

The Ghosts of our Interfaith Past

Rev Jenna Crawford,
6/14/22

Introduction



INTER FAITH LEADERSHIP

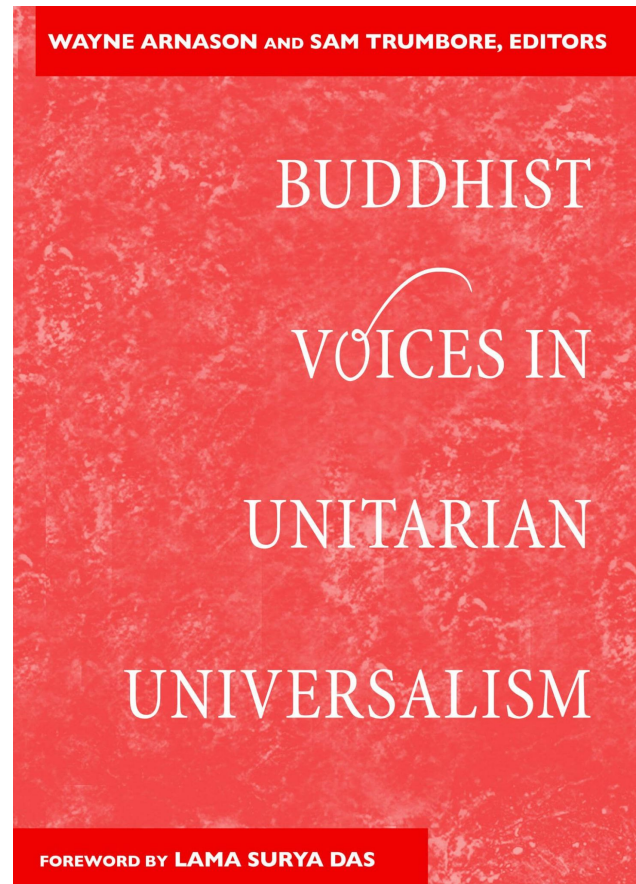
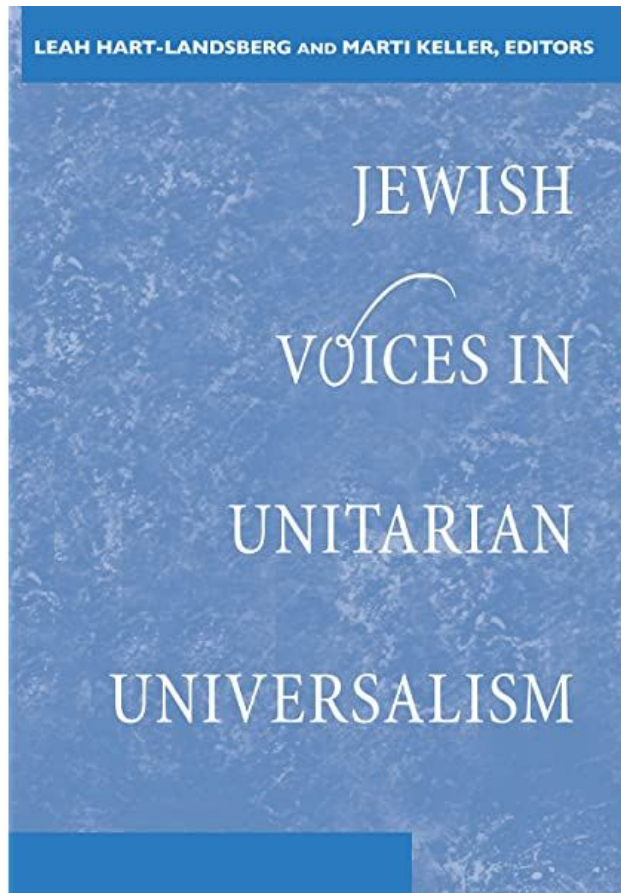
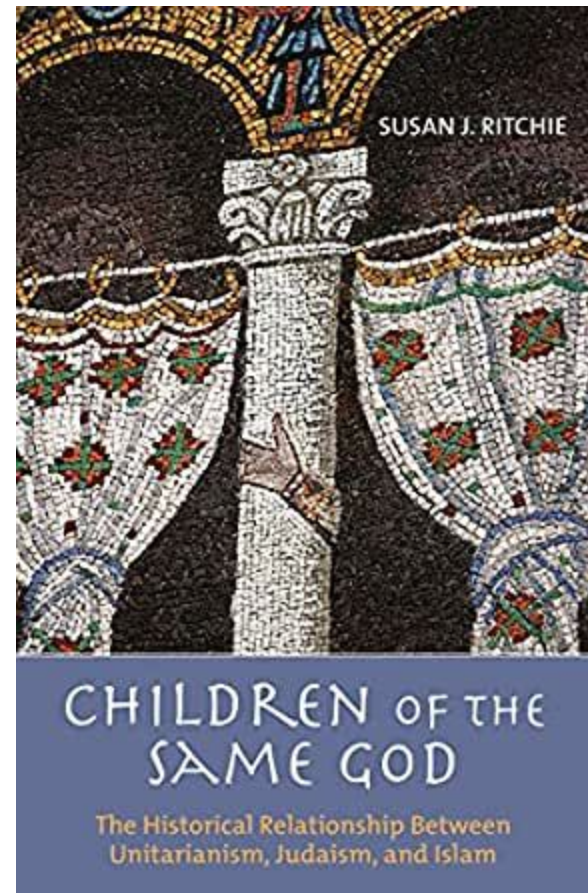
A PRIMER

EBOO PATEL

Founder and President of
Interfaith Youth Core

Outline

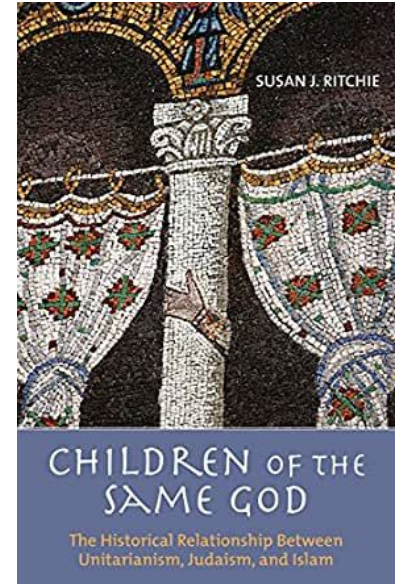
- 16th century Eastern Europe (Unitarians, Jews, Muslims)
- 19th century Unitarian encounters
- 20th century North American Unitarian Universalist encounters
- Today, and where do we go from here?
 - Tools to become interfaith leaders



16th Century Eastern Europe (Unitarians, Jews, Muslims)

- Geographic and doctrinal borderlands
- Michael Servetus's anti-Trinitarianism: intellectual reasons or interfaith oriented?
- Dual Unitarian-Muslim influence of the Edict of Torda in 1568
- Setting down the *too rosy-colored glasses* here

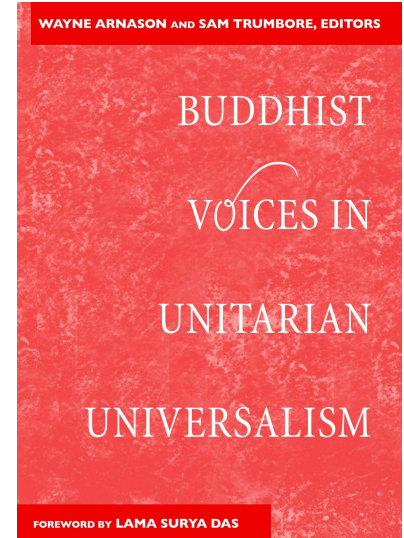
Note: The European vs. North American context of Unitarianism - 1) Arianism vs. Arminianism and 2) Social and political comfort



19th century Unitarian encounters

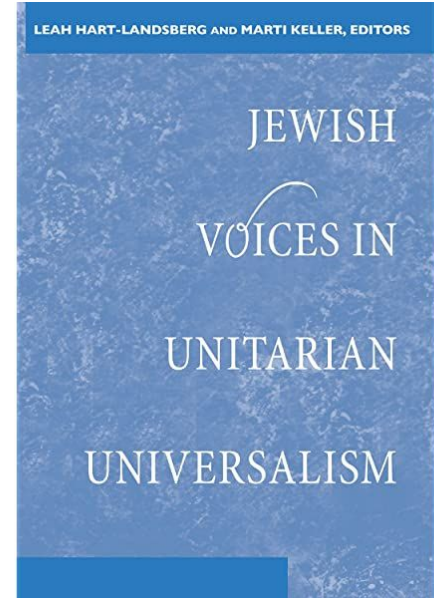
I argue that the Unitarian (and, to a lesser extent, Universalist) encounter with other faith traditions in the nineteenth century was characterized in large part by the attempted Unitarianization of those other traditions and a discomfort with genuine borderlands that resisted easy Unitarianization, all from a Protestant-as-center-of-the-universe standpoint.

- Unitarian encounter with Japanese Buddhism: Nakahama Manjiro, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Rev. Arthur Knapp



19th century Unitarian encounters

- Unitarian encounter with Reform Judaism in the United States: Rabbi Solomon Hirsch Sonneschein
 - Hart-Landsberg writes, “The history provides fertile ground for exploring Unitarian Universalist boundaries. Imagine if our movement had embraced a rabbi in the nineteenth century. We might draw lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ differently now.”
- Interest in world religions, and our framework for doing so



20th century North American Unitarian Universalist Encounters

- Merger of the American Unitarian Association and Universalist Church of America in 1961
- Ongoing threats of cultural genocide (a term I borrow from Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley)
 - Japanese Americans' forced displacement and internment camps
 - September 11 and Muslim Americans
- Huge disclaimer
- Forced the emergence of a whole new set of questions
 - “Kwanzaa, Cornrows, and Confusion: The Dilemma of Cultural Racism and Misappropriation”

Lessons from the Ghosts of our Interfaith Past

- That we have historically mistaken exporting our Unitarianism and rational religion as interfaith work encourages us to be attuned to the power dynamics in interfaith settings (19th century)
- That we have historically misappropriated other traditions and been uncomfortable at borderlands... (19th and 20th centuries)
- And that we have been genuinely multireligious, even if it was five centuries ago, and have engaged directly with communities other than our own in moments of real solidarity, shows us what is possible (16th century)

Becoming an Interfaith Leader

“Only a fusion coalition representing all the people in any place could push a moral agenda over and against the interests of the powerful. But such coalitions are never possible without radical patience and stubborn persistence.”

- Rev. Dr. William Barber (*The Third Reconstruction*)

Becoming an Interfaith Leader

IDENTITY (Moments that make up an interfaith leader):

- inspiration/enrichment
- relationship
- prejudice/conflict
- action/cooperation
- Feeling appreciation despite difference

...with people or ideas from other traditions

KNOWLEDGE BASE:

- Appreciative knowledge
- Theologies of interfaith cooperation
- History of interfaith cooperation
- Shared values

INTER
FAITH
LEADERSHIP

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INTERFAITH
TRIANGLE:

- Knowledge
- Attitudes
- Relationships

Becoming an Interfaith Leader

SKILL SET:

- Building a radar screen for religious diversity
- Developing a public narrative of interfaith cooperation
- Building relationships and mobilizing religiously diverse constituencies
- Creating activities that bring people who orient around religion differently together
- Facilitating interfaith conversations with a religiously diverse group

**WHERE?: At My Neighbor's Table,
Greater Boston Interfaith Organization**

INTER
FAITH
LEADERSHIP

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QUALITIES:

- Grit
- Relatability
- Leading with pluralism
- Craft

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