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A Chosen Faith: An Introduction To Unitarian Universalism



Synopsis

For those contemplating religious choices, Unitarian Universalism offers an appealing alternative to religious denominations that stress theological creeds over individual conviction and belief. In this new edition of the classic introductory text on Unitarian Universalism, which includes a revealing, entertaining foreword by best-selling author Robert Fulghum (*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It*), a new preface by UU moderator Denise Davidoff, and two new chapters by the authors, John Buehrens and Forrest Church explore the many sources of the living tradition of their chosen faith.

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Customer Reviews

A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, is hard to describe. The book is a history of the denomination, with lively passages depicting the lives and ministries of important Unitarian-Universalist leaders such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Ellery Channing. Yet it is also a collection of testimonies by contemporary laypeople and ministers, who describe their churches' responses to questions ranging from "How do I know when to get married?" to "How should the government treat single mothers?" The funny and wise introduction was written by Robert Fulghum, who indulges the often invoked criticism that Unitarian Universalism's ideals are interchangeable with those of PBS. And, finally, it contains some straightforward explications of the denomination's core principles. The Church's aversion to creeds will be off-putting to some readers--at times, it seems Unitarian Universalists believe in nothing so

much as not committing to any one belief. But there's something universally refreshing about this protean faith: most religious people, at one time or another, find that God leads them to reject some tenets of their religion. Unitarian Universalists have a true genius for accepting God's most surprising Words, which makes *A Chosen Faith* a valuable resource for all of us. --Michael Joseph Gross --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Buehrens, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and Church, senior minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City, present a summary of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist today. In a new foreword and a new preface prepared for this edition, bestselling author Robert Fulghum, a Unitarian Universalist minister, and Denise Davidoff, a Jewish convert to Unitarian Universalism, add their personal observations. Buehrens and Church cover the history of Unitarian Universalism, whose origins they trace to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The authors also find precursors of Unitarian Universalism during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, and they find the first mention of "Unitarianism" in England in 1654. The book is an informative look at what they call a "choice in religious living," which they describe as affirming diversity, dialogue, personal choice, and work for social justice. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The book is a discussion by two Unitarian Universalist Ministers. Each alternates in writing a chapter. Unitarian and Universalist history is richly discussed. I like the idea of "deeds not creeds". Examples such as Unitarian minister Henry Whitney Bellows in the early 1860's founding the American Sanitary Commission which was the precursor to the American Red Cross. And Unitarian minister, Rev. James Reeb who was murdered in Selma Alabama for marching with Rev. Martin Luther King. Rev. Forrest Church discusses the historic Christian Apostle's Creed and what it says about Jesus. The creed does not mention the life and teachings of Jesus which are important. Unitarian Universalists do have Christian roots. Rev John Buehrens points out that "The living tradition we share draws from diverse sources." UU's have a rich tradition going back to the reformation, questioning the belief in the Trinity. Michael Servetus was burned at the stake as a heretic for challenging this belief.

The book you are pointed to when you are thinking of joining a Unitarian Universalist church. I had it on hard copy and wanted a kindle version. I'm so glad that it's on kindle now. It's the perfect introduction and something you'll go back to years later.

A wonderful book on Unitarian Universalism. I bought it to do a research paper on religion, New Thought, and it was complete, easy to understand and above all, inspirational.

Good introduction to Unitarian Universalism, but could use some more background on struggles within the movement. It does describe some of the self-criticism, but only in passing. I kept waiting for background on the struggles to make the movement, relevant in such crisis as "The American Civil War" etc.

This book is what its title says it is: an introduction to Unitarian Universalism. It combines a brief history of the denomination (which, in one respect, goes back centuries, but in another goes back to the 1961 merger of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations, whereupon the Unitarian Universalist Association ceased to be a "liberal Christian" denomination and became the "non-creedal religion" it is today) with an overview of UU principles, mixed with the author's personal reminiscences. Unitarian Universalism is a tough religion to categorize or summarize. For those used to faiths where you are given a creed to follow and answers to life's deep questions, it can be difficult to understand the appeal of a religion that gives you questions rather than answers. There are no "authoritative" answers within the church regarding the existence of God or the nature of souls and the afterlife or why good people suffer, so the author of this book can only give his personal opinion without presuming to speak for Unitarian Universalism in general. If you want to know more about Unitarian Universalism in general, this is a good book to start with. If you are wondering whether Unitarian Universalism might be the "right" religion for you, then you won't find the answer to that in this or any book. You need to attend a UU church and talk to the members of the congregation and see if it's a good "fit" for you. And be aware that no two UU congregations are the same -- some are heavily theistic, with a lot of spiritual/religious overtones (though none explicitly endorse or require members to believe in a deity), while others are much more "humanist." Some UU congregations are even explicitly pagan/"Earth-centered" in nature, though these are rare. The point is, if one congregation doesn't feel right to you, you might find another one does. You will find some UU members who are very comfortable with "religious language" while others recoil at any mention of God. Some regard this as a positive thing about Unitarian Universalism, the fact that it is so personal and unique to each individual's experience, others find the lack of uniformity or consensus frustrating. I think it is this tension between "theists" and "humanists" within the UUA that prompted a previous reviewer's negative review of this book. As an atheist UU myself,

I disagree with his assessment that this book is "hostile" to humanists/atheists. The thing is, the author is more theistic himself and so he has a more benevolent view of Unitarian Universalism's theistic (Christian, in fact) heritage. He doesn't explicitly say "There is a God," and admits he's unsure, but one gets the impression that he believes in some sort of higher power or at least would like to, and so he has a kindly attitude towards fellow believers. This may grate on determinedly atheistic UUs who would prefer that there be no mention at all of deities or spirituality in UU services. Personally, I don't find such religious references offensive as long as I am not being asked to subscribe personally to a belief in any gods or made to feel excluded because I don't. But as far as theology goes, this book only offers the author's PERSONAL theology; it cannot lay out a theological foundation for all UUs, because every UU approaches theology differently.

I've enjoyed this book very much and will use it as a reference book for many years. The basic philosophy of Unitarian Universalism is well described and its historical events well documented. It speaks volumes about the attitudes and hopes of modern liberal religious leaders today. This book explains the similarities of human religious thought all over the world. I like this groups embrace of diversity, respect for others religious beliefs, and it's never ending search for truth and understanding about the mystery of life. I'd recommend this book for everyone, whether you agree with it or not. This religious philosophy, in my opinion, is a step in the right direction.

I liked this book. People who are interested in faith studies should be interested in reading this book... One of the things that was especially interesting is the author's writing style and ability to get his message across. Overall, this book was very well written and I highly recommend to those who have not read. To those who have read it - read it again!

It is so nice to read church books that don't promise fire and brimstone. UUA promises loving support in one's own spiritual journey and demands nothing except that which one can or will consecrate to others in the congregation. I love this whole system, especially after I realized I had been practicing this organization's precepts for years, without knowing it. I look forward to the rest of my life spent living my chosen religion, rather than constantly trying to rationalize staying in the church which had been chosen for me.

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