

Okay. Now, why do you know the name Joseph Priestly? Why is that name familiar to you? Because he was a well-known scientist in England at the time. He was a very well-known person, Dr. Joseph Priestly.

So, there he is. As one author said, he's a chemist, a thinker, a reasonable person. Joseph Priestly, even though he was reared in Anglicanism, became a Unitarian.

So, this man who was of great stature in England became a Unitarian and even became a Unitarian minister. And that really forwarded the cause of Unitarianism. And that kind of English background to Unitarianism is certainly going to come over to America.

It was finally recognized, by the way, in 1813 in England. It was recognized as a legitimate denominational religion in 1813. So, Unitarianism takes on that shape through Biddle and then through Priestly.

Okay. Now, still, in terms of background, there is a shift in Unitarian thinking from Biddle's day to Priestly's day and on. So let me talk about that shift because if we don't understand that shift, we're going to get the wrong impression of Unitarianism in terms of its history.

Early Unitarians and Priestly are good examples of that even. So, he comes quite a bit after Biddle, as you can see. But early Unitarians were very focused on the Bible.

The Bible was very important to them. And they read a lot from the scripture. They preached a lot from the scripture.

They sang from the scripture because the scriptures accented, you know, for them, the scriptures accented this one God who was a God of love. Now, of course, they had difficulties with the biblical text, especially with the incarnation and then the miracles of Jesus, his death on the cross, his resurrection, and his ascension. They had difficulties with the biblical text, but they still tried to wrestle through the biblical text.

They kept on trying to work with the Bible, but yet they were firm about their Unitarian convictions as well. Okay, now, as other Unitarians started to, other generations started to come into Unitarianism, and the Bible was used less and less. Finally, a lot of Unitarians decided we don't need the Bible anymore.

Everything we believe can be understood by reason, by the use of our rational abilities, and by the use of our reasons. So, the Bible is out. And so Unitarianism for a while became kind of split between this old wing, this more conservative wing, these biblical Unitarians, and the new wing, these more liberal people, these rational Unitarians.

So, for a while, Unitarianism became split, but eventually, the biblical wing died out. Eventually, the biblical wing is gone, and Unitarianism becomes, in England, a strictly rational religion. Now, what happens, of course, for our interest, what happens, of course, is that it starts to come over into America.

So that's Unitarianism in America, that's number B. Okay, the first person that's of interest to us in America is a man by the name of James Freeman. And there are the dates of James Freeman, 1759 to 1835. Okay, long story short on James Freeman.

James Freeman had a church called, I should have put these in order, but oh yeah, here it is, well, James Freeman had a church in Boston called King's Chapel. So, he's the pastor of King's Chapel. You're going to recognize King's Chapel, right? Because all of you have been. Is there anyone who hasn't been on the Freedom Trail? By any chance, is there anyone in this room? You can confess this; it's okay, even though you've been a Gordon for two, three, four years.

Have you been on the Freedom Trail in Boston? You have to, okay, no, okay. Well, we're going to walk certain sections of the Freedom Trail. So, confession is good for the soul.

So, we're going to walk certain, if you're going on the field trips, we'll be walking on certain sections of the Freedom Trail. This is dominant on the Freedom Trail. If you've walked the Freedom Trail, you've passed by this church.

This is dominant. This is King's Chapel. James Freeman was the Anglican priest at King's Chapel.

In 1785, that's an important date, and you want to take note of that date. In 1785, this became the first Unitarian church in America under James Freeman, under their pastor, under their priest. So here you have an Anglican church that, as a congregation under the direction of Freeman, moves over into Anglicanism. And so that's where it all starts, right here in Boston.

That's where it all is. It was an Anglican church, and it was a Unitarian church, and it became the first Unitarian church in America. Now, the second person to mention in terms of American Christianity is probably the most important when it comes to the kind of shaping of Unitarianism.

And his name is William Ellery Channing. And this is a picture of the young William Ellery Channing. Okay.

William Ellery Channing had a church called the Federal Street Congregational Church in Boston. So, the Federal Street Congregational Church. Now, today, it's called the Arlington Street Congregational Church, and here it is, but this is the Federal Street Congregational Church when William Ellery Channing was the pastor and the rector.

We'll walk by. This is now, Federal Street is now called Arlington Street. So it's now called the Arlington Street Congregational Church.

Today, however, it's a Unitarian church because William Ellery Channing took that church, which was originally congregational, and moved it into Unitarianism. Right across the street from the church is this statue of William Ellery Channing. So, we will stop and see on one of our field trips, not the first one, but the second one. We'll walk by the church, and we'll also see the statue of William Ellery Channing.

So, let's give a, I don't know, a title for Channing. William Ellery Channing is the father of American Unitarianism. He is the one who shaped American Unitarianism, starting at his church.

Okay. So, with William Ellery Channing, there are three important dates. The first one is 1815 because 1815 is when he, let me put a picture back of his church.

1815, he led his church to become a Unitarian church. So that's an important date in Channing's life in terms of his ministry, in terms of his really becoming a leader in shaping American Unitarianism in the way that James Freeman didn't. James Freeman predates William Ellery Channing.

Okay. The second date is 1816. 1816 is a very important date because 1816 Harvard University founded a divinity school in 1816. it was basically a Unitarian divinity school, and William Ellery Channing would have preached there.

He would have taught there and so forth. So, he would have had an association with Harvard University's Unitarian Divinity School. Now, while we're talking about Harvard, just to fast forward on the history of Harvard for just a minute, Harvard, the university began as a place to train Puritan preachers, remember? And do you remember that date? 1636, John Harvard gave his library to begin Harvard University.

Now we get to the date 1816, and that's the founding of the divinity school at Harvard, but as a Unitarian divinity school. Harvard Divinity School is a very interesting place. Now, I'm going to say a third thing about Harvard, and then we'll come back to the third date for William Ellery Channing, but Harvard Divinity School is a very interesting place.

All kinds of people go there. I've been to Harvard Divinity School graduations, and it is such a fascinating place because one student will come up and that student will be Unitarian, and another student will come up, and that student will be Jewish, and another student will come up, and that student will be Native American with maybe a Native American kind of religious identity. Another student might come up and be Buddhist, another student might be a Taoist, but they're all getting degrees from Harvard Divinity School, which is interesting.

But the fact of the matter is a lot of evangelicals have gone to Harvard Divinity School. We've had students go to Harvard Divinity School. They're probably evangelicals at Harvard Divinity School today.

So, a lot of evangelicals have gone to Harvard. Now, so here's this very kind of liberal Unitarian seminary founded in 1816. All kinds of people go there to get degrees, but yet evangelicals go there.

So, a few years ago, there was an interesting debate. This was about 10 years ago or so. Actually, I've got the article so I can actually see the date.

This was, let's see, maybe it's longer than I thought. Yeah, it is long. It's 1983.

Okay, well, life goes pretty fast. So, 1983. So, there was a discussion at Harvard University and Harvard Divinity School.

And the discussion was, because we've got so many evangelicals going to Harvard Divinity School, should we have an evangelical chair at Harvard Divinity School? Should we have someone come here to teach evangelical, Christian, Protestant, and

evangelical theology? And the answer was, yes, we need an evangelical chair at Harvard Divinity School. And the first person to fill the chair at Harvard Divinity School was a man by the name of Mark Noll. Now, you may be familiar with his name from other readings and so forth.

He was at that time at Wheaton College. He is now at Notre Dame but a very distinguished church historian and American church historian. Mark Noll went on to be the first chair of the evangelical chair at Harvard Divinity School.

I was able to go to his inaugural address and to all the celebrations of this evangelical chair. So, it's kind of interesting that, in a sense, by establishing an evangelical chair, Harvard Divinity School was going back to the roots of the university, back to the Puritan roots, in a sense. So, it's very interesting that that all happened.

There have been many people; George Marsden is another very well-known American historian and a historian of fundamentalism and evangelicalism. He has been in that chair. So, it's been an interesting history.

So anyway, that's where Harvard Divinity School was founded. Pardon? Mark Noll. No.

There's a man now who is a Methodist from Boston University. I believe his name is David Hempton. I'd have to check on that to be sure.

But I think it's a one-year chair. So, the person who goes there is there for a year, teaches evangelical theology, and so forth. And then it's so it changes every year.

But the people who have had the chair are very notable scholars, no doubt about that. Yes, that Unitarian basically, you could probably go into a Unitarian church and find a preacher, maybe. And we're going to talk about this in just a minute.

But you would probably find a preacher who might be using certain scriptures, maybe the Lord's Prayer, or maybe some of the Beatitudes and so forth. But the evangelical chair at Harvard Divinity School, that person can teach evangelical theology. That's what they got him there to do.

So, they got him there to teach evangelical theology and the authority of the Bible and all kinds of things. Yeah, so we're rejoicing in this. So no, it's no longer.

No, it was founded as a Unitarian institution in 1816. Now, at Harvard Divinity School, I'd have to look at their mission statement or whatever just to check on that today. But they welcome all who want to come and study at Harvard Divinity School.

You do not have to be Unitarian. The professors don't have to be Unitarian to teach at Harvard Divinity School. Yeah.

We're going to get to that in just a minute. Why don't I hold to that, and we're going to come to that? Let me give the third date for William Ellery Channing.

Remember we said we had three dates for him? We had the date when his church became Unitarian, 1815. We had the founding of Harvard Divinity School in 1816. The third date is really, really an important date because the third date is when William Ellery Channing founded the American Unitarian Association.

The American Unitarian Association was an association of Unitarian churches finding common ground together, kind of discussing their theology, and so forth. So that was founded in 1825. And William Ellery Channing was the founder.

Actually, when we're up in Beacon Hill, there's a little plaque. It's a little hard to see, so people walk by it every day and don't notice it. But there's a little plaque that tells you the home in which William Ellery Channing lived while he was pastoring this church in Boston, right up in Beacon Hill.

So, we'll pass by that. So, the American Unitarian Association was founded in 1825. So those three dates really are important.

Okay, now we're still on Unitarianism in America. So let me just go back to another name here. And that is the name of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a movement called Transcendentalism.

Okay, so the question is, what is Transcendentalism? Transcendentalism was a movement out of Unitarianism. In other words, the Transcendentalists basically had been Unitarians. That had been their church, their denomination.

They had been reared in that kind of tradition. But with Ralph Waldo Emerson he's the most famous Transcendentalist, both kind of theologically and in terms of literature. So I mentioned Ralph Waldo Emerson here.

You're familiar with him from other courses. But with Ralph Waldo Emerson, we have this movement called Transcendentalism. Now, there are five points I want to make about Transcendentalism here.

First of all, Transcendentalism was really a rejection of Unitarian rationalism. Unitarianism had become very rational, very reasonable. It's kind of defending their cause by reason, you know.

And there were people who were reared in Unitarianism who were kind of fed up with that kind of very strict rationalism of Unitarianism. Secondly, Transcendentalism, instead of embracing the Enlightenment movement, which was a movement of reasonableness and rationality, embraced the Romantic movement. So Transcendentalism is an embracing of Romanticism.

And you know that culturally, that's the kind of movement that followed the age of the Enlightenment in the 19th century. So, they're embracing that. Thirdly, the Transcendentalists emphasize religious truth by intuition.

Religious truth can come to you by your intuition and can come to you by your experience. You don't need to prove religious truth by some kind of rational proof. And you don't need to find those religious truths in a book called the Bible.

As a matter of fact, for many Transcendentalists, you don't even need to find that religious truth in something called the church. You can find that religious truth in your intuitive feelings and your intuitive inner knowledge. That religious truth can come to you.

Number four, of course, they believe that God is in every person's heart. I don't know exactly what that means, but God is in every person's heart. God is kind of around us.

That's kind of the over-soul of Transcendentalism. God is in every person's heart. So there's kind of this heart religion.

It doesn't need to be organized. You don't need a book. You don't need a Bible.

You don't need a church. You don't need a building. It's in everybody's kind of heart.

And also, number five, that you see up here, God dwells in nature as well. These people, the Transcendentalists, were also almost pantheistic in some ways, that God is contained in the natural world. So, here's where you can find God in the natural world.

So, Transcendentalism is a break-off from Unitarianism in a sense. Now, some of these Transcendentalists still attended Unitarian churches, so this isn't a total break. However, transcendentalism is a movement out of Unitarianism emphasizing these kinds of things, and Ralph Waldo Emerson's best expression of that is that

Okay, now the question is, what do Unitarians believe? That's what we want to kind of figure out. Unfortunately, you can identify Unitarians more by what they don't believe than what they do believe. In any case, what do they believe? Oh, I meant to mention, before I do that, what do they believe? Before I do that, let me just show you one more picture here.

The Unitarians united with the Universalists in 1961. So, the Unitarians and the Universalists came together in 1961 and formed the denomination called the Unitarian Universalist denomination. So, the Unitarian churches that you see in the center of these New England villages are Unitarian-Universalist churches.

And the headquarters is right up in Boston, the International Headquarters. There it is, there's their flag, the blue flag. And on the right, you see the Statehouse.

So, you can kind of see where you are here, where we're going to walk by that headquarters and point it out when we get there. But so, yeah. What was that year? 1961.

1961, yeah. Okay, I meant to mention that. Okay.

Now, what do the Unitarians believe? That's the question. And you need a 10-second break. No, five-second break.

It's only Wednesday. Five seconds. That's all you get on Wednesday.

It's five seconds. Bless your heart. This movement was kind of founded by these people.

What do they believe? Okay. I'm going to mention about eight things that they believe. Unfortunately, some of them are negative.

So, it's what they're reacting against that defined Unitarianism. Okay. Let's start off with one positive thing.

The Unitarians believed in loving your neighbor. They believed in charitable work. So that's a good thing.

So, we'll start off positively. They did believe in charity. They did believe in loving your neighbor and so forth.

Yes, we're still under B, Unitarianism in America. So now this is just some, what do they believe? What do they hold? Yeah. So, first of all, they believed in charitable work.

They believed in loving your neighbor. I think that would be pretty distinctive. If you went into a unit, I was just walking in Andover a couple of days ago, and I walked by the Unitarian Universalist Church and very much by the signage of the church and everything, very much involved in kind of charitable work and changing society for the better, that kind of thing.

So that's number one. Number two, of course, is a denial of the Trinity. This is where they really make a break with historic Christianity.

They deny the Trinity. It's a denial of the Trinity. Okay.

Number three, which follows from number two, is a denial of atonement. It's a denial of the doctrine of atonement. You do not need an atonement if that atonement is going to be universal.

If when everybody dies, you're going to go and be with God. You don't need some atonement to happen here in this world. So it's a denial of the atonement, especially of course, of the atonement as espoused by the death of Christ on the cross.

Right. They believe that Jesus is a good person, a moral person, an ethical person. They believe he actually lived.

He's kind of like the prophets. So, they believe he actually lived. The spirit they're glad to talk about the spirit, but that's not a third person of the Trinity for them.

The spirit is just God's spirit at work in the natural world or God at work in our souls, in our bodies, and so forth. So, for them, that's the spirit. Now, if you take this second one, the second person of the Trinity, we all know this, don't we, from Mere Christianity?

Jesus is a good man. He's a moral man. He's a nice man.

You should be like Jesus. What did C.S. Lewis say about that in Mere Christianity? He's either a lunatic or a Lord. Lewis said you can never take this middle ground on Jesus.

It's impossible because he's either who he said he is, he's Lord, or he is a lunatic because he's a man who kept on saying he was God and doing things that God did and everything. So he's Lord or lunatic. So C.S. Lewis wouldn't let people take that middle ground, but the Unitarian Universalists have basically taken that ground and stand on Jesus.

Good moral man and a good prophet. We should learn some things from him. Yeah.

Okay. So, it's a denial of the atonement. Yeah, Alexander.

Yes, Unitarians. I'd have to look and see how many countries where they operate, but there are still Unitarian churches in England. I passed by Unitarian churches in England.

Yeah. And wouldn't you know, it would be Boston? It would be the bastion of Unitarianism in our backyard right here.

Okay. Yeah. Yes.

That's a good question because even though the merger didn't come until 1961, you know, in our time, 20th century, Unitarians were already basically Universalists as well. So, it was pretty natural that they would come together, and they finally did. It took them a while, but they finally did.

Yeah. For the what? Yeah. Let me go back to Freeman and get him. Yeah. Here. Whoops. There he is right there. Yeah. Freeman is 1759, 1835.

Okay. Fourth, Unitarians believed or denied, I should say, the doctrine of original sin. They denied the doctrine of original sin.

There is no original sin. People make mistakes. People might, and there might be some people who even sin.

It's a possibility. But original sin, sin is an inherited disease passed down from Adam. No way, you know.

So, they denied the doctrine of original sin. So yeah. Yeah.

Okay. James Freeman. Okay.

Yes. Right. He was the Anglican priest of King's Chapel.

And in 1885, he moved, he kept, they stayed in the chapel, but in 1885, they moved to, they joined Unitarianism as a congregation with him as their priest, as their, I should say, their minister. That's why he's so important: this is the first church in America ever to become Unitarian, King's Chapel. Yeah.

Does that help, Freeman? Yeah. Okay. So, no original sin.

Sin is out for these people, in a sense. Okay. Another thing we should take note of is number five, is that they denied the doctrine of predestination.

They fought against the Puritan Calvinist understanding of election, predestination, and double election. They denied all of that. So, they really are in combat with the Calvinists.

No doubt about that for a lot of reasons, but for this reason as well. Okay. Number six, they developed, maybe not totally consciously, but they developed a kind of salvation by good morals, a salvation by ethics, a salvation by being a good person, that that's how you place yourself in a good relationship with God.

So, it became a kind of salvation by a character in a way. So salvation by works. So maybe they didn't quite intend it to be following the Roman Catholics and salvation by works, but that's the way it went.

Yes. Ultimately, everyone is still saved. Now, if you go to the Unitarian preacher in Boston, William Ellery Channing, there he is preaching in his church.

If he sees an absolute reprobate out there, somebody who's a real sinner and angry against God and so forth, well, he'll preach to him, but he'll know that if he's not saved in this life, then in the afterlife, he'll come through a time of purging, but eventually, he'll go and be with God. So, they're convinced that this is going to happen. Yes.

A good example of that is Harvard Divinity School. They go to Harvard Divinity School. They get a master's divinity degree.

They become ordained into the Unitarian Universalist ministry. Yes, they are ministers. They are ordained ministers.

Now, one thing that Unitarianism has done, though, I will say Unitarianism recognizes and is honest about the fact that they are not Orthodox Christians. They do not align with the Orthodox Christian faith. So I think they're, at times, they're careful not to call themselves Christian, not in the Orthodox sense anyway.

Okay. Still, a couple more things that they did believe or didn't believe or do believe or don't believe. Okay.

The next to the last is something we've already mentioned. They have a very low view of the Bible if any view of the Bible at all. It certainly is a low view, if any view.

Therefore, the word I'll use is that the Bible is not an authority, a source of authority for Unitarian Universalism. If you've got Unitarians who read the Bible or sections of the Bible, if you've got Unitarian preachers who might preach from the Beatitudes or might preach from loving God and so forth, that's fine. But that Unitarian preacher would never say the Bible is God's authority for truth.

So, they would never say that. Yeah. Right.

Well, doctrine is not quite a word when we think of... Yeah. Right. Kind of... Yeah.

Doctrine is... Yeah. Okay. So, what they would... That'll lead me to my last point.

So why don't I make that point, and then we'll see how they go here? They have had and do have a high view of reason, a high view of rationality, and a high view of us being able to use our reason to determine what truth is. Now I confess, here I'm lecturing on Unitarianism, but I confess I've never actually been to a Unitarian service and kind of taken a look at, heard the preacher, and so forth.

I should do that sometime. I would just be interested in that. But my suspicion is that in the Unitarian service, what the preacher is going to be relying on is a reasoned argument about being good to your neighbor or a reasoned argument about being a good moral person because it's good for the common good.

So that's my suspicion. I may be wrong, but I don't think so. Okay.

So that's Unitarianism, American Unitarianism. So first of all, background and then secondly, now coming to America. So, let me stop for a couple of minutes.

Questions about what we're most interested in is getting this thing over to American Christianity. So, do you have any questions about Freeman or William Ellery Channing? Very important. A very important person in American Christianity shaped this thing or about Unitarianism, just in general, about what they believe.

Do you have any questions here? Okay. So, the exam, this is where the exam stops. The first-hour exam stops here.

So, you've got lectures one through six. So, we're doing okay. That gives you a few days to kind of get ready for the exam from your lectures.

Yeah. Whoops. Yes.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and a few intellectuals in Lexington and Concord. I mentioned his name because you'd be familiar with his name in terms of literature and so forth. However, a few people founded this movement called Transcendentalism, which was a very elite intellectual movement.

I mean, these people were poets and writers and thinkers and so forth. So it wasn't a movement for whosoever, for sure. So, it was a very powerful intellectual movement.

The reason Transcendentalism has a real influence on American broader culture, not necessarily Christian culture, but broader culture, because these people were literary

geniuses and literary people that people were reading. So that's how it had an influence on the broader culture. Yeah.

Something else here. You understand where we are here. You understand where we are for the exam.

Okay. Bless your hearts. I don't think I'll start the second great awakening today with five minutes to go.

I'm going to give you five minutes to get another cup of coffee and questions on Friday. Bring the books on Friday, and we will help you get ready for the exam again.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 9, The Emergence of American Unitarianism. Religion in the American Revolution.